

Committee date: Monday 6th November 2017

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1. Fire & Gas Safety

Fire risk assessments

- 1.1 CityWest Homes (CWH) is required to perform fire risk assessments (FRAs) on all buildings that have communal areas. An independent fire consultancy has been commissioned to carry out level 4 risk assessments on all tower blocks over 10 floors with enclosed communal parts, which are already underway. This is the highest level of assessment and includes a detailed in-flat inspection of 10% of all properties per block. As a result they are taking three to five days per block to inspect and will continue through until the end of the year.
- 1.2 In addition, London Fire Brigade (LFB) has carried out joint inspections with the in-house team on 10 storey blocks with open deck access. LFB, as part of the central task force, has also carried out detailed inspections of the six Little Venice tower blocks and Parsons House, which has wrap around cladding but not ACM. Whilst there are a number of follow-on actions from these assessments, LFB have given their assurance that the buildings are safe. As these reports are received from LFB, an update will be provided to residents from each tower to provide reassurance.

- 1.3 A full inspection of all fire doors will also be taking place independently, starting with all blocks over 6 storeys. This is likely to take 6-9 months to complete.

Sprinklers

- 1.4 Following the council's commitment to retrofit sprinklers in blocks of flats over 30 metres in height, CWH has appointed an external consultancy to undertake a feasibility study in each block. The findings of these reports should be available by December 2017, after which CWH will consult with residents and leaseholders on the proposals specific to their block.
- 1.5 A feasibility study has already taken place in Little Venice tower blocks and a summary report with recommendations is being produced.

Fire safety regulations

- 1.6 CWH continue to monitor and review sector best practice working closely with the DCLG and London Fire Brigade, whilst lobbying government to increase the regulation and responsibilities of leaseholders.

Large Panel System construction

- 1.7 Following reports that Southwark Council disconnected the gas supply to some of their Large Panel System buildings in August, CWH commissioned checks on Little Venice tower blocks and Lisson Green buildings which are of a similar structural design. The structural engineers who carried out the checks have confirmed the original report that the buildings are safe, structurally sound and able to withstand abnormal pressure from a gas blast and that no further action is required. Whilst all the buildings are constructed in the same way, CWH are carrying out checks on the remaining buildings on these estates, which will be complete this month.
- 1.8 Inspections were carried out on three buildings at Lisson Green (Kimble House, Penn House and Chequers House) and Little Venice (Gaydon House, Wilmcote House and Princethorpe House). Further checks are being carried on the remaining buildings.
- 1.9 All the blocks and flats managed by CityWest Homes have current gas compliance certificates in place.

Little Venice towers

- 1.10 Post failing DCLG tests, the decision was made to remove the cladding at Little Venice as quickly as possible. This work started mid-September and is expected to be complete by the end of November.
- 1.11 A category one ACM cladding, which passed the DCLG tests, is being proposed as a replacement. Clarity is being sought with the DCLG of any proposed changes to building regulations to confirm this type of panel's future suitability. The overall programme to replace cladding is likely to take until Spring 2018.
- 1.12 We continue to keep residents and leaseholders updated via regular fire safety and cladding work letters, alongside an on-site presence at Little Venice estate office and in-block surgeries taking place every week.
- 1.13 On Monday 16 October, following new guidance from London Fire Brigade, the fire evacuation procedure for Little Venice towers temporarily changed from 'stay put' for floors 10 and above to full evacuation. This is a temporary measure until the cladding is completely removed. Twelve fire wardens, two per block, are now onsite 24 hours a day to manage this temporary change. Fire wardens are trained to assist with detecting a fire. In the event of a fire, the fire wardens will summon the emergency services and ensure residents on floors 10 and above are alerted to begin a full evacuation. Letters have been delivered to all residents, two information sessions have been held, evacuation signage changed and vulnerable residents identified and contacted. Very few residents have expressed concern about this change to date. The majority of the feedback has been positive as residents feel comforted by the presence of fire wardens.

Communications

- 1.14 General fire safety updates and copies of the latest communications sent to residents are available on the CWH website.

2. Regeneration

Church Street

- 2.1 Consultation on the masterplan concluded on 29 October. A wide range of residents, local community groups, businesses and other stakeholders have responded and this information is being collated into a consultation report to accompany a Cabinet report for December. It will also be utilised to ensure additional information is added into the masterplan document.
- 2.2 The Regeneration Base at 99 Church Street has been the main exhibition venue and has had a steady flow of visitors asking questions and making comments about the proposals. In addition, the exhibition has 'popped up' at venues including Church Street library, Church Street market, City of Westminster College, Greenside Community Centre and Westminster Adult Education. Members of the masterplan team have attended school coffee mornings and parent events, workshops, Health Centre patient committees and resident meetings.
- 2.3 The masterplan document will lay out the Council's on-going commitment to engaging with the community as sites within the masterplan, if approved, come forward for development.
- 2.4 Scheme specific consultation on Ashbridge and Cosway was carried out in October and further meetings with community led working groups have also been held. The feedback from these is being considered and the proposal is for planning to be submitted at the end of November.

