



City of Westminster

Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee

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Report Of: Councillor David Harvey

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Housing

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1 Housing Priorities – City for All

Cleaner and Greener

Leverage energy efficiency measures in housing

- 1.1 Modelling has been undertaken to understand what is required to get the stock close to net zero carbon and the options for achieving that and analysis of the energy performance of the housing stock has been undertaken as a baseline. All but around 300 housing units are rated above the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) E rating.
- 1.2 The estimated cost of bringing the stock to an EPC B rating is £180M and between £230-£350M to reach net zero carbon. With limited external funding currently available, movement in the existing capital programme is required to accommodate this work. £145k of grant funding has been secured for E rated properties to benefit from internal wall insulation and heating upgrades and £300k to complete cavity wall insulation to over 350 properties.
- 1.3 Planned activities can be divided into reducing energy consumption and off-setting consumption. Work to reduce consumption/decarbonise the stock includes enhanced insulation and replacing traditional boilers with air source heat pumps. Options to off-set consumption include photovoltaic panels. The various technologies will be trialled so that the impact can be better modelled.

Vibrant Communities

Develop a new approach for major works for our buildings

- 1.4 The major works delivery process is under review which will result in a reduction in the process and improvements in the accuracy of indicative leaseholder bills. This year a programme management approach has been put in place to oversee delivery of the capital investment programme.

- 1.5** A new format is being developed for monthly project updates from the very start of the project which will be included on the project webpages for residents. This is in addition to the standard communication for each project and will standardise performance management across projects as they move through the milestones.
- 1.6** Operationally, COVID-19 has pushed major works communications to a digital approach and 42 online sessions have been held with residents since April, reaching new audiences. In addition, over 450 calls have been made to residents as part of the reassurance before restarting work onsite in July 2020.

Supporting Vulnerable residents

- 1.7** Reviews of the floating support contract and support arrangements for care leavers are underway to ensure that service users get the help they need to sustain their tenancies. The floating support service has been delivered by Single Homelessness Project (SHP) since July 2018, supporting people across Westminster that occupy their own homes and require support to sustain their tenancy and thrive. The service operates a holistic offer by not looking at single issues but at the person as a whole and the wider support they may require. The service helps them navigate any identified support issues, looking to improve their health and wellbeing whilst building their resilience generally to live independently.
- 1.8** The housing service is working with partners to establish a multi-agency framework to deal with mental health issues. This will lead to the establishment of a multi-agency panel to provide better support.
- 1.9** A new approach to involving residents in resolving anti-social behaviour (ASB) through a case review panel is being developed and will be piloted later this year. This pilot will run in two geographically distant wards and engaged residents from one ward will help peer review anonymised ASB cases relating to the other ward. It will give engaged residents the opportunity to sense check the council's approach to ASB management, establish an operating model for the group, and understand how well council methods and approaches align with resident expectations.
- 1.10** Work towards DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation is progressing. This is an in-depth piece of work expected to take a year to complete. Housing Solutions Service (HSS) is also working towards accreditation as a contractual requirement and repairs contractor Morgan Sindall is working with DAHA to develop a brand-new contractor's accreditation for responding to domestic abuse.

Redesign of service model through shared space and maximise the use of public building

- 1.11** As part of the vibrant communities initiative to review how services are delivered, the housing service is designing a project to improve wellbeing and community engagement and to ensure community assets are used to their full potential. Pilots that are currently being explored include working with our contractors Morgan Sindall and Continental landscape to improve the outdoor spaces in partnership with residents. Consultation will determine residents priorities and options to be pursued. Examples include rejuvenating the existing wildlife garden, building a wildlife friendly vegetable garden and engaging residents with the use of allotment planters. The project will deliver a series of pilot interventions to residents of Churchill Gardens in partnership with other services to create a more engaged, resilient community. Pilots will seek to strengthen partnerships, co-ordinate council and community services with better use of local assets.

