

Housing, Finance and Customer Service Policy and Scrutiny Committee Briefing

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Briefing of: Head of Cabinet Secretariat

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration,
Business and Economic Development

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Please find below an update on key areas of activity from the Housing, Regeneration, Business and Economic Development portfolio since the committee last met.

Housing

1. Delivering Housing Renewal: Church Street

Lisson Arches

Enabling works are progressing with rebuilding steps and retaining walls. The programme of diversions is continuing and there is a small risk that the UKPN diversions may be late and delay the main contract works. These are now scheduled to commence in October 2016 but this allows for the more work to be done in the enabling package, meaning that the revised completion date of November 2018 is unaffected.

Luton Street

Detailed design discussions continued, with the working group and developers are seeking to submit a planning application by April 2016 with a view to start on site in September 2016.

Venables Street

Tenders returns were due mid-February and all works are programmed for completion first week May 2016. Conways are being instructed to carry out preparatory works prior to the main contract starting to ensure that the works finish on time.

Tresham Crescent

Practical completion was taken 16th Dec 2015 and the facility will open February/March 2016 following OFSTED inspection/approval. FSG held its December meeting on site.

Orchardson Street

Homes will be available for residents to view and comment on throughout the month of March. It is anticipated that the homes will be let in May 2016.

Penn and Lilestone

The Lilestone Street project is being redesigned to accommodate council offices in addition to the health and community wellbeing components. Discussions are taking place with the NHS as to their requirements for the building.

District Energy Scheme

Changes to the design of the retaining walls east of Lisson Arches mean that it is no longer possible to locate all the plant for the energy centre and generating plant under the road way. Alternative options are being evaluated on to inform an appropriate strategy.

2. Church Street: Regeneration:

At the Futures Steering Group 18th January the Council set out strategy for the continued transformation of Church Street, under the title "Church Street for All".

Plans are advancing with creation of the regeneration team base in Church Street. A planning application for change of use has been submitted and plans for the renovation works are substantially agreed.

Since the last meeting we have continued to move forward with regeneration:

- Employment coaches will be in post during March 2016
- Business engagement coordinator should be in post during April 2016
- Neighbourhood upkeep procurement – bids were evaluated on 15th February
- Green Spine designer, tenders are now received and are under evaluation
- Appointing a master planner for the programme started in February 2016.
- A "Change Process" for revisiting projects where the circumstances have altered since the vote has been agreed and will be implemented.

Housing Zone:

Following detailed discussions with the GLA and including their agreement to a significantly reduced degree of scrutiny and control the Overarching Borough Agreement has been accepted. The specific agreements for Lisson Arches and other projects can now be reviewed and agreed.

3. Affordable Housing

Since 1 April 2015, 176 new build affordable homes have been completed in Westminster and made available for occupancy. These new homes delivered include 75 social housing units and 101 intermediate homes. A further 26 spot purchases have been secured for affordable housing use.

There are a number of new planning consents or planning applications pending where on site affordable housing will be provided /is anticipated to be provided. Those schemes that have recently secured planning consents that will deliver on site affordable housing include:

- 32 Buckingham Palace Road SW1 (Grosvenor Estates) -23 affordable homes,
- 32 34 Great Peter Street SW1 (Qatari Diar) -6 affordable homes,
- 206 -216 Marylebone Road NW1 (Marylebone Properties Ltd) -16 affordable homes

4. Housing & Planning Bill update

The Housing and Planning Bill is currently undergoing scrutiny at committee stage in the House of Lords, where a number of amendments have been put down and are to be debated. We have provided briefings for selected peers. Although much of the detail about how the various policies will operate will be set out in regulations, which have yet to be published, we are continuing to work to influence and shape the Bill as it passes through Parliament and monitoring the debate so we can better understand the likely impacts on Westminster. Once more details are available, further work will be done to identify impacts and prepare for implementation.

5. CityWest Homes

Recruitment for the new Resident Engagement structure started in February with a number of guaranteed places for Resident Associations. The chairman recruitment has also started with an appointment expected by the end of April. Martin Edgerton has been appointed as the new Service Director and joins at the end of March.