Ebury Bridge

- 2.5 Phase two of the community engagement programme will come to a close at the end of the month. This listening period included 169 individual conversations with families on the estate, a figure of 77% of all current households. These discussions will be used to inform the way engagement and communication activities are coordinated with residents in the weeks to come. Two interactive consultation events have also been held with specific user groups including those tenants who have temporarily moved off the estate and overcrowded families. There have also been meetings with leaseholders and retailers.

- 2.6 The Ebury Bridge project team has now been expanded to incorporate the design element of the programme. Arup have been appointed to work closely with residents on proposals for renewal of the estate.
- 2.7 A resident advisory group, the Community Futures Group (CFG), is being formed to provide a sounding board during the development of options for the estate. A good representation of residents across the estate expressed an interest in joining the group and initial informal conversations have been held. It is anticipated that the group will meet regularly throughout the pre- and post-planning stages. The group will be supported by WCC officers and will look to recruit an independent Chair.

Infill Programme

- 2.8 The first disposal sales have been concluded, achieving levels in excess of the valuations. Construction of the first new homes has commenced with additional properties entering into the design phase.
- 2.9 The Ward Councillor tours are underway, invitations having been issued to 10 of the 20 wards and identified opportunities are being submitted for feasibility assessment.
- 2.10 Following the outcome of the accelerated delivery review, the first scheme using Modern Methods of Construction is nearing completion of the design phase. Options to streamline delivery and further encourage take up from Small to Medium Enterprises and local businesses are being reviewed.

3. Affordable Housing

- 3.1 A total of 50 new build affordable homes have been delivered in Westminster since 31 March 2017, including the 12 new affordable homes recently delivered at the Jubilee regeneration scheme in September. In addition, 17 homes have been purchased on the open market for use as affordable housing and works are currently being carried out on these properties to bring them up to letting standard.
- 3.2 Demolition works have recently completed on a site at Lanark Road, Maida Vale in advance of the commencement of building works to create 67 new homes, including 44 affordable housing units together with a sizeable community space (2,400 m²). This new scheme, on the site of the former North Paddington Boys Club and Maida

Community Centre, is expected to complete within 18 months and is being delivered by Dolphin Living, one of the Council's housing partners. The City Council will have 100% nominations to the affordable homes there.

- 3.3 Topping out on a new development at Westbourne Grove (Westbourne Baptist Church Scheme) being delivered by Dolphin Living has recently been achieved. The scheme, once complete, will provide 32 intermediate affordable homes, a new church and new library. The Council will have 100% nominations to the completed affordable homes there.

4 New Housing Options Service (HOS)

- 4.1 A Cabinet Member report on 4th October set out detail of the mobilisation of the new Housing Options service led by Places for People, who will work in partnership with Shelter and The Passage. The new way of working will enable the necessary channel shift of clients to the new arrangements for accessing more refined pathways depending on their individual needs. A 'soft' launch of the new contract on 1st October started the transformation work.
- 4.2 The formal launch of the service on 1st April 2018 is proposed to coincide with the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act; demonstrating Westminster's commitment to the new Act.

5. Housing Policy

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

- 5.1 In August 2017, the Mayor formally published his supplementary planning guidance relating to affordable housing and viability, setting out the approach that he will take to deliver affordable housing through the planning system. The SPG includes a new approach to viability based on a 35% "threshold". Developments providing this level of affordable housing or more will have less rigorous requirements in demonstrating viability. Those providing less will be required to produce viability assessments and will be subject to scrutiny by the Mayor.
- 5.2 The SPG makes clear the Mayor's ambition to move towards delivery of 50% affordable housing on all schemes in the long-term. This is likely to be reflected in the new

London Plan, which is being consulted on in the autumn. The SPG also gives guidance on intermediate housing and “build to rent”.

5.4 Officers are going through the detail of the SPG and will look at possible changes to City Plan policies as part of the current revision.

Homelessness Reduction Act

5.6 This Bill was given Royal Assent in April 2017 and will be implemented from April 2018. DCLG has announced the new burdens funding each local authority will receive to implement the Act and Westminster will receive £980k over three years.

Higher Value Voids Levy

5.7 The Government has announced that they will still go ahead with the policy, but that the first payment will be postponed until at least 2018. A consultation on the formula to determine the payment is expected. In May, the Government announced a regional pilot for the housing association right to buy extension until 2021 (the higher value voids levy is intended to fund the housing association right to buy extension).

Draft Homelessness Code of Guidance for Local Authorities

5.8 DCLG is consulting on this new guide until 11 December. It is being updated in view of councils having new responsibilities under the Homelessness Act 2017. The document provides guidance on how local authorities should exercise their homelessness functions and councils are required to have due regard to it. Officers are working on a response.

London Housing Strategy draft for public consultation

5.9 The Mayor is consulting on a new strategy until 7 December. There are five priorities:

- Building homes for Londoners;
- Delivering genuinely affordable homes;
- High quality homes and inclusive neighbourhoods;
- A fairer deal for private renters and leaseholders; and
- Tackling homelessness and helping rough sleepers.

5.10 Key proposals include supporting more intensive use of London's available land, protecting the Green Belt and prioritising higher density schemes and development on brownfield sites. Officers are working on a response.