1.12 Successful initiatives will be scale-able and will be rolled out citywide as appropriate.

Private rented sector strategy

1.13 The new Private Rented Sector Strategy (led by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration) that was discussed by the committee and consulted on last year, is due to be published shortly. Nearly 100 responses were received including from tenants, landlords and advice organisations representing the sector. The Strategy includes a range of actions to support the sector including introducing a discretionary licensing scheme for all houses in multiple occupation across the city, subject to having considered the results of a separate consultation which closes in February.

Smart Cities

Trial smart homes technologies

1.14 The housing service is exploring the use of technology in homes and on estates with the intention to test a range of technology through small pilots to determine the benefits that may be delivered by roll-out across the city. The initial areas for exploration have been selected as offering significant improvement to the reliability of the repairs service, cost savings and to look to the future at what might be possible as follows:

- Sensors to detect leaks, trigger communal lighting etc.
- Drones - to view hard to reach areas that previously would have required scaffolding
- Digital noticeboards – to explore how we can improve the accuracy and timeliness of information to residents

1.15 Due diligence is being undertaken regarding the use of drones, including user identification, privacy, data protection and information storage and establishing arrangements for monitoring drone flights and calculation of comparable scaffold costs and savings.

Facilitate broadband connections

1.16 The project is in delivery phase and 65% of homes now have access to full fibre. Operators are on site or mobilising for work which when complete will bring this percentage to 72% and plans are in place to secure fibre broadband services for 80% of homes by March 2021.

1.17 Community Fibre and Hyperoptic are currently completing work in the borough with G- Network mobilising to commence their programme of works. Virgin Media have also signed the citywide wayleave however their plans have been paused due to COVID-19. We are also in discussions with Openreach with regards to the citywide wayleave.

1.18 The infrastructure work necessary is being completed by operators at no cost to the Council. The Council's staff costs associated with review and oversight of operator's infrastructure work is also covered by operators.

2 Housing Contact Centre

2.1 During Q3 a total of 71,432 calls were received into Housing Services, an increase in calls of 20% on the previous quarter. October saw c.30,000 calls into the contact centre - the highest volume received to date. This was as a result of the reintroduction of routine repairs, combined with the annual heating switch on and the posting of leasehold services charge

actual account. 19,643 calls were received in December into Housing of which 86% were handled.

2.2 Across Q3, five members of staff were redeployed from the contact centre to support Westminster Connects and an increase in sickness absence was recorded. With the substantial increase in call volumes all service level KPI's were impacted and despite performance above target being maintained over Q1 and 2, performance for year to date is now below target.

2.3 For the year to date:

- 172,910 calls have been received
- 12% of calls were abandoned (target 8%)
- 65% of calls have been answered within 30 seconds (target 70%).

2.4 Despite the challenges, customer satisfaction with the service remains high and year to date satisfaction remains above target at 89%.

3 Major Works and Repairs

3.1 The full repairs service was reinstated on 26 October 2020 and is performing well.

- **4,450** repairs have been raised and or completed since 1 October 2020
- **1,495** heating and hot water repairs since 1 October 2020
- **1,410** repairs currently in progress as of 6 November 2020

3.2 Gas compliance is currently 99.57% with 27 properties outstanding from a total of 6,566. Annual gas servicing was given no dispensation during lockdown despite access to many properties being understandably refused.

3.3 Statutory testing and inspection of services including gas appliances, water tanks, asbestos and fire risk assessments has continued, with staff taking additional health and safety precautions as appropriate. Compliance across the five areas of gas, electricity, water, asbestos and fire is excellent.

4 Housing Digital Projects

Integrated communications platform – 8x8

4.1 A new IT communications platform was launched in October 2020 called 8x8. This new technology has the functionality to manage all types of communications between staff and residents. Phase one of the roll-out provided new telephony and email services and Phase 2 and 3 will include text messaging and chat, contact centre workforce management tools, and a new PCI compliant payment solution. This technology has been rolled out to the housing contact centre, housing staff and the housing solutions service contact centre.

4.2 Preparation, testing and staff training have been delivered and go live dates are on target to complete at the end of January. The project team will continue to offer support to the service for two weeks after launch and address any identified issues. The project is due to complete by mid-February.

