

**Date:** 7 December 2022

**Portfolio:** Housing Services

**The Report of:** Councillor Liza Begum

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- 1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 14 November:**
  - No decisions have been taken during this period.
- 2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date of the new administration.**

### **Major Works Update**

Work continues to progress this Autumn in the South of the borough. United Living are working on 11 live contracts and a further 8 Client Briefs are in development, 6 SPP's in review stage with our Commissioning Team with a further 2 in mobilisation. In the North of the City 5 projects are currently underway.

### **Housing Decarbonisation Process**

In line with our 2030 target, officers continue to work on the Housing Decarbonisation Programme. Through benchmarking, multiple investment scenario models can be produced and analysed to identify the best way forward on specific elements to the programme. We continue to network and collaborate with other Local Authorities and leading agencies, notably officers are inputting into the London Councils Retrofit Action Plan and are working on a Retrofit Implementation Plan for the City. Operationally, Housing officers continue to engage with a wide array of stakeholders and interested parties including colleagues in Planning, term contractors, Registered Providers, our Climate Emergency Team and the GLA. Through the Social Housing Decarbonization Fund (SHDF) set by central government, SHDF is available for social housing providers to improve the energy efficient of social homes.

### **Update on the Housing Restructure**

Following the Housing Restructure, we have recruited to all of the new Housing Officer and Resident Advocate posts. Due to the pressures of the Cost-of-Living Crisis we are in the process of recruiting an Energy Manager and we have recruited an Energy Officer within the Leasehold Services team.

The Housing Needs restructure continue to progress with various positions to be filled in the lead up to Christmas. The new structure continues to reflect our work and response to rough sleeping and builds our skills and capacity as a team to respond to and address homelessness prevention as a priority for our providers and commissioned services.

### **Greening in the Housing Services**

We are now preparing to submit our application for our first new Green Flag in 6 years, with the aim of achieving accreditation for Hallfield Estate in 2023. Aligning with our Fairer Environment ambitions the Council strives to continue to manage accessible high-quality green/open spaces that meet the needs of the diverse communities in Westminster. More broadly working with residents, the Estate Services Team are identifying areas that