

Date: Monday 15 March 2021

Report Of: Councillor Heather Acton

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration

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1 Summary

- 1.1 Following an agreed adjusted Cabinet Member report structure, this update provides highlights on the City for All priorities, areas of current focus in the Communities and Regeneration portfolio and pertinent performance information.

2 City for All – Communities and Regeneration Priorities

The refreshed City for All vision was launched earlier this month, so that the strategy for improving the city for future generations is responding to the impact of COVID-19. Our vision for tackling climate change, creating vibrant communities and a smart city remains but a further aim of a “Thriving Economy” has been added to reflect the council’s priority to support economy recovery. Cabinet Member priorities are cross cuttings over each area of the strategy, though my key priorities are largely within “vibrant communities”

Vibrant Communities

Private Rented Sector (PRS) Strategy

- 2.1 Following detailed consultation, the PRS Strategy was put in place in February. The consultation on the Houses of Multiple Occupation additional licensing scheme, which complements the PRS strategy, ran from 19 November until 18 February. This scheme will go to Full Council on 13 May for approval and adoption.

Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy

- 2.2 We are in the early stages of developing a new Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy to address and combat ASB across the borough. Evidence to support the strategy is being collated at the moment and all colleagues will be consulted in due course.

Westminster Connects

- 2.3 Westminster Connects has continued to support residents who are shielding or self-isolating, as well as supporting local track and trace operations.
- 2.4 On 17 February, Central Government added 1.7m people to the cohort of 2.3m people considered clinically vulnerable. This has had a substantial impact on Westminster, as the local cohort of clinically vulnerable residents has more than doubled, from 8,511 to 17,325.
- 2.5 To date, 26,934 residents have been supported or offered help through Westminster Connects. Over the coming year, we intend to expand on the success of Westminster Connects and work with our partners to create a new level of civic engagement, where greater numbers of volunteers support vulnerable residents across the borough.

Rough Sleeping strategy

- 2.6 Evidence collation to inform a revised rough sleeping strategy will commence soon. This will involve our Homelessness Partnership, other support organisations and the police and will be developed with the Cabinet Member for Housing.

Regeneration and Affordable Housing

- 2.7 The regeneration programme is proceeding well and remains on track to meet the Council's 1,850 affordable housing target by 2023.

Church Street

- 2.8 The Site A design for Church Street would provide c. 430 homes, of which 50% are affordable. Public consultation will begin in March, in preparation for a hybrid planning application – a detailed plan for site A and outline plans for sites B and C, the public realm and Church Street Market.

Ebury

- 2.9 Good momentum has been maintained on Ebury and demolition of vacant blocks has been brought forward. "Ebury Edge" was completed in October 2020 and, despite COVID19 and lockdown restrictions, is almost fully let. Fat Macy's is offering a local deli and take away services and trial periods have been granted for local community groups, including 'Carly's Angels', an Ebury resident childcare provider.

Cleaner and Greener

Code of Construction Practice (CoCP)

- 2.1 Work is progressing on the revision of our Code of Construction Practice document, which sets out best practice for construction works taking place throughout Westminster. The document will go to consultation including to members of this committee.

Air Quality around Schools

- 2.2 Every school across the borough received a bespoke air quality audit report, highlighting opportunities to reduce emissions and exposure to emissions. Schools can access the £1mil School Clean Air Fund to implement steps to improve their situation. £250k has been earmarked for 2021/22, and we continue to support schools in introducing green measures to improve air quality. Some of the projects already completed include air filtration system instalments, and signage and road-markings to reduce engine idling outside schools.
- 2.3 Work also continues on the implementation of nine new School Streets.

Regeneration Projects

- 2.4 We continue to aim for carbon zero or at a minimum neutrality in our regeneration projects. We are targeting extremely low heating and hot water demand within new homes and eliminating fossil fuels for the heating of new developments. All sites will maximise the amount of renewable energy generated.

3 Major Decisions

- 3.1 I approved the 'Home Improvement Grants and Assistance & Leaseholder Relocation Assistance Policy' on 17 February 2021.

4 Areas of Focus

City Inspectorate

- 4.1 We are in the process of adjusting the City Inspectorate, in order to provide a more bespoke service. Each ward will have a dedicated City Inspector to help resolve local street and premise-based issues. Further work to bring about improvements to the service will involve smart working, also involving improved reporting and monitoring of issues for residents and businesses.

Westminster Builds (WB)

- 4.2 WB has submitted its Business Plan for 2021-2022 to the Council for approval and this is scheduled for Cabinet decision on 26 April. The plan includes two key agreements between WB and the Council: a Shareholder's Agreement to set out control and management of the relationship with the Council, and a Service Level Agreement regarding joint working on completing projects and selling, letting and managing homes.
- 4.3 The Business Plan sets out a programme to deliver c.2,000 homes over the next 10 years. The proposals emphasise quality and sustainability, are developed in partnership with the Council and use Council resources.
- 4.4 WB is exploring opportunities to work collaboratively with other organisations, both private and public, including in London's Growth Corridors, in order to maximise its capacity to deliver value for money, while minimising risk.

5 Performance Updates

Rough Sleeping - Street Count

- 5.1 The CHAIN Westminster street count was carried out on 28 January 2021 by the Westminster St Mungo's team. A total of 111 people were seen in the borough, down from 242 in the previous November 2020 count and 244 in January 2020. This is the lowest figure on record since 2015 for an official count.
- 5.2 Of the 111 people encountered, 43 refused to give details and as such were unidentified on the night. Of the unidentified people seen, 14 had previously been seen by Outreach but declined to engage or give their name on every occasion. The Outreach team revisit the sites where "unknowns" are seen to try and engage with these clients and work with them towards a route off the streets.

Rough Sleeping - SWEP

- 5.3 During the recent cold weather, we have activated the Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) over 25 days. We have offered accommodation to more than 250 people who needed our support.
- 5.4 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) provided a 'Surge Winter Capacity' fund to Westminster with a baseline allocation of £210,000 in 2020/21 and agreed to an additional £100,000 to be allocated to winter pressures funding in February 2021.

Developments

- 5.5 Following planning submissions at the end of last year for Carlton Dene, Balmoral and Westmead schemes, planning committee hearings are anticipated in March/April 2021. The Carlton Dene proposals include a new extra care facility for Adult Social Care nominated residents as well as new general needs apartments and brand-new community and green space. The Balmoral proposals include 34 new community supported homes and 18 new high-quality affordable homes for local residents, along with landscaped green space. The Westmead proposals include over 60 new homes, to be delivered on the site of the former Westmead care home, from which residents have moved into the completed Beachcroft development.

Infill Schemes

- 5.6 The Lanark Rd scheme, involving the redevelopment of two garage sites into 8 social family homes, has started on site in February 2021. An additional package, involving building 6 social homes in a former office, laundry room and undercroft spaces, is due to complete construction in March 2021.
- 5.7 Across the Infill programme there are currently 145 homes either on site or at the pre-construction stage, with public consultation under way on a further 27 homes. The programme is preparing to commence consultation of another set of schemes in the coming months, which have the potential to deliver a further 26 homes.