



**CITY OF WESTMINSTER**

# MINUTES

**Communities, Regeneration and Housing  
POLICY and SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
26 January 2022**

## MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held **virtually** on 26 January 2022 at 6:30pm and livestreamed **via Microsoft Teams**.

**Members Attended:** Councillors Jim Glen (Chairman), Barbara Arzymanow, Liza Begum, Eoghain Murphy (substituting for Antonia Cox), Matt Noble, Ian Rowley, Mark Shearer (substituting for Elizabeth Hitchcock) and Hamza Taouzzale.

**Also present:** Councillor Heather Acton (Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration), Councillor David Harvey (Cabinet Member for Housing), Tracey Chin (Policy and Scrutiny Co-Ordinator), Michael Clarkson (Lead City Planning Policy Officer), Fergus Coleman (Head of Affordable Housing and Strategy), Alexandra Deolinda Severino (Portfolio Advisor), Cecily Herdman (Principal Policy Officer), Debbie Jackson (Executive Director of Growth, Planning and Housing), Artemis Kassi (Lead Scrutiny Officer/Statutory Scrutiny Officer), Gillian Matthews (Homeless Contract and Performance Manager), Raj Mistry (Executive Director of Environment and City Management), Sally Ann Nott (Housing Partnership and Development Manager), Ezra Wallace (Director of Policy), Neil Wightman (Director of Housing)

## AGENDA PART 1

### 1. MEMBERSHIP

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor Elizabeth Hitchcock (Councillor Shearer substituting) and Councillor Antonia Cox (Councillor Eoghain Murphy substituting).

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 The Committee noted a declaration by Councillor Shearer on his work in the local community. Councillor Shearer confirmed this would not impact on any of the items on the agenda.

### 3. MINUTES

- 3.1 The Committee noted that Councillor Begum's attendance had been omitted in the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2021 and requested this be corrected for public record.
- 3.2 **RESOLVED:** That the minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2021 be approved as an accurate record of proceedings, pending the above correction.

### 4. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND REGENERATION

- 4.1. The Committee received an update from Councillor Acton, Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration, focussing on current and upcoming issues from the portfolio. The Committee discussed the following points:

#### **Homelessness and rough sleeping**

- 4.2. The Cabinet Member reported that the numbers of rough sleepers had decreased, although the exact numbers had yet to be confirmed. There was the possibility of an increase, due to the number of rooms that were being allocated to those outside the City. However, it was confirmed accommodation had been provided for the most vulnerable.

#### **Digital enforcement and fixed penalty notices**

- 4.3. The Committee queried the effectiveness of digitisation for enforcement and its impact on public protection, especially on market trading and the entertainment sector. The Cabinet Member recognised that using this approach would help simplify the application process in these areas and would enable faster action to be taken. This may include an increase in fixed-penalty notices by the inspectorate on fly-tipping.

#### **Leaseholder queries regarding Ebury Bridge regeneration**

- 4.4. The Committee reported concerns from leaseholders regarding the proposals for short lets as part of the Ebury Bridge scheme. The Cabinet Member expressed reservations in the use of short-term lets and confirmed that the Council were applying for greater control in this area.
- 4.5. There were further concerns from residents regarding Phase 2a of the Programme, that some existing properties would lose a large percentage of natural lighting because of the proposals. The Cabinet Member encouraged greater liaising between residents and officers as part of part of the consultation process to ensure their concerns were noted.

- 4.6. A Member of the Committee reported intimidation claims from leaseholders by officers during the negotiation process and had raised concerns that they would not be receiving like-for-like properties as had previously been agreed. The Cabinet Member noted the claims and confirmed these would be investigated further.