5.11 The new draft London Plan for consultation will be published at the end of November and will be accompanied by a new Strategic Housing Market Assessment for London. The latter will set out the number of homes needed in London and the proportion which should be affordable. Westminster has received its delivery target which will be set out in the London Plan.

DCLG Consultation: Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Location

5.12 The consultation runs until 9 November and officers are working on a response. It seeks comments on changes to national policy including:

- A proposed standard methodology for calculating local housing need to inform local plan preparation;
- Proposals for improving the use of section 106 agreements by making the use of viability assessments simpler, quicker and more transparent – and to encourage greater transparency about how section 106 resources are used.

Social Housing Green Paper announcement

5.13 The Secretary of State for CLG has announced that there is to be a green paper on social housing in England. He says that this will be a “wide-ranging, top-to-bottom review of the issues facing the sector” intended to “kick off a nationwide conversation on social housing.”

6. Community Supported Housing (CSH) Review

6.1 A review of our community supportive housing stock is underway and is nearly complete. The review will respond to a number of factors, including the following issues:

- The future demand for CSH is uncertain;
- Some stock is of poor quality and needs investment;

- There are high numbers of studio's and properties which are not wheelchair accessible;
- Demand from older council tenants in General Needs housing is relatively low.

8. Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Rough Sleeping

- 8.1 The continued reductions in rough sleeping figures across Westminster are encouraging. The September street count gave the lowest overall figures since February 2015 and there is confidence this will continue. A combination of impressive partnership work, dedication from our outreach services and the opening of the Westminster Assessment Centre and Green Room 'Safe Space' have ensured that every person met can be offered a route off the street.
- 8.2 New literature, with clear routes and plain speaking text, is being finalised that can be used by rough sleepers to understand what services are available to them and what they should expect if they sleep rough in the City.
- 8.3 In the last few months we have re-tendered and remodelled our service provision on Vauxhall Bridge Road and in Covent Garden, welcoming Mayday Trust into London to offer their unique way of supporting rough sleepers to live independent and prosperous lives.
- 8.4 With funding from the CLG, a dedicated women only safe space opened on 1st September 2017 for female rough sleepers who have experienced domestic and sexual violence. The service, called 'The Green Room' and run by St Mungo's, has been well used over the first 6 weeks, helping a number of women as a stepping stone off the street. Feedback from clients and referring agencies has been excellent, with one comment *"your service is literally a lifesaver, we have no idea what we would've done without you"*.

Improving the quality of life for individuals

- 8.5 Officers have been working with Nacro and Genesis Housing to improve the quality and fabric of the internal shared communal facilities for homeless individuals who are

supported to reduce offending behaviour and re-integrate them back into the community.

8.6 Work has now been completed; these works represent the completion of what has been the very significant improvement of Westminster's supported housing provision over the last 10 years and the feedback from both staff and service users has been extremely positive.

Introducing the Independent toolkit

8.7 The Young Persons Supported Housing Pathway continues to be an effective means of support and housing provision for young people up to the age of 25. In collaboration with service providers and Children Services, officers have recently launched an Independent Toolkit across the housing pathway.

8.8 The Toolkit is being launched as a pilot for 6 months and young people will continue to be consulted directly, identifying what works for them in the process to help shape the final document.

8.9 For residents who live in our mental health supported housing pathway, the implementation of an Engagement Agreement for clients who are assessed and deemed appropriate to move into general needs housing began on 1st October. The 'move on' quota applies to a small cohort of clients who continue to be care managed by the Community Mental Health Teams but are ready to make positive steps in their lives.

9. CityWest Homes (CWH)

Performance

9.1 CWH performed well against its Management Agreement targets for quarter 2 and is on track to meet the end of year targets.

Service Transformation

9.2 A separate report is provided on CWH service transformation.

- 9.3 The new CWH website has had more than 24,200 hits in the last month. A Chat BOT function has been launched to assist residents locate relevant information quickly and easily. More than 200 “conversations” took place with the BOT within the first month of going live. Resident testing of secure online services is due to commence later this autumn, before being rolled out citywide in 2018.

Major Works contract re-let update

- 9.6 Leaseholder consultation on the proposed providers for the two new major works contracts for the north and south areas respectively has now completed and will be awarded November 2017 subject to final approval of the procurement. In total they have received 68 observations from leaseholders, all of which will be responded to.

The appointed contractors will carry out all major works to properties over the next 10 years, with the exception of a small number of schemes procured in the last year that are yet to complete. The new contracts are forecast to deliver an estimated £28m of savings, which will be passed on to both the HRA and leaseholders.

10. SHSOP

- 10.1 The City Council has appointed a contractor to complete the design of the Beachcroft scheme and carry out the demolition and construction work. Onsite works are due to commence this year.
- 10.2 The City Council will hold a ‘Meet the Contractor’ event where residents will be able to find out more about the works and ask any questions they may have.
- 10.3 Following agreement on the preferred scheme option for the Carlton Deane and Westmead sites, a procurement and delivery strategy will be developed and an outline business case recommending approval of the preferred development option.