CRM

- 4.3 A knowledge base is being developed to provide the contact centre with the information they need to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact. Over 250 knowledge articles have been created including estate-based information.
- 4.4 Steady progress has been made in designing a general enquiry process and mapping housing data requirements. Customisation of Microsoft Dynamics CRM has also started.
- 4.5 The project team is working on a Housing CRM proof of concept to provide the service with an insight that allows them to experience using Microsoft Dynamics CRM after it is integrated with the main housing service database. Proof of concept is scheduled for delivery at the end of January and will inform our choices as we continue to develop a high-level design for the overarching CRM architecture.

Online services

- 4.6 A new on-line housing application form for the housing register has been developed and is being tested.
- 4.7 After going live with a self-help video on the website for residents, three further videos are in pipe-line. Animations have been produced and are now being scripted.
- 4.8 On-line appointment bookings for a digital surgery pilot is underway in Soho allowing residents to book a telephone or online video meeting with a Housing Service Officer to discuss any issues. The service is being evaluated to assess its effectiveness and fitness for rolling out to other areas of the city.

5 Resident Engagement

- 5.1 A review of the citywide resident engagement framework is underway and residents will be asked for their views on the proposed framework to ensure the framework meets residents' needs and expectations. Feedback from residents will help to refine and improve the proposed approach and will inform the implementation of a more effective engagement framework. The consultation will also help shape terms of reference and ensure involved residents feel ownership of proposed engagement forums.
- 5.2 Consulting on our engagement approach will ensure compliance with relevant regulatory requirements.

6 Housing Operations

Rents- income collection

- 6.1 Our first priority has always been to support and protect residents, particularly in times of uncertainty to sustain their tenancies. COVID-19 has created challenging conditions for many households financially and rent collection performance is at 97.59% at the end of December 2020 compared with 98.57% at December 2019.
- 6.2 To make best use of the team resources to support residents who require the most assistance, a core of 1,500 more complex cases are being prioritised and the work on these

cases shared across the team. Throughout the pandemic we have kept a complete record of any reference to COVID-19 raised by the tenant or a member of their household. We have supported initiatives such as the employment assistance programme, referrals to Westminster Citizens advice or the charities we have close working relationships with. Debt support advice has been offered by Westminster Citizens advice and the business and enterprise team. The income team has helped to promote two social value initiatives run by Morgan Sindall who have offered help to low income residents who use gas and electricity pre-payment meters. For our residents who require the most support we have been liaising with adults and children's services to ensure our residents are receiving the appropriate level of support.

- 6.3** Current eviction restrictions were due to end on the 11th January 2021 but have now been extended again until 21 February 2021. A section 21 notice must give at least 6 months' notice and we can only apply to the courts after the end of the notice period. The courts are still open with many remote operating hearings, but there are now large backlogs in some areas. Presently only instances of substantial rent arrears prior to COVID-19 and egregious ASB cases are being considered for action.
- 6.4** Bailiffs are not permitted to carry out section 21 evictions until after 21 February 2021. There are some exceptions to the rules, but government says this is only for the most egregious cases such as those involving domestic violence or anti-social behaviour.
- 6.5** The approach to income collection remains support focused and no evictions have taken place this year.
- 6.6** Universal Credit claims have increased by 74% from the start of the year and by 57% from 1 March 2020. This is an unprecedented rise from any prior year.
- 6.7** Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are promoted, with communications sent by text and letter to a targeted audience. DHP can only be made as a top-up to housing benefit or universal credit where tenants are in receipt of either benefit. Tenants will continue to be encouraged to claim DHP for a fixed period unless there are exceptional circumstances. There are no time limits on backdating a DHP award.

Leasehold Services

- 6.8** Lessee service charge collection performance remains good and we are yet to identify an increase in arrears on the portfolio comparable with the increase in arrears on the rent accounts.
- 6.9** The service charge team are monitoring all service charge accounts and are keeping a log of any references to COVID-19 which may impact on our leaseholder's ability to pay their service charge. Once again, no standard debt recovery action is being taken at this time. Payment reminders are being sent with an emphasis on support and assistance.
- 6.10** The actual service charges were debited to the accounts in September 2020. The net debit to the account was in the sum of £2.6m. Most of the costs related to an increase in responsive repairs from 2019/2020.
- 6.11** Virtual surgeries were held 5-8 October 2020 and the uptake was tenfold compared to the physical surgeries held in the area office in March 2020. Residents were able to book a 20-minute appointment with our advisers and had an opportunity to provide us with information in advance of the call.

