

Housing, Finance and Corporate Service Policy and Scrutiny Committee Briefing

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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

Tresham Crescent: Both nursery operators are now in occupation. The temporary use of the upper floors by the church relocated from Dudley House has commenced, with little adverse comment. A launch event will be organised with Communications officers to mark the completion of this project.

Lisson Arches: The main contract works are now scheduled to commence in October 2016 allowing for the enabling package to be completed which has increased in scope.

Luton Street: Detailed design discussions have continued with the working group. These are substantially complete and London Newcastle/Bouygues are seeking to submit a planning application within 6 weeks with a view to start on site in September 2016.

Venables Street: Conways have been instructed to carry out the enabling works and manage the construction of the market traders' storage units. The storage units are being manufactured, delivered and installed by a separate company. This work will be complete by September 2016.

Orchardson Street: Handover of the completed properties was achieved in March and the homes will be available for residents to view and comment on throughout the month of April. It is anticipated that the homes will be let in May 2016. A launch event will be organised with Communications officers to mark the completion of this project, reflecting the role of residents in the design process.

Penn and Lilestone: A workshop involving Council departments and primary health care providers was held on 11th March. This agreed the concept for the Lilestone Street project. Further work is being undertaken to develop a feasibility report that will set the size of the building, an essential first step in understanding the services that can be relocated to the site.

District Energy Scheme: A revised business case is being prepared that updates the location of the plant, looks at dependencies with other aspects of the Church Street for All programme and demonstrates commercial viability along with quantifiable benefits to the Council and to our residents.

2. Church Street: Regeneration:

The continued transformation of Church Street has now been branded “Church Street for All”. Planning application process is in motion for 99 Church Street, with building work to commence in early April and last approximately 11 weeks. We envisage office space for 8 officers, starting with the Community Engagement team with opportunities and invitations to partners to work on site with us.

We have continued to move forward with regeneration:

- Employment coaches are now in post
- Business engagement coordinator planned to be in post by May 2016
- Neighbourhood upkeep procurement – bids have been evaluated and contracts to be awarded end of April
- The procurement of a master planner for the programme started in February 2016
- It has been recognised that circumstances have changed in many respects since the vote in 2013 and projects planned then may need to evolve. A process that documents the changes and seeks agreement to revised proposals has been set out with FSG.
- Recruitment of a new chair for Future Steering Group is on-going
- Pocket Living are developing a proposal to act as development manager for Ashbridge Street
- A revised business case is in hand for Cosway Street, looking at options for the site and seeking to optimise the return on the site. This should be completed by the end of May 2016.

3. 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. There is a dialogue with them about whether the funding is treated wholly or partly as grant rather than a loan. The specific agreements for Lisson Arches and other projects can now be reviewed and agreed.

4. Ebury Bridge:

Members of the project team met ward councillors and residents on 27th February to discuss the outcomes of the soft market testing and implications for the programme. The phasing programme for the estate is being revisited in the light of feedback we have received. The two preferred options aim to complete the works in 2022, this will be discussed with ward councillors and residents at a second public meeting on 11th May. A commitment has been made to regular meetings and newsletters to ensure residents are kept informed and feel involved.

5. 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.

The most significant of these schemes is at the former Middlesex Hospital site which has delivered 40 social housing units and 14 shared ownership homes, and Trenchard House which delivered 65 sub-market rent homes right in the heart of Soho. In addition to these new build homes a further 33 spot purchases have been secured for affordable housing use.

Schemes that have recently secured planning consents that will deliver on site affordable housing include:

- Dudley House W2 -197 affordable units,
- 221-235 Lanark Road -44 affordable homes
- 32 Buckingham Palace Road SW1 (Grosvenor Estates) -23 affordable units,
- 32 34 Great Peter Street SW1 (Qatari Diar) -6 affordable units,
- 206 -216 Marylebone Road NW1 (Marylebone Properties Ltd) -16 affordable homes,
- 10 Broadway sic New Scotland Yard (Northacre) -10 affordable homes,
- 21-23 Farm Street W1 -14 affordable units,
- First Chicago House, 90 Long Acre, London WC2 -10 affordable housing units.

Those planning applications pending that will deliver affordable new homes include:

- West End Green NW8 (Berkeley Homes) 126 affordable homes,
- Dora House, St. John Wood Road NW8 (Central and Cecil) – 156 modern sheltered affordable homes (heard by planning committee on 8th March and deferred).

6. Housing & Planning Bill update

The Housing and Planning Bill went to its Report Stage in the House of Lords on the 11th April. 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.

7. CityWest Homes

Recruitment for the new Resident Engagement structure closed on 1st April. Recruitment of the chairman remains on target to complete by the end of April with interest from strong candidates. Martin Edgerton has now taken up the post of Director of Customer Services and will bring a strong customer and commercial focus to operational service provision.

Annual satisfaction measurement is about to commence with the housing management survey due to be despatched to all residents week commencing 11th April. A short survey is also due to be sent to members of the Council to gauge their views on CWH. This will be accompanied by a copy of CWH strategy to 2020.

CWH continues to support the Council's regeneration and development programme, with the Development & Construction Team working on 13 development projects comprising over 1,300 new homes, a secondary school, a library, a nursery and enterprise business space.

Key achievements over the last quarter include planning permission for the redevelopment of Dudley House comprising 197 new homes and an 840 pupil secondary school; the handover of 111 Oliphant Street being the conversion of a vacant community space in to a 3 bedroom home for social rent; and entering in to an Agreement for Lease with Almacantar for 47 affordable homes at 466-490 Edgware Road.

8. Rough Sleepers' accommodation services

Highlights in Quarter three 2015/16 includes:

- 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

9. Markets

The council is engaging with the local community with regards to the procurement of a market operator for Berwick Street. This engagement includes drop-in sessions for market traders and letters to local residents and businesses encouraging them to provide information about their aspirations for the market. The contract notice is to be issued and circulated to potential bidders by the end of April.

10. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

A successful Marble Arch BID ballot outcome was announced on 26th February. The results were 77.9% in favour (60 of the 77 businesses voting), 60.16% turnout (77 voters of the 128 balloted). Those voting in favour represented 88.1% by rateable value. A BID for the Marble Arch area will be established from 1st April 2016 covering the northern stretch of Park Lane, Marble Arch, Connaught Village, Seymour Place, and Edgware Road , including, the Marylebone Flyover.

Last month Westminster BIDs met with Cabinet Members and officers for one of our quarterly BIDs roundtable meetings where Business Rates and the introduction of the Westminster Business Unit were discussed.

11. Employment & Skills

As announced in the Leaders speech for City For All year 2, the Employment and Skills team will be launching a new employment service that will support long term unemployed residents and those at risk of long-term unemployment.

In collaboration with a cross-section of officers from Housing, Public Health, Adults, Children, PPC and external partners including City West Homes and WAES, the service will enable residents to receive a tailored employment support offer covering pre-employment support, skills development and work related opportunity placements e.g. jobs and work experience opportunities. As a part of this work a successful bid to Job Centre Plus' Community Flexible Support Fund has secured £150,000 that will support the delivery of the new service. Following approval of the business plan in July 2016, a pilot of the new service will be delivered in September 2016.

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.