**The importance of continual work on ASB**

- 4.7. The Committee queried the work that had been undertaken by the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy Task Group in response to ongoing anti-social behaviour across the City. The Cabinet Member confirmed the recommendations made would be utilised in the ongoing work.
- 4.8. The Committee raised concerns on the continuing issues of drug-use, pedicabs and US-style sweet shops along Oxford St, which were contributing to the issues of anti-social behaviour and what law enforcement methods could be applied to resolve this. The Cabinet Member agreed that these were ongoing concerns. Drugs were a specific area of law enforcement and would continue to be so. The rise in US-style sweet shops would continue to be monitored, following the success of Operation Jade.
- 4.9. Anti-social behaviour in private transportation was noted by a member of the Committee including cyclists and e-scooterists passing red lights and the continued presence of pedicabs. The Cabinet Member acknowledged the challenges in the permanent removal of pedicabs and indicated that the use of PSPOs would be considered. However, it was clarified that a TMO could not be used as pedicabs were not classed as traffic.
- 4.10. The Committee requested an update on busking enforcement. The Cabinet Member noted concerns from residents and businesses on increased noise levels and acknowledged the challenges faced by Police when buskers had given false details. It was noted that most individuals had applied for licenses.

**Heathrow flight path and its impact on residents**

- 4.11. The Committee requested information on the changes to the Heathrow flight path. The Cabinet Member acknowledged concerns from residents on the changes to the Heathrow flight path, which included the lowering of flights, resulting in increased noise levels. It was confirmed that the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) had noted these concerns and advised the Council to liaise directly with Heathrow. It was confirmed that a consultation with residents would be available later in the year.
- 4.12. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee note the current and forthcoming issues in this portfolio.

ACTIONS:

1. to investigate leaseholders' concerns and allegations of intimidation regarding the Ebury Bridge project.

The Committee requested information on the following:

2. to report on figures for performance and sustainability on Policy and Scrutiny issues.
3. to explore the possibility of using PSPOs to resolve the pedicabs issue.
4. to circulate the figures for the confiscation of e-scooters and fines for cyclists on pavements.
5. a written response on the work of the Private Rented Sector Strategy Task Group in improving the standards of privately rented accommodation in the City.

## **5. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING**

- 5.1. The Committee received an update from David Harvey, Cabinet Member for Housing, focussing on current and upcoming issues from the portfolio. The Committee discussed matters including:

- 5.2. **Details of the allocation of affordable housing**

The Committee queried the information on 3.7 of the report and the exact figures for the allocation of affordable housing. The Cabinet Member confirmed that most of the flats being developed were 2–3-bedroom properties, which were classed as family-sized.

### **Shared spaces innovation**

- 5.3. The Committee enquired about the use of the shared spaces scheme, citing promising results on the Churchill Gardens Estate. The Cabinet Member confirmed that this was a possibility that was being investigated. It was emphasised that balance was needed between quiet and active spaces.

### **Housing of refugees in the City of Westminster**

- 5.4. The Committee queried the number of refugees receiving permanent residency in the City of Westminster. It was confirmed that there were many individuals and families, with differing requirements, waiting to be rehoused. The Council was working to ensure that families were able to be housed in suitable permanent, long-term accommodation.

- 5.5. Whilst there had been reports of families settling successfully outside the capital, it was acknowledged that there were cases where families had declined accommodation outside of London, in favour of remaining in the City.

### **Residents being housed outside the City**

- 5.6. The Committee raised concerns that some City of Westminster families could not get housing locally and were being re-housed outside the City in private rented accommodation. The Cabinet Member noted the Committee's concerns on the pressure of temporary housing on residents.

#### **Lillington & Longmoore Estate repairs**

- 5.7. The Committee requested an update on the flooding repairs and queried, what long-term improvements could be made regarding the heating and hot water systems and how long these were likely to take.
- 5.8. The Cabinet Member explained that the waiting time for the properties to dry was between two to three months. Most of the issues found were linked to mould and groundwater flow, which may require residents of the affected properties to vacate where necessary, before full repairs could be made.