Performance remains strong to year end and a new complaints process to simplify resolution has been agreed with the Customer Services Committee. The annual survey will start earlier this year to ensure a clear view by the end of the year, to ensure clear objectives and target set in April for 2016/17. The service standards (defining what the core service offer should be for all services) are at draft stage and workshops to design with residents have been arranged for February and March.

CWH's major focus is the continued support of the Council's regeneration and development programme, with 13 active projects worth £378m – CWH have recently developed a simplified suite of 'whole programme' progress, cost and risk reporting which has been well received by our development team. The capital programme, investing in existing HRA property, is forecast to deliver £35m of investment in the current year, this is expected to peak in 2016/17 at close to £50m. 22 projects are on site and resident satisfaction is currently at 73%.

6. Rough Sleepers' accommodation services

We have now awarded the contract for Edward Alsop Court to Look Ahead Housing & Care. The new service will deliver an innovative offer to Westminster's homeless men over 50 years old who experience complex needs bringing together elements of care from colleagues in Adult Social Care alongside targeted interventions to increase health participation and harm reduction from substances. It also is a significant step towards the integration of rough sleeper's accommodation services and new Housing Options pathways for vulnerable adults.

Officers have finalised a clear framework for measuring outputs and outcomes from the commissioned accommodation services; highlights in Quarter three 2015/16 include:

- 97 people were housed with an increase in people being accommodated straight from prison gates and hospital discharges, thereby reducing costly interventions on the streets.
- Accommodation services have done a lot of work reducing ambulance call outs which has resulted in a 30% reduction in call outs to hostels.
- 97% of residents are registered and engaged with a GP within 4 weeks of moving in
- 32 people moved into their own tenancies across London.
- 60% of residents are actively engaging with substance misuse treatment services; with 53% of those who access residential rehab completing their treatment successfully and being resettled into their own homes.

Economic Development and Growth

7. Markets

The council has commenced the tender process for a market operator for Berwick Street Market. The traders with permanent licences will remain in-situ. The remainder of the pitches will be contracted to a market operator to curate and manage. The aim is to improve the look and feel of the market and provide a more flexible offer better suited to the needs of local resident, workers and visitors.

8. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

Notice of ballot given for Marble Arch BID occurred on 14th January. If the ballot is successful, a BID for the Marble Arch area will be established from 1st April 2016. The area covered will include the northern stretch of Park Lane, Marble Arch, Connaught Village, Seymour Place, and Edgware Road , including, the Marylebone Flyover. Ballot Papers were counted and published on Friday 26 February after 2.00pm.

The Economy Team has had some early discussions with BIDs to help identify potential areas for collaboration and to further improve the effectiveness with which we work together.

The Cabinet and BIDs Q&A session that I chaired on 2nd February received positive feedback from BIDs and they continue to welcome this mechanism of engagement with Cabinet Members and senior officers. The BIDs Roundtable occurred on the 1st March 2015.

The text for the BIDs page of the Council's website has been reviewed and updated to reflect recent developments and ensure details remain accurate and consistent information is provide for each BID. Findings of London Enterprise Panel's research into the potential of London's Business Improvement Districts will be launched on 10th March.

9. Employment & Skills

The total number of residents supported into paid employment opportunities with the support of council commissioned projects or services up to the end of Quarter three 2015/16 is 524. Year-end projections indicate that the programme will end the year on track with approximately 750 - 800 people going into paid employment.

Skills Update – Area Review of Skills

The Mayor and London boroughs are preparing to play a leading role in a series of area reviews of post-16 education and training across London that will begin in March 2016. Part of a national programme of reviews designed to deliver a rationalised and more responsive Further Education sector. London's areas reviews are an opportunity to secure a more resilient and sustainable base of providers to deliver the skills outcomes that London needs.

The reviews will begin in March starting with the West London sub-region followed by Central London (17th March which includes Westminster) and the south and east sub-regions starting in May.

The Government's priority through the review is Further Education and College provision and within the context of reduced public funding, quality, oversupply and where colleges are in intervention. Other post-16 provision is within scope, including Adult Community Learning providers and the Council has taken the decision not to opt WAES into the Area Review process given concerns that the Council's properties which WAES occupies would be within scope. The Council and WAES will influence the Area Review through other means including through Central London Forward.

A separate internal Strategic Review of WAES is underway and will be considered in the next month.