Following the success of the virtual surgeries we have now extended the service. From November 2020 we have held virtual surgery sessions every Wednesday to give our residents the opportunity to discuss any queries directly with Leasehold Operations. Residents are able to book a 20 minute telephone appointment between the hours of 9am – 8pm with one of our leasehold advisors.

Once our residents have booked their appointment they receive an email to confirm their upcoming booking. Residents can manage their own booking, they can reschedule or cancel their appointment at any time. We ask residents to provide a summary of what they would like to discuss on our call to help us to prepare for the appointment. We call our residents after 10 minutes of the appointment time if they have not joined the call.

- 6.12** A 'virtual' leasehold conference was held on 17 October 2020. A number of sessions were offered with presentations from the Leasehold Advisory Service and Citizens Advice. Attendance at the all-day conference was high, with all 200 available places booked. Attendees heard presentations on how Westminster is tackling short lets and how leaseholders can kick off the process of extending their lease.
- 6.13** The 'Your Lease Explained' video guide which has been very well received and will be followed up with 'Ways to Pay Your Service Charge' and 'How to Extend Your Lease'.

Area Housing Teams

- 6.14** The Housing teams continue to deliver services to residents with new ways of working, such as virtual property viewings and online sign ups.
- 6.15** 60% (208) of actions set out in Estate Action Plans have been completed and work is underway to complete plans for over 80% of the stock by year end. The next phase of the plan will explore how the redesigned frontline service and resident engagement models might respond to resident priorities, further developing the next iteration of the Estate Action Plans to include more aspirational targets.
- 6.16** The final phase of Traffic Management Order implementation is in progress, completing all areas and making amendments to some locations where requested by residents.

Anti-Social Behaviour

- 6.17** The Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Team handled a total of 335 new cases between August 2020 and the end of December 2020. 25% of these cases were related to noise, 21% to verbal abuse and 16% related to misuse of drugs/drug dealing. December had the highest increase in cases with 40 cases reported in 2019 and 52 cases in 2020, a 30% increase.
- 6.18** Resident satisfaction with ASB management is above target at 65% YTD and 71% recorded in December.
- 6.19** The progression of court cases is restricted to those sought on mandatory grounds for possession and no evictions have been carried out this year. Applications have been made

for bailiff's warrants to evict tenants at two properties and one possession hearing is due in January.

- 6.20** Other legal tools have been used to provide residents with some protection from ongoing ASB, including civil injunctions, solicitors letters and premises closure orders.
- 6.21** In December 2020 the ASB team started a trial of the 'The Noise App'. This enables residents to record anti-social noise coming from their neighbour's property and send in recordings to their case manager via the app. This is something we are hoping to take forward and use full time. We are currently trialling the app with longstanding noise cases across the borough, the end for this trial is the 21 January 2021 when its impact will be evaluated.

Registered Providers

- 6.22** We continue to meet quarterly to exchange best practice, challenges and ideas. As ever, where we encounter problems for residents (except in extreme cases) the statutory framework means that our tools are limited to persuasion and cajoling. Registered providers (RPs) continue to offer services in a similar way to the Council during the pandemic, with many staff working remotely from home. With some exceptions, public facing offices have remained closed or with restricted access. Services such as repairs and lettings had been returning to business as usual including during Tier 4 with new practices to minimise the risk of COVID-19 implemented.
- 6.23** However, with the move into Tier 5, landlords are now revisiting their risk assessment and capacity issues. While most landlords wish to carry on business as usual on repairs, capacity issues and concerns for the spread of COVID-19 may result in some landlords reverting to emergency and urgent repairs for the time being, with routine repairs being delayed. Compliance matters will continue as normal as will essential maintenance, work to voids and external works. There is enhanced cleaning to estates and communal areas in RP blocks.
- 6.24** RPs are keen to continue with lettings as normal, but virtual viewings and digital sign ups is the preferred option. Some RPs are still facilitating actual physical viewings following a risk assessment and with COVID-19 safe procedures being employed.
- 6.25** RP websites are being regularly updated to inform residents of operating arrangements. RPs are operating welfare calls for vulnerable residents and some are also carrying out food deliveries, working with local charities and volunteer groups.
- 6.26** 201 new affordable homes have been delivered to date in Westminster during 2020/21, 22 of which are RP homes. RPs have successfully let to 148 Westminster nominees between April and November 2020, representing 36% of all lettings.

Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs)

- 6.27** All TMOs are now following the City Council in undertaking only urgent in-flat repairs, planned maintenance (where delegated) and communal repairs. They are running full estate services, with increased cleaning on main touchpoints throughout their buildings. TMO staff are undertaking a mixture of homeworking and office based work but the offices

are currently closed to residents. Although we have had instances of TMO staff having to self-isolate, we have had no instances Coronavirus amongst staff.

- 6.28** The Government has extended the deadline for annual general meetings until the end of March 2021. Currently, 75% of TMOs have held their AGMs, although current awaiting confirmed dates, the remaining two should be completed in line with the deadline given.

7 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Homelessness and Housing needs

Housing Solutions Service (HSS) Contact Centre

- 7.1** The HSS contact centre is operating as normal and since April 2020 the service has received 49,500 calls. Customers are currently advised to contact the service via telephone or by going online to complete the online assessment form.
- 7.2** The majority of HSS contracted staff continue to work from home with a skeleton appointment only service operating from the Family Hub at Bruckner Street.
- 7.3** There has also been a review of the complaints procedure to deal with Stage 2 and Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaints regarding the HSS service. Process changes to improve the process and outcomes have, focussed on increased transparency and visibility of process, action planning around remedies and improvement where fault is found.

Allocations

- 7.4** Following the lifting of lockdown, allocations increased with 219 lettings made during Q3, 49% were made via Choice Based Lettings and 25% were to units managed by Registered Providers. This compares with 131 lettings in Q3 of 19/20 of which 57% were via CBL and 38% were managed by RPs.
- 7.5** Following the initial lockdown measures in March 2020, allocations returned to a new business as usual in August, with some processes such as e-sign-ups and virtual viewings remaining in place to ensure staff and applicants are safe and adhere to the latest Government advice. These processes have remained in place and continue to offer protection to all involved in the current lock-down.

Homelessness prevention activity

- 7.6** Homeless approaches to the Housing Solutions Service from October to December 2020 were 13% higher than the same period in 2019, with homeless applications down 27%. The main reasons we are seeing applicants approaching the service is due to family exclusion followed by private sector tenancy coming to an end. Although approaches remain high, homeless applications are lower as a result of the new HRA application process being introduced.
- 7.7** As part of the process a full assessment is carried out within 7 days, usually on the day of approach. This allows caseworkers to advise applicants and issue decisions quickly. This approach means that applicants who don't qualify for TA or an Allocation of social housing

choose not to proceed with their application, the new process is more efficient and better manages expectations.

- 7.8** Homelessness preventions are 7% higher compared with the same period in 2019/20, this figure comprises a combination of positive outcomes in the “Prevention” stage and the “Relief” stage of the Homelessness Reduction Act. The ban on evictions coupled with an increased number of lettings via the Westlets team has enabled a greater number of positive prevention outcomes compared to last year.

Mental Health Pathway Activity

- 7.9** Clients are being reviewed who are ‘tenancy ready’; have no recourse to public funds; CHAIN verified; non S117 and Care Act ineligible, to expediate moves onto independent potentially private rented sector and registered social landlord nominations. Referrals across the board have demonstrated an increase in this quarter for clients with Mental Health support needs who have a Rough sleeping history.
- 7.10** Mental Health providers continue to practice protective measures/ infection control in line with government guidelines on COVID-19 management. Public health and MH commissioners are offering additional support measures which has included staff training via Public health and Find and Treat.
- 7.11** A service level agreement between the Mental Health providers, Housing, Adult Social Care and CNWL Mental Health Trust has been completed and distributed for agreement, to ensure that collaboration is key to service delivery with all partner agencies. A working protocol is currently being developed to ensure joint and effective working between Housing Management and CNWL and support community safety and tenancy sustainment.