#### **Flooding**

- 5.9. The Committee queried the allocation of funds to address repairs caused by flash-flooding on the City's housing stock. The Cabinet Member confirmed funds came from the Council's insurance but acknowledged that the most impact would be on leaseholders. It was noted that issues would vary across different stock and highlighted the importance of having ongoing discussions with leaseholders.

#### **Resident Repairs**

- 5.10. The Committee queried residents' satisfaction level on repairs, and how this had been collected. The Cabinet Member explained that this had been carried out via a range of methods, including telephone surveys and independent technology, which can measure the tone of voice.
- 5.11. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee note the current and forthcoming issues in this portfolio.

#### **ACTION:**

1. The Committee to investigate reported cases of City of Westminster families having to be rehoused outside the City.

## **6. PLANNING OBLIGATIONS AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT**

- 6.1. The Committee received a report from the Executive Director of Growth, Planning and Housing and the Executive Director of Innovation and Change, which provided an update on the progress on affordability of new intermediate housing in the borough. The key goals of the report were to gain the Committee's views of the scope of the proposals. The report was presented by Ezra Wallace, Director of Policy, with support from Cecily Herdman,

Principal Policy Officer, and Fergus Coleman, Head of Affordable Housing and Strategy.

- 6.2. The Committee queried the decision to focus on the intermediate housing sector. It was explained that the definition of “affordable” was complex and that pricing could be better controlled in this sector, with any rent increases helping more people over several years.
- 6.3. The Committee recommended that it may be useful to increase the case studies available based on the differing financial circumstances of a variety of individuals.
- 6.4. The Committee proposed having tighter regulations on foreign investments as this seemed to be impacting the land values.
- 6.5. Discussion arose on the number of provisions allocated to key workers. It was confirmed that the report did not include information on all key worker sectors, focussing instead on the “traditional” sectors.
- 6.6. The Committee queried the size of the new units and who these were primarily allocated to. It was explained that the size and type of units was dependent on the needs of those in the City and that a target of 25% of these new homes would be at least 2-bedroom units.
- 6.7. The Committee asked officers if they had any further queries and confirmed their satisfaction of the information provided. The Chair thanked officers for their work.
- 6.8. **RESOLVED:** That the Committee note the report and the actions arising from the discussion.

## **7. SUPPLY AND ALLOCATION OF SOCIAL HOUSING 2022/23**

- 7.1. The Committee received a report from the Executive Director of Growth, Planning and Housing and Neil Wightman, Director of Housing, which focussed on the proportions and methodology of allocated housing. The report was presented by Neil Wightman, with support from Cecily Herdman.
- 7.2. The Committee queried the status of housing provisions for care leavers. It was confirmed that care leavers would receive appropriate accommodation in social housing once they had turned eighteen.
- 7.3. The Committee raised concerns about the number of individuals on the housing waiting list and queried how fairness was ensured in allocations across the differing categories, especially with regards to those on the waiting

lists. Neil Wightman agreed that this was an ongoing issue, acknowledging that demand far outstrips supply and all allocation decisions between different groups were very difficult.

- 7.4. In response to the Committee's query regarding any additional points for consideration, Cecily suggested further scrutiny on the housing waiting list points system.

**ACTIONS:**

The Committee requested information on the following:

1. to provide a breakdown of housing allocations given to BAME groups.
2. to provide Members with year-to-date stats for the proportion of projected properties for wheelchair users.

**8. WORK PROGRAMME**

- 8.1. The Committee agreed that the next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for the 9 March 2022. This was amended from the original date of 17 March 2022.
- 8.2. The Committee discussed its work programme for the remainder of the municipal year and was confirmed that the main items for the next meeting would be anti-behaviour and rough sleeping.
- 8.3. It was agreed by the Committee and Cabinet Members that any unallocated items would be heard in the following municipal year.
- 8.4. **RESOLVED:** That the work programme report be noted

**9. TERMINATION OF MEETING**

- 9.1. The meeting ended at 9.20pm.

CHAIRMAN \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_