

Date: 9 March 2022

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**

To date over £400k of grant funding has been received and spent on over 100 homes for the purpose of making them more energy efficient. Our priority continues to be focusing on refurbishing D rated social-housing properties across the borough for this purpose. Through dialogue with the South-East Hun (BEIS agent for LAD2 grant funding) we have seen eligibility reduced to allow more D rated properties. We are hoping for any surveys to be completed on these properties by end of March 2022 to allow for a June deadline regarding the installs. In late February 2022 Westminster received £1m funding from Central Government to support residents' domestic energy efficiency improvements such as cavity wall insulation, internal wall insulation and electric storage heater upgrades.

**1.2 Vibrant Communities**

**1.2.1 Supporting Vulnerable Residents**

The much-anticipated launch of the Changing Futures Churchill Gardens Pilot is set for April 2022. The deadline for tender bids for the procurement of a support worker closed on the 21<sup>st</sup> January and evaluations took place in early February. The winning tender will be announced once relevant sign off have been approved. The pilot entails a Housing Support Worker that will be assigned to the Churchill Gardens ward to support residents who are experiencing Multi Disadvantage (at risk of homelessness, mental health, domestic abuse, re-offending, substance misuse etc) to sustain their tenancies, improve health, wellbeing, and community connectiveness.

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

In partnership with the Housing Services and community partners a Churchill Gardens pilot newsletter and coordinated programme of activities has been developed. This programme will be displayed on estate notice boards and the newsletter will be hand delivered to all residents on the estate. The newsletter highlights the partnerships developed by the Housing Services to create and promote new resident engagement opportunities such as adopting a planter, forming a community food growing group, and volunteering opportunities to support local neighbours who are vulnerable and need help to support with the upkeep of their gardens.

**1.3 Smart City**

**1.3.1 Trial Smart Homes Technologies**

The Smart Homes tech programme continues to progress well in early 2022. We have undertaken drone surveys at two reactive response repairs blocks, and 18 blocks set for major works this year. We had a kick-off

meeting with our IT project manager that set the initial expectations and workflows necessary to instigate the installation of sensors and digital notice boards on our estates.

### ***1.3.2 Facilitating Broadband Connections***

Work to achieve 100% connectivity throughout the City continues to progress well. Solutions have recently been found to multiple blocks that were previously deemed unserviceable (such as Fleming Court), this will bring our current programme to 96%. We now have four providers active throughout the borough (Community Fibre, Hyperoptic, G Network and Virgin Media).

## **2. Cabinet Member Decisions**

- Annual Review of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Rent and associated HRA charges 2022/2023 (Joint with the Cabinet Member for City Management)
- Purchase of Properties by the Council for use as Accommodation for Former Rough Sleepers (Joint with the Cabinet Member for Finance & Smart City)

## **3. Areas of Focus**

### ***3.1 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Update***

ASB on Estates (Financial Year to Date 2021/2022)					
Injunctions Issued	Injunctions Granted	Injunctions in Process	Notices Seeking Possession Served	Acceptable Behaviour Contracts Issued	Closure Orders Issued
17	13	4	25	5	4

In December 2021 a mobile security patrol service pilot which includes a security dog was established to cover the Lancaster Gate Ward running up to May 2022. The security patrol works 7 days per week and runs from 9pm to 6am with some shifts starting at 6pm when the team patrol with the local Police team. The service has been reporting ASB issues back to the Public Protection & Licencing and the Housing ASB teams.

### ***3.2 Major Works Update***

Internal recruitment continues to be slow but is ongoing as the teams are beginning to backfill some of our vacant positions. It is positively reported that both Service Providers (United Living and Axis Europe) and their respective supply chains have returned to full strength (following supply and labour shortages due to Brexit and the pandemic) we are now seeing greater traction on our sites across the City.

