

Date:	14 October 2021
Report of:	Councillor David Harvey
Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Housing
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1. City for All Vision and Strategy (2021 – 2022) – Housing Services Priorities

1.1 Greener and Cleaner

1.1.1 Leverage Energy Efficiency Measures in Housing

Significant analysis has been completed in modelling the entire property portfolio, resulting in clear requirements to achieve an average EPC rating of B and to get WCCs social rent homes to a net zero standard. The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) Wave 1 was launched on 23rd August. Discussions have already taken place with Turner & Townsend, the government consultants for the scheme. They have commented that Westminster was the first local authority they have spoken to that have detailed data on their homes and would be in a good position to bid. The bid is open for 8 weeks from 23rd August to 15th October.

1.2 Vibrant Communities

1.2.1 Supporting Vulnerable Residents

In April leads from the Supporting Vulnerable Residents Project Team developed a pilot proposal which will support vulnerable housing residents on the Churchill Gardens Estate. The proposal formed part of the wider Housing service bid submitted to MHCLG 'Changing Futures Programme'. Our bid has been successful.

Our pilot between Housing and Children's Services which aims to work with our partners to establish multi-agency frameworks to manage complex Housing management cases are still underway with repairs and housing management visiting the properties identified via repair demand and no contact data sets across the city. To date, 15 visits have been conducted with the following referrals and signposting to: Assistance with registering for a Mutual Exchange (4), Referral to Adult Social Care (3), Referral to Mental Health Services (3), Drug & Alcohol Support (1), Westminster Adult Education Service (1), Community Voluntary Partners (2), and assistance with registering for transfer (5).

1.2.2 Redesign of Service Model Through Shared Space and Maximising the Use of Public Buildings - Churchill Garden Pilot

Following a survey earlier on in the year an action plan has been produced which has identified residents' priorities to improve health, wellbeing, and resident engagement. The action plan outlines a number of key actions and initiatives for further discovery and implementation from 2021 – 2024 and includes cross departmental working, to explore community café models with community partners and residents, to engage with youth on estates to understand their health and wellbeing, and to increase the levels of resident engagement and resident volunteering opportunities. This pilot was launched at the Residents Association 70th Year anniversary Churchill Gardens Community Event on Saturday 28th August 2021 with great enthusiasm.

1.2.3 Resident Engagement

Following our consultation with residents that ran in May, findings of our surveys are ready to be relayed to residents through a wide variety of channels including Your Home magazine, Your Home e-zine, the Council's website, and text messaging.

Phase 2 of the project to launch the new structure has commenced. Next steps are setting up the performance and policy group, completing the ASB case review group pilot, piloting the estate briefings, relaunching Westminster Housing Online, and signposting interested residents to local groups and potential themed groups. We will continue to make good use of technology to engage with residents on a wider scale but also still offer face to face contact for those that are not online. We also recognise that this project should proceed step by step, building on success rather than rushing through to a large number of groups.

1.3 Smart City

1.3.1 Trial Smart Homes Technologies

The technology due to be piloted will assist the Council in issues that are prevalent and important to us and residents. Drones will assist our repairs and major works teams to access roofs which are otherwise inaccessible and require the erection of scaffolding. The use of digital notice boards will allow staff to remotely update information proactively and reactively, assisting faster communications. Various types of sensors (leak detection, legionella in water tanks, communal fire door open/close sensors and in flat air quality) will assist the council in being proactive to address the safety and welfare of residents. We have completed that data privacy impact assessment and risk profile forms, as well as risk assessments for the pilot strands and anticipate satisfying the councils IT thresholds on how data is managed.

1.3.2 Facilitating Broadband Connections

The roll-out of Broadband across Westminster's housing stock continues to progress very well. Currently we have 90% of our stock with an available Broadband connection from at least one supplier as of 31st August. We are currently on target to achieve 100% by 31st December 2021.

2. Cabinet Member Decisions (June – September 2021)

Since the last report was made, no notifiable decisions have been made by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

3. Areas of Focus

3.1 Homelessness and Mental Health Pathway

We continue to monitor demand closely to identify any potential risks or issues associated with a potential spike in demand following on from the relaxation of COVID-19 restrictions such as the ban on evictions being lifted in July.

We have a continuing programme of review for all clients placed in Commissioned Mental Health Housing related supported provision. Alongside the Community Mental Health Teams and the Placement Review team we are targeting clients who: are tenancy ready and could be resettled into the private rented sector, those that may be tenancy ready and have a rough sleeping history who can access Clearing house properties, those clients who no longer are deemed to have Care Act support needs but are suitable for Community Supported Housing with a care package if needed, and those individuals whose physical ageing needs warrant a move to residential care.

3.2 Major Works Update

The Major Works programme continues to perform well with our main contractors Axis Europe and United Living both Service Providers are pressing on and delivering their respective capital programmes. The additional resources provided by Axis is evident in the positive feedback received on the Queens Park Estate and at Little Venice Towers. This has in turn allowed the teams to achieve practical completion and Little Venice Towers, and with Hallfield Estate's programmed work due to

complete by the end of September. United Living have a variety of work ongoing within the South of the city- Glastonbury House is a high-profile cladding contract which is currently on programme and given the high-risk nature of these works, it is being tracked through our Programme Board on a monthly basis. All members have been contacted to ensure their understanding and involvement in major works projects planned in their wards. Meetings will be held with members as requested to explore their interests in the programme.

Given the recent media coverage it has been reported nationally, that throughout the construction industry there has been a scarcity and shortage of certain building materials e.g. cement, plasterboard, glass etc, which has had a knock-on effect with a price increase across the building material spectrum. In addition, as has been widely reported, there are pressures on available skilled labour, predominantly due to lockdown and Brexit.

3.3 Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Updates

There are currently 166 ASB cases open with the team at the moment with a total of 57 new cases raised in August. The first two ASB case panel pilot meetings were held on the 24 and 26 August. Feedback is currently being collated following which a full review will be conducted. Three injunctions covering the Mozart and Lydford Estate area were obtained on 13 July 2021. The individuals can be arrested for breaching the injunction and be produced at court. We are currently working with the police regarding a possible breach and speaking with our legal team regarding this. Housing and PP&L met on 7 September to plan actions around addresses that have been identified as potential contributors to ASB during the coming Halloween and Bonfire night period ('Autumn Nights'), and to discuss actions to be taken in advance.

3.4 Repairs Updates – Summer Flash Flooding

At the end of July and early August, Central London was hit with a downpour of rain. As reported extensively, this caused widespread flooding and damage to property throughout areas of Westminster. Our repairs service, housing staff and contractors all responded admirably to the emergency situation with contractors and our staff working long into the evening to ensure residents were cared for, safe and affected properties were repaired. Despite the significant increase of emergency repairs being reported over this period, causing a huge strain on resources, our contractors and staff all responded very well to the situation. The situation was helped massively due to the Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) which is in place and is carried out throughout the year involving cleaning gutters, downpipes and gullies, this assisted in alleviating what could have been a significant emergency.

3.5 Updates to The Fire Safety and Building Safety Bills

In response to the Grenfell Inquiry and bills currently in draft, Housing Services is committed to an enhanced requirement on Fire and Rescue services. Risk assessments are already available via the freedom of information request route. We are currently looking at how we can provide access via the Westminster Website either to request a copy or download the latest version of the fire risk assessment. To ensure Westminster City Council holds comprehensive fire safety and building safety data, a specialist software has been procured to accurately manage and maintain fire safety for both the housing and corporate property portfolio. The implementation of this system will also help satisfy the anticipated requirements of the Buildings Safety Bill.

3.6 Negative Homelessness Applications – Ending Temporary Accommodation Letters

193 affected households without previous Westminster connections will be sent a letter reminding them of their negative homeless decision and that their provision of accommodation is temporary. This letter sets out the support available to find alternative accommodation, and our services that can aid in this process. Those affected will be contacted individually through HSS to work through their housing options. Assistance will also be available through the North London Regional partnership that secured funding to assist authorities with supporting households to move into the private rented sector.

3.7 Afghan Relocation Settlement Scheme

On 30 July, The Council decided to participate in the ARAP scheme. It was requested that officers scoped potential support from civil society and charitable organisations in the area, so that LES families could be properly supported on arrival. As part of ARAP, relocated individuals/ families must be supported for a four-month period with housing and cash support, and a twelve-month period with integration, by a local authority. We have committed to sourcing 5 properties for a mix of individuals and families. Officers across the Council are currently working to identify suitable accommodation.

4. Key Performance Indicators

4.1 Housing Management Contact Centre

In August the Housing Management Contact Centre received **18,150** calls, **71%** of which were answered within 30 seconds (performance above target range), with the longest call waiting time 15 minutes. **62%** of calls were resolved during first contact and resident satisfaction with call handling is at **89%** which is above target. **91%** of stage 1 complaints were responded to in target.

4.2 Satisfaction with Repairs Service

Overall tenant satisfaction with repairs has remained steady at **78%** in August 2021. **98.2%** of emergency repairs in this period were completed on the first visit, and positively **84%** of tenants were satisfied with the quality of their repairs.

4.3 Overall satisfaction with Housing Services

Tenant satisfaction that WCC provides a safe and secure home remains steady at **70%** for tenants and **78%** for leaseholders in August. Satisfaction with cleaning of communal areas is at **77%** for tenants and **81%** for leaseholders, while satisfaction with grounds maintenance is above target at **84%** for tenants and **91%** for leaseholders.