City of Westminster

Empowering citizens and communities: a move away from command and control provision to more citizen-driven mechanisms

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Nationally and locally, the idea of a shift from command and control provision to citizen-driven mechanisms is gaining increasing traction...

Why?

Issue of citizen disempowerment:

- Only 39% of people in England & Wales felt they could influence decisions affecting their local area in 2005, down from 44% in 2001.
- Only 39% of people engaged in some sort of civic engagement in 2007/2008.
- Only 3% of people attend public meetings.

Source: Citizenship Survey by Home Office then DCLG

Why?

Sense of untapped potential:

- There are estimated to be 700,000 to 1 million community groups in the U.K. : 1 for every 6 citizens.

- There are 238,000 start-up social entrepreneurs in the UK and 1.7m working in social enterprises.

  Source: Global Enterprise Monitor

Why?

Evidence that citizen-driven mechanisms lead to better outcomes and reduce cost:

- **Westminster's Family Recovery Programme** actively involves families in designing their own recovery plan. This is tailored to the needs of each individual family with professionals working together in one team to co-ordinate support.
- The programme has supported 50 families delivering a net saving to the public purse of **£1.1m**.

A new citizen-driven approach: guiding principles

- A smaller state with stronger accountability to local people
- Self-sufficient local authorities, freed from regulation and financial constraints to act in the best interests of citizens.
- The local authority as facilitator or enabler, freeing individuals, communities and businesses to play a stronger role in improving local areas and delivering services.
- Provision that is sustainable over the long-term.

Citizen-driven action on three fronts:

Individuals

Communities

Businesses

Volunteering

- 250 registered City Guides
- 91 registered Sports Volunteers, who contributed nearly 3,000 hours over the last quarter.
- Library volunteers who support homework clubs, children's reading challenges, reading groups and providing IT support, as well as assisting with the core work of day to day service delivery.
- 65 Westminster Works clients supported into volunteering.

People get on well together from different backgrounds up from 72% (2007) to 83% (2011) *– Westminster City Survey 2011*

Area Forums

- Set up in 2001 to facilitate community engagement and address local concerns in a proactive and positive environment.
- Attendance of 200-350 residents each quarter.
- New, more interactive format introduced in 2005 to give residents more influence over future policy and plans.
- Plans to revamp in 2011 including Leader's Question Time sessions, participatory budgeting trials, and facilitated workshops.

Satisfaction with area as a place to live is up from 84% (2007) to 90% (2011) *– Westminster City Survey 2011*

Ward budgets

- Set up in 2008 to give a greater voice to local communities and empower Members to act as local champions.
- £100k per ward p.a. (£50k per ward from 2010)
- Over 500 projects funded since April 2008, including:
  - Outreach work in Bayswater with 100 young people to reduce anti-social behaviour.
  - Open space projects in Church Street which developed 40 green spaces.
  - Senior Playground in Hyde Park

The council is making the local area a better place to live up by 10 points from 2008 to 2011 *– Westminster City Survey 2011*

Healthy Futures

- Project to reduce premature mortality on two local housing estates.
- Included outreach to every household on the estates.
- 110 residents had health and wellbeing checks and were referred onto local services.
- 7 local residents were trained in health promotion in the community to enable them to act as local health champions.

The percentage of residents describing their health as "not good" decreased by 9% and 54% of respondents who had a health MOT said they had changed their lifestyle as a result.

Fear and Fashion

- Group work with young people aged 10-19 identified as being at risk of carrying weapons and gang involvement.
- Mentors, aged between 17 and 21, use games and drama to help other young people explore the dangers of knife crime.
- Aims to empower even more young people to better manage dangerous situations and make the right decision when faced with conflict.

Over 1,500 young people participated in the Fear and Fashion "Uncut" programme run by Working with Men

Parish councils

- Active consideration being given to the creation of a parish council in the north-west of the city.
- The parish council could build on the legacy of the local neighbourhood forum which provides employment and health advice, organises an annual community festival, and supports local service delivery by the council, police, NHS and RSLs.
- Offers the opportunity to make real the local commitment to devolution and civic activism.

Business Improvement Districts

- 5 Business Improvement Districts operating in Westminster.
- 2 more under development.
- Heart of London Business Alliance match-funded improvements to the Coventry Street streetscape.
- New West End Company has funded street ambassadors who provide directions to tourists, and report problems with street paving or faulty lights.

Westminster's BIDs have contributed more than £5.5m in additional investment in the city

Westminster Works (Workplace co-ordinators)

- Operates in key commercial districts across the city.
- Commercial landlords, developers and private partnerships host the workplace co-ordinators who generate hundreds of vacancies, part time jobs, work placements and training opportunities for residents on the Westminster Works programme.
- Supports local employers and out of work residents.

55 residents helped into employment in the West End and over 200 vacancies captured in Paddington

Clear evidence of success but a number of challenges:

1. **Sustaining provision following funding reductions:** £1.14bn cut nationally in local government grants to the voluntary sector.
2. **Supporting the most vulnerable**: ensuring that there is an adequate safety net in place for them.
3. **Developing robust financial models**: to give the private sector confidence to invest in public services, such as through Social Impact Bonds.
4. **Creating a clear link between business taxation and local investment**: Westminster lobbying for business rate reform.
5. **Overcoming scepticism**: e.g. Liverpool "withdrawal" from the Big Society