A number of major works projects are set for completion in the upcoming weeks (Fountain Court by the end of February closely followed by Glastonbury House by the end of March). Building control will also make their final visit to Hallfield Estate for sign off as complete. We have a progressive programme of works to commence from the new financial year (2022/2023) with approximately 27 projects, spread across the North and South of the borough. Across London up to 1/7 of houses do not meet the Decent Home Standard. We in Westminster are well under 1% and by providing a comprehensive Major Works Programme we looking to eliminate this in the borough.

### ***3.3 Communicating with Leaseholders***

We have created a dedicated leasehold communications page at the front of the Council's leasehold web pages which holds current news and information for our leaseholders. We consulted with our residents in January 2022 to ask for feedback on our service charge letter templates. Feedback was constructive and positive, and we have incorporated a number of changes into the revised templates which will be received by our residents in March 2022.

We recognise the financial pressure that leaseholders are under, and we are doing all that we can to offer robust support. Additional Hardship Funding is also available, and information can be found on the Council's website. Online surgeries will be available for our leaseholders from 8 - 11 March 2022 (9am to 7pm) which will allow our residents to speak to our staff about the service charges for the year ahead. Our support and assistance letter will be sent out as a standalone piece of correspondence in advance of the invoice to offer help and assistance.

### ***3.4 Afghan Relocation Re-settlement Scheme Update***

Through corporation with the Home Office, we have now let our first private sector property to an Afghan family. As per our commitment to the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy Scheme (ARAP) we are still working to secure an additional four properties. We continue to work with landlords and the Home Office to ensure the needs of a potential family are being met. A few additional properties have been identified as being preferable for the scheme and inspections are ongoing.

### ***3.5 Westminster Rough Sleeping Working Group***

The Westminster RSL Working Group, chaired by PP&L's Senior Practitioner – Crime & ASB and GPH's Head of Affordable Housing & Strategy, comprises ten of the largest RSLs and Westminster Housing. The group will first meet on 16<sup>th</sup> February to review the analytical findings of their collective ASB case management data undertaken to inform WCC ASB Strategy development. The inaugural meeting will capture feedback around the analysis and create 5 sessions to establish, enhance and embed a standardised, tenure neutral, operational response to the ASB Strategy Pillars throughout Westminster's residential sector which include: prevention, early intervention, victim support, bringing perpetrators to justice, and engaging the community.

### ***3.6 Resident Engagement Activities and Opportunities***

We are now planning and preparing the implementation of our new Resident Engagement Strategy. Some of the first steps in that process will involve communicating the new ways to get involved, reactivating our email survey group (Westminster Housing Online), and beginning the process of recruiting residents to our new strategic resident engagement panel (The Policy & Performance Group). The Housing Neighbourhoods Division is in the process of setting up a new Resident Advocacy service. We have recruited to the new role of Resident Engagement & Advocacy Service Manager, and they join the Council at the start of March. We have appointed to all of the new Resident Advocate roles, and we are currently arranging start dates.

Resident Advocates will lead on resident consultation and engagement for our pipeline of Major Works projects planned for our estates. The Advocates will also lead on resident engagement and support in relation to a wide range of Housing projects. We currently have an advocate supporting residents at Pennyford Court who have been experiencing problems with ASB and we have an Advocate who will be supporting residents at Lillington & Longmore in relation to repairs issues.

## **4. Key Performance Indicators**

### ***4.1 Housing Management Contact Centre***

In January 2022 the Housing Management Contact Centre received **21,197** calls, **67%** of which were answered within 30 seconds, with the longest call waiting time 13 minutes. **54%** of calls were resolved during first contact and resident satisfaction with call handling is at **75%** which is above target.

### ***4.2 Satisfaction with Repairs Service***

Overall tenant satisfaction with repairs has remained steady at **71%** in January 2022. **95.5%** of emergency repairs were completed within target and **85%** of routine repairs were completed within target.

#### ***4.3 Overall satisfaction with Housing Services***

Tenant satisfaction that WCC provides a safe and secure home remains steady at **78%** for tenants and **69%** for leaseholders in January. Satisfaction with cleaning of communal areas is at **77%** for tenants and **64%** for leaseholders, while satisfaction with grounds maintenance is at **91%** for tenants and **78%** for leaseholders.