Partnership engagement

- 7.12** the Housing Solutions Service Partnership with Shelter and the Passage have focused on continued service delivery for customers, and areas for development especially focussing on our prevention offer. Activity carried out by Shelter has included, responding and contributing to Westminster’s Private Rented Sector Strategy, engagement with the DWP to deliver improved early intervention opportunities, a targeted piece of work with out partner RP Peabody, around financial inclusion and
- 7.13** The Passage continue to provide holistic support for clients with specific support needs. These include Domestic Abuse, Drug and/or Alcohol, Language Difficulties, Rough Sleepers, Clients over 60, Physical Health, Mental Health, Welfare, Hospital Discharge, Prison Release, PRS/Tenancy Sustainment. The most common support needs related to Mental Health, PRS/Tenancy Sustainment and welfare needs. There has also been development around employment and development, following an increase in the amount of referrals received by HSS for clients seeking support with finding employment.

Domestic abuse

- 7.14** Although there has been an overall decrease by 27% in homeless applications between October and December compared to the same period last year, the data recorded currently

shows that there has been a continued increase in the number of applications where Domestic abuse (DA) is stated as the main reason for loss of settled accommodation.

- 7.15 DA was the main reason for loss of settled accommodation in 13% of homeless applications compared to the same period last year where it accounted for 5% of homeless applications.
- 7.16 Current year to date figures show domestic abuse as the 3rd largest cause of homelessness behind families being no longer willing to accommodate the applicant and the end of a private rented tenancy. HSS continue to work towards obtaining the DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation and have carried out reviews of their policies and procedures, continual staff training and individual case audits.

8 Indoor Rough Sleeping

- 8.1 Building on the elements in our existing Rough Sleeping Strategy, Westminster City Council has embarked on a comprehensive review of our operational rough sleeping work which encompasses commissioning, challenging existing models, forming new strategic partnerships and integration with the wider work of the council. The Rough Sleeping Team now operate within the housing service and forms part of the Housing Needs, Support and Safety division. This strategy will be jointly worked on with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration.
- 8.2 The service recognises the need to innovate and change the operating models to reflect the new demographics teams are seeing on the ground but also the new direction we are seeking to take to work towards the new vision for the ways of working. Individuals being supported on the street are increasingly complex with behavioural issues and entrenched addiction and offending issues but we do believe that by taking more of a housing led approach, we can support these individuals quicker and more effectively to reduce the risk of them becoming more entrenched in the street population that we have locally.
- 8.3 While the volumes are challenging, we feel that by trying new ways of working and reflecting the collaboration across the council, we can begin to reshape our offer to provide more routes away from the streets based on joint single assessments and an improved throughput. This work has started with the following programmes of delivery demonstrated below.

Protect and Next Steps Accommodation Programmes

- 8.4 The Protect Programme launched in November and funded by MHCLG it supports the ongoing efforts of our work to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic. This programme will help areas that need additional support most during the restrictions and throughout winter and to protect some of the most vulnerable rough sleepers in our communities from COVID-19.
- 8.5 The Protect Programme has enabled us to focus on protecting individuals who are clinically vulnerable during the winter. The 'Protect Programme' is supporting the most vulnerable rough sleeping clients recognising the average life expectancy for rough sleepers is 44 for men and 42 for women; many have coexisting conditions which puts them at increased during the pandemic.
- 8.6 Officers work with our clinical colleagues in the 2 specialist GP surgeries in borough to identify those who met the guidance definition of clinically vulnerable. We identified 58 people initially who have now moved into pathways and accommodation. A further 40 clients

have been assessed and will be supported through this programme of work. The numbers may increase slightly as we receive more information from our GP's on the health of individual rough sleepers.

