

West End Area Forum
Chairman: Cllr Tim Mitchell
(020) 7641 3916
areaforums@westminster.gov.uk
1 March 2011

Dear West End Area Forum Member

Thank you to all who were able to attend the recent West End Area Forum and help us to make decisions that affect your local area. Your views are important to us, so I'd like to take this opportunity to let you know what we are planning to do in response to your feedback.

If you would like more detail on the workshop discussions and ward budget spending visit www.westminster.gov.uk/neighbourhoods or contact our Area Forums Team.

At our last area forum on Thursday 17th February, two workshops were held in order to give you the opportunity to comment on the council's spending reductions and learn about the volunteering opportunities available in the West End.

Council Spending Reductions

Councillor Melvyn Caplan, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, discussed the budget the council has prepared in response to the Local Government Finance Settlement, which will significantly reduce the funding local authorities will receive over the next few years. Westminster's response to the spending reductions is to share services with other local authorities, reduce spending on back office services and get better value for money by doing more work with contractors and voluntary organisations. Some services will be made more commercial and eventually 'self-funding', while many street services will be scaled back.

Answering your questions, Cllr Caplan said that services would only be merged with other boroughs if it made economic sense and if it could be done without damaging the services residents receive. He also explained that the politics of each council would remain separate and Westminster would still be free to choose different levels of spending and service provision from the other boroughs, if that was what residents and councillors wanted.

Volunteering

Cllr Andrew Smith, Deputy Cabinet Member for Community Services, introduced a showcase of voluntary organisations working in the West End and reiterated the council's commitment to supporting the sector.

Johannes Hagos from Volunteer Centre Westminster discussed how you could get involved with voluntary projects in your local area. He said that people often want to volunteer but do not know where to start. Volunteer Centre Westminster matches potential volunteers to positions that suit them. To contact the centre call 020 7402 8076 or email johannes.hagos@volunteercentrewestminster.org.uk

Neil Drinkwater, Time Bank Project Manager, introduced Time Bank as a project aiming to get people connected and create links in the community. Volunteers are matched to an activity that suits their skills and the time they can give. In return, they earn time credits that can be spent by asking other people to do something for them. Time credits can also be spent on leisure

activities; member organisations include Marshall Street Baths and the Soho Theatre. To contact Time Bank call 020 299 0794 or email paola@westendtimebank.org.uk

Ian Harvey, a volunteer with the Samaritans, introduced the charity as a confidential, non-judgemental emotional support service. It focuses on listening rather than providing practical advice and works with a wide range of people. To contact Samaritans call 020 7439 1406, email volunteering@cls.org.uk or find out more by visiting www.cls.org.uk

Lance Kuhn, Volunteer Manager, told you about the Connections service at the St Martin in the Field's Trust. This is the biggest day and night centre for homeless people in Central London, providing a wide range of services, from basic survival to job skills and CV writing, under one roof. 88% of service users say it has made a positive difference to their lives. Please call 020 7925 7893, email lance.kuhn@cstm.org.uk or visit www.connection-at-stmartins.org.uk

Former Westminster councillor Rachel Whittaker discussed the range of volunteering opportunities available at Westminster Abbey, including museum guides, stewards, bell ringers and embroiderers. They are looking for 50 volunteers to commit to one four hour shift a week. Please contact Catherine Butler on 020 7654 4805, email volunteers@westminster-abbey.org or visit www.westminster-abbey.org to find out more.

Georgia Vossou, Conservator, told you about the range of volunteering opportunities that is available with Westminster Libraries and Archives. The council's archives service is looking for volunteers to help with conservation tasks, preserving the archives and helping to run events, while libraries give you the opportunity to help with homework and reading classes for young people or IT sessions for older people. Please call 020 7641 5162, email gvossou@westminster.gov.uk or visit www.westminster.gov.uk/archives

£50,000 for your Ward – Ward Budget Updates

West End and St James's

Councillors are currently deciding how to spend your ward budgets. Suggestions were put forward at the West End Forum and further suggestions can be made through the contact details at the bottom of this page.

If you would like to find out about how ward budgets were spent last year, please visit www.westminster.gov.uk/wardbudgets

To find out which electoral ward you are in, please visit www.westminster.gov.uk/wardfinder or contact the team.

Your next West End Area Forum

If you would like to raise a topic at the next West End Area Forum on Thursday 26th May 2011, from 6.30-8.30pm (agenda and venue to be confirmed) or for more information, please contact the Area Forums team using the contact details on the front page of this letter.



CLlr Tim Mitchell
Chairman of the West End Area Forum

Contact your ward councillors by calling 020 7641 3916 or email:
westend@westminster.gov.uk
stjames@westminster.gov.uk