

Date: 17 November 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

A Social Housing Decarbonisation Grant (SHDF) application was prepared and submitted on the 15th of October. This bid was for £3m match funding for fabric first retrofit works to 360 D Rated Social rented homes. This scheme could save 250 tonnes of Co2 per year. Detailed analysis of our stock was required to prove eligibility and demonstrate Knowledge of PAS 2035 (the standard for retrofit works). Contractors have since been engaged and working with us to prepare for the scheme which could start in early 2022. Pilots of some properties retrofitted to PAS 2035 will be completed in November 2021 as the grant funded works are required to be delivered to this standard. Results of the grant funding application will be made by the end of December 2021.

1.2 Vibrant Communities

1.2.1 Supporting Vulnerable Residents

Our tenancy support service pilot for residents experiencing multiple disadvantages continues to progress well at Churchill Gardens. It aims to test a place-based approach which includes the recruitment of a tenancy support worker. Person led action plans tailored to residents' strengths, skills and interests will support residents of the Churchill Gardens Estate to sustain their tenancies and improve wider outcomes such as improved physical and mental health, improved education, training, employment, volunteering opportunities and increased financial stability outcomes. Residents will also be supported to connect with their local community assets and supporting local organisations to work better together on multiple disadvantages.

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

Positive resident engagement has been seen in several new initiatives at Churchill Gardens over the last few months. Recently under a new pilot, 25 residents previously not involved with any pilot activity met with the Resident's association (RA) to participate in a gardening skills and awareness session. The group expressed a keen interest in a community gardening site for food growing and the governance of this group will be discussed with the existing RA. Following feedback from residents, locations for a potential outdoor gym have been identified and shortlisted and further consultation is being undertaken with the Churchill Gardens RA. Further quotes and funding will need to be identified before wider resident engagement consultation occurs on this potential pilot.

1.2.3 Develop and New Private Rented Strategy

Our new Private Rented Strategy (PRS) has been now completed and is being delivered. Key recent achievements include setting up a PRS strategy group involving external stakeholders and securing external funding for enforcing energy efficiency in the private rented sector.

1.2.4 Refreshing our Approach to Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour

In response to a suggestion from a resident, the Housing ASB team has recently developed an information leaflet for residents who report ASB, which explains the process of providing witness statements that may be used at court. The team is now developing further leaflets which set out the actions we can take to tackle ASB which can be sent to residents.

We are also proposing to pilot a six-month roving estate patrol. The estate patrol service would consist of two patrol officers in a dedicated marked patrol vehicle with specialist drug or weapon search dogs available upon request. The officers and vehicle will be branded as Westminster City Council. Our aim is for this service to provide regular intelligence reports back to the Housing ASB team. We are proposing to initially pilot the service on four estates (Lisson Green, Hallfield, Lydford and Lillington and Longmore) with deployment of patrols between 6pm and 2/3am.

1.3 Smart City

1.3.1 Trial Smart Homes Technologies

Our trialling of new technology in the Housing Service continues to move at pace. Approval to commence the use of drones on estates has been received and the first surveys are due to be undertaken in the week commencing 18 October. This will focus on 8 sites that are due for major works in 2022, and the surveys will help identify defects and therefore provide more accurate scope and costing of works needed to the roofs. Work to document the requirements of the smart tags project strand is also underway. The sensors and digital notice board projects have also satisfied the IT and data security requirements and are awaiting an IT resource to work on the requirements.

1.3.2 Facilitating Broadband Connections

Infrastructure roll out is continuing well and we have now provided access to services to 90% of homes covered by the citywide wayleave. Infrastructure work taking this figure to around 95% is currently in progress/ mobilising and the team have established with providers a forward programme to secure access for 100% of homes. This last phase of the programme includes predominately street properties and non-estate-based blocks.

2. Cabinet Member Decisions (October – November 2021)

- Allocation of Social Housing Supply 2021/ 2022
This report illustrates that demand exceeds supply for social housing. However, across the City and the approach to letting social homes set out in this report aims to take account of the needs of the different households with priority for social housing. The overall aim is to achieve a balanced and transparent approach to letting social homes during 2021/22 and which takes account of the Council's key priorities.

3. Areas of Focus

3.1 Anti-Social Behaviour Updates

There are currently 147 ASB cases open with the team, with a total of 71 new cases raised in September. Following our new approach to ASB and enforcement in January, the team have continued to serve Notices of Seeking Possession (NOSPs). There have been a further 16 served since April '21. We have had two closure orders granted in our West area, one full closure which closes an entire property to the tenant and to other persons, and one partial closure which prevents anyone but the tenant themselves from being in the property. These were both as a result of people coming and going from the properties causing nuisance to local residents and the property being used for criminal purposes such as drug use.