- 8.7** Through £996k of Protect Programme funding we are mobilising a further 119 bed spaces to support those at risk of Covid-19 and the cold weather. Within the Protect Programme we will also provide emergency accommodation during periods of extreme cold weather; we already have accommodated an additional 90 people, under the 'Severe Weather Protocol (SWEP)' and will secure sustainable move-on accommodation for many of these clients to prevent the need for them to return to the streets. Our outreach services continue to work with hard to house individuals, with provision in the Protect Programme who have historically been more challenging to engage or have not maintained accommodation.

The Protect Programme funding was also made available to support the additional pressures following the closure of night shelters in Westminster. Public Health guidance requires the protection of individuals from communicable diseases such as COVID-19 and night shelters with communal areas for sleeping and shared (air) spaces are not able to comply.

- 8.8** The flow of new rough sleepers to Westminster has not abated; since our street count of 242 in November 75 new rough sleepers have been met, and as above responding rapidly to the needs of those new to rough sleeping is at the centre of Westminster's response. We secured funding for additional outreach workers as part of the Rough Sleeping Initiative Year 3 to form an Assessment and Triage team who focus on rapid assessments for everyone, they accommodate in short term accommodation before their move on solution is realised.

- 8.9** In addition to our Protect Programme, Westminster secured £2.38m through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme from MHCLG in September. A further 153 individuals have been referred into a holistic range of services that provide accommodation to meet the need of the individual:

- 64 primarily new rough sleepers moved into our Rapid Triage and Assessment service to prevent entrenchment in rough sleeping.
- 40 individuals have moved into our Staging Post to provide the longer assessment period their multiple needs require.
- 39 have moved into our Private Rented Sector schemes with floating support to ensure the moves are sustained.
- non-UK nationals with complex immigration cases moved into emergency accommodation with caseworkers resolving their cases.

- 8.10** Westminster continues to deliver a wide range of active work to support rough sleepers off the streets and this will continue and meet the requirement to make thorough assessments and offers for current rough sleepers.

- 8.11** Outreach services also utilise bed spaces for newer rough sleepers through GLA provision at No Second Night Out and the GLA's Chorus hotel, as well as a multi-borough service hosted by the North London Housing Partnership in which Westminster has committed £144k of funding as part of the Protect Programme.

Protecting and improving the health of people sleeping rough

- 8.12** The health-led response for people experiencing rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic has seen unprecedented levels of new and multi-disciplinary working between

health care, local government (public health, social care and housing), and homelessness service providers, including the voluntary and community sector.

- 8.13** From the start of the pandemic, we have taken a health led approach with our Homeless Health Nursing Team, the Joint Homelessness Team (Mental Health Team), GP led in reach and rapid access to prescribing for those who require it. We have put in place a comprehensive flu vaccination programme for those in hostels and have held a vaccination day for people who are still on the streets.
- 8.14** Our Public Health team supports us with outbreak management and in providing Standard Operating Procedures for every type of service that provides support to rough sleepers. Where someone tests positive, Find & Treat have been commissioned to rapidly test on the day and if there is a positive test, an active pathway is in place for our street population to get that person to hospital safely so they can be cared for. All clients who live in commissioned accommodation are supported to self-isolate with support on site.
- 8.15** In January Public Health co-ordinated the asymptomatic testing in Edward Allsop Court an approx. 80 bedded unit for older homeless men. This asymptomatic testing supports prevention of outbreaks (and associated complications and deaths) in Edward Allsop Court a fully occupied residential hostel for older men with a history of rough sleeping with high health/care needs. So far, all residents have tested negative and the testing regime will continue while we co-ordinate the vaccination programme for these residents.
- 8.16** Our work with ASC and Safeguarding continues with fortnightly Enhanced Vulnerability Forum (EVF) to review all cases that require a multi-disciplinary response in relation to Care Act Assessments and subsequent care plans alongside having safeguarding professionals around the table to review all safeguarding cases that are referred.
- 8.17** Officers continue to source additional accommodation solutions to ensure we can keep people safe. This will involve working with all our providers, including the GLA to take a multi-agency approach to support our rough sleepers to come indoors and off the streets of Westminster.