

Housing, Finance and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee

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Classification:	General Release
Title:	Update on transition streams associated with the transfer of the Council's housing management previously delegated to City West Homes back to the Council.
Report of:	Barbara Brownlee, Executive Director of Growth, Planning and Housing.
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Councillor Andrew Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing Services
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	City For All
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1. Executive Summary

This report summaries progress on the key transition work streams being undertaken in advance of the transfer of the Council's housing management function from City West Homes back to the Council. This report focuses of the following works streams;

- Resident feedback from listening events
- CWH Staff consultation and transfer to Westminster
- Update on contracts and the associated risks
- Future Governance arrangements
- Finance

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

The Housing, Finance and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee are asked to:

- Note the updates on transition works streams covered in this report
- consider any requirements for updates on individual workstreams including any risks.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Cabinet decision taken by the Council on 15 October 2018 confirmed that the council's housing management function previously delegated to City West Homes would be returned to Westminster City Council from 1 April 2019.
- 3.2 To ensure an effective and seamless transfer of the housing management function back to the council, a Transition Board was established with membership from both the Council and City West's executive teams to oversee workstreams. A transition project team has also been set up to lead on key workstream areas.

4.0 Resident Listening Programme

- 4.1 In December last year, Westminster City Council launched a listening programme to start to rebuild trust with tenants and leaseholders, many of whom felt that they had been let down by the service over the last few years.
- 4.2 The format for the programme was to provide residents with a face to face opportunity to talk to a WCC representative about their experiences of the service then give feedback on how they would like the service to be shaped in the future once it had returned to WCC. This would enable them to get their frustrations 'off their chest' and begin to create a fresh start for the service in the future.
- 4.3 From 26 November 2018 to 21 February 2019, 861 survey forms were completed either online or face-to-face at the listening events. 235 surveys were completed face-to-face and 293 online. A further 333 were completed following visits to older and vulnerable residents' homes, giving them the opportunity to have their say.
- 4.4 The results are compiled from nine WCC face to face listening events and five Open Door events organised by CWH. Results from four further face to face events will need to be added.
- 4.5 The split between tenants and leaseholders is 60/40 reflecting the make-up of the estates.

4.6 The table below shows the split between age range, which does reflect that a majority of tenants are older.

1 Age Group	2 Tenant	3 Resident leaseholder	4 Non-resident leaseholder	5 Total
6 18-35	7 6%	8 4%	9 0%	10 9%
11 36-45	12 7%	13 5%	14 1%	15 13%
16 46-59	17 17%	18 14%	19 3%	20 33%
21 60+	22 24%	23 17%	24 3%	25 45%

4.7 The objectives of the Listening events were to consult with tenants and leaseholders on the following:

- To capture experiences of the housing service CWH to date.
- See resident's priorities that WCC should focus on when the service is brought back under WCC control from 1 April 2019.
- Collect views on how residents would like to be communicated with regarding the reshaping of the housing service going forward.
- Collect demographics of the residents and leaseholders completing the survey.

As expected the Listening Programme was an opportunity for residents with concerns to air their grievances, therefore the tone was largely negative with a small number of positive comments.

4.8 Key issues raised

a. Issues with the repairs service: in particular the systems for reporting, the quality of contractors involved with repairs and the communications between CWH, the contractors and residents.

b. The contact centre. Although concerns were largely retrospective, this was one of the biggest frustrations explained by most residents, especially when it comes to the process of logging repairs or complaints. Resident said they typically ended up waiting between 30 to 60 minutes to speak to someone. Residents argued that the system was too complicated, and they often end up being transferred from a department to another without their complaints being dealt with.

c. Security and anti-social behaviour on estates: Residents frequently mentioned a lack of response or urgency to ASB reports. Some residents feel unsafe on their estates and explained that a lack of CCTV cameras, general security and lack of maintenance to repair broken doors and locks on garages or main entrances to the buildings, means anyone can access their buildings and often rough sleepers use

the stairwells for shelter for example. Also, parking on estates is not always managed properly.

There seems to be a lack of communication when a resident calls the contact centre to report a ASB case, with residents explaining that they felt their complaint regarding ASB was not taken seriously by CWH. This perception was driven by factors such as, the expectation of receiving updates and resolution from CWH regarding ASB complaints were not made; and not proactively seeing or hearing action taken on their estate as a result.

d. Communications: Residents complained that there does not appear to be a clear customer journey leaving them feeling confused and 'not listened to' and unsure of who their issues are being dealt by. In general communications provided by CWH have been good, for example residents are happy with the newsletters and support provided on social media. Although there seems to be functionality issues regarding the website at times. There seems to be an even split between residents wanting letters or email of updates.

e. Staff: Residents would like more staff visible on estates and in the communities. The role of estate managers is missed and they expressed concerns that the local knowledge of that role has been lost.

f. Reputation of CWH and future expectation of WCC: Many residents have high expectations for the handover of the housing service back to WCC, with many expressive their thanks that the decision had been made to return the housing service back in-house.

4.9 The information gathered from residents during the Listening Programme is being used alongside information gathered during Listening events with staff to put together a service plan post April 1st.

4.10 The Cabinet Member's separate report to this committee details the improvement plans being implemented to the contact centre, repairs service, and estate services that have resulted in significant improvements to the performance of these services, leading to increased satisfaction levels among residents. The report also sets out the local offer initiative being piloted aimed at improving services and giving a voice to residents in their neighbourhood.

5 City West staff transfer and consultation process

5.1 Consultation with City West Homes staff began on the 21 January 2019. The consultation period was extended to a 45 day period following a request by the unions and staff. The consultation period will now complete on 6 April 2019.

5.2 Group consultation sessions with staff have been were held, followed by briefings with the Westminster Directors and one to ones. HR and pension drop in sessions were arranged for staff to ask specific queries about their personal circumstances. One to one meetings with staff and their

representatives have also taken place. A final report will be issued once consultation has closed.

5.3 City West Homes will also transfer from their existing payroll provider to the Integrated Business Centre (IBC) solution delivered by Hampshire County Council. City West Homes HR and Westminster City Council HR are working with the IBC to ensure that all information is provided for a correct payroll run in April following transfer. A project group and supporting programme plan is in place to support this. IBC are currently testing the system and as part of the migration plan will also be running a test payroll to ensure outputs are correct. Transferring staff will have access to the IBC portal from 1 April.

5.4 Facilitated Listening events have been held with staff with 296 staff having taken part to date. These events will;

- Provide staff within City West operational teams with the opportunity to share their views.
- Identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) related to service areas
- Understand how services currently work and how they could be shaped in the future.

5.4 As part of the engagement strategy for transferring staff, West Homes staff have access to their existing Employee Assistance programme. Throughout March and into April, a number of activities will take place to engage and support transferring staff;

- Senior leader walk-about – Executive Leadership team members will visit staff in all area offices
- Engagement sessions - listening sessions with staff will provide a further opportunity for senior leadership to show that they are committed to engaging with all staff
- Welcome event - This event will provide an opportunity for staff to meet with reps from the different directorates within Westminster. This will take place on the 1st of April to welcome staff to Westminster.
- Staff will also be invited to attend the Westminster Way programme once they join.

6 City West contracts update

6.1 The transfer team (involving service owners, legal and procurement) has reviewed contracts for all goods and services procured by City West Homes. As a result, some 800 contracts have been assessed and classified by criticality and business needs beyond the transfer date of 1 April 2019. The review also identified those externally contracted employees whose roles are critical to ongoing service delivery beyond the transfer date.

- 6.2 As a result, some 89 contracts have been identified as critical and required beyond 1 April 2019 – and according to their RAG status are now being transitioned to WCC. This process involves a single point of coordination for WCC and dedicated legal support.
- 6.3 At the end of February – some 55 contracts for goods and services remain, of which 28 are in the process of being novated to Westminster and some requirements are being met by existing WCC contractual arrangements. Of the 27 remaining, 17 carry RED status indicating the critical nature of service provision. The rest are AMBER, which are goods and services of a less critical nature.
- 6.4 Intensive work continues complete the transition by 31 March with focus on those contracts carrying RED status.

7 Governance

- 7.1 Officers are investigating options to ensure effective governance of housing services post 1 April 2019. This includes a review of the decision-making framework, consideration of the opportunities to strengthen member-level accountability through Policy and Scrutiny and links to community-level accountability mechanisms through resident engagement. The preferred options will be discussed with Members shortly to enable implementation from 1 April and a more extensive verbal update will be available at the meeting of the Committee.

8 Finance

- 8.1 To ensure a smooth transfer of financial accounts and liabilities from City West to Westminster at 1 April 2019, finance colleagues from Westminster and City West are continuing to work closely to ensure all accounts are clearly reconciled with Westminster auditors. An IBC steering group has been set up to ensure financial transactions previously carried out through City West pass seamlessly on to the Council.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact Fergus Coleman on x2129
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