The ASB team received full training on the system "Uniform" which is the databased used by the Noise Service to record all calls and events relating to noise reports to the Council. The team have been using the system for 3 weeks now and it has made managing noise cases easier and quicker in terms of retrieving reports and information. This has meant that when a resident advises a case

officer that they reported an out of hours noise report, the case officer can look straight on the system to enable them to progress the investigation of their case without any delays.

3.2 Major Works and Member Consultation Updates

Our Sites across the North, South and Central are performing well and in line with submitted programmes, we are due to complete three existing projects within the next few weeks. The cladding project at Glastonbury House is on site and remains a priority project, and there is strong collaboration between The Council and Network Rail given the proximity of our scaffolding to the Southeastern Network. We are expected to complete the cladding works in early 2022. There is currently 10 Projects due to commence within the first quarter of the new year starting from January 2022.

On 9 September 2021, we began a formal Members consultation on our Major Works Business Plan. With the consultation now closed we are now collating results and feedback. Apart from this, on Major Works updates, including copies of correspondence and invites to residents' meetings, are issued to ward members two working days in advance of residents. This gives members notice of the current status of each project and allows for comment and feedback. Approximately 25% of members proactively engage in this process with ongoing dialogue throughout projects.

3.3 Homelessness in Westminster

Since lifting national COVID-19 restrictions in July, there has been notable higher numbers of rough sleepers and flow of people on the streets in Westminster as anticipated. However, the street count numbers in September 2021 (187) are far fewer than that of the numbers of 269 recorded in September 2020. A majority of Individuals encountered on our counts continue to be from the UK/ ROI, and EEA.

Homelessness applications have increased 17% in Q1 2021 (946 in Q1 – 1107 in Q2). 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. The main reason we are seeing applicants approaching the service has remained consistent over the past few quarters. These include loss of a settled home, family no longer willing or able to accommodate, end of private rented tenancy and domestic abuse.

3.4 Update on New Affordable Housing Supply

Several new affordable housing developments are due to be completed shortly offering over 200 new units across Westminster. The first phase of West End Gate that will deliver a total of 130 new affordable homes including 99 social and 31 intermediate homes is due to be handed over later this autumn. In the initial phase, 108 affordable homes made up of 1,2 and 3bed units will be available for tenants being decanted from the Church Street regeneration area, local lettings to residents from the Hall Park Estate, other priority groups, and households eligible for intermediate housing in the City.

Parsons House a Council led development will deliver 60 new homes this November, including 10 social and 9 intermediate homes for rent. Priority for these affordable homes will be to local residents in priority housing need. Finally, the recently completed intermediate rented scheme at Farm Street in Mayfair will provide a mixture of studio, 1bed and 2bed homes for intermediate eligible households including key workers.

3.5 Updates on the Afghan Relocation Scheme

The Council committed to providing 5 private sector family sized homes under the ARAP scheme. Officers are actively pursuing several properties where landlords have expressed a strong interest and we believe there is potential of a concrete offer of accommodation; all properties are 2 and 3bed units. These will be rigorously inspected by officers before letting, all will be available at Local Housing Allowance rates with the rents expected to be covered through households' Universal

Credit with the Council guaranteeing rent. Once inspected as suitable and the detail agreed with the landlord, the properties will be offered to the Home Office who will match these to families.

3.6 Resident Engagement Activities and Opportunities

Our city-wide review of resident engagement is now complete. Recommendations and overall strategy will be brought forward for review and implementation in the upcoming months.

Bookings at community halls are 90% what they were before the start of the pandemic. Since the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions this summer, five large community events have been delivered with great feedback from residents. Three halls will continue to be used as COVID-19 testing centres until March 2022. Communications to affected residents will be sent by the Department of Health and Social Care.

4. Key Performance Indicators

4.1 Housing Management Contact Centre

In September the Housing Management Contact Centre received **19,796** calls, **71%** of which were answered within 30 seconds (performance above target range), with the longest call waiting time 18 minutes. **61%** of calls were resolved during first contact and resident satisfaction with call handling is at **88%** which is above target.

4.2 Satisfaction with Repairs Service

Overall tenant satisfaction with repairs has remained steady at **77%** in September 2021. **98.5%** of emergency repairs in this period were completed on the first visit, and positively **85%** 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 **76%** for tenants and **71%** for leaseholders in September. Satisfaction with cleaning of communal areas is at **80%** for tenants and **64%** for leaseholders, while satisfaction with grounds maintenance is above target at **86%** for tenants and **77%** for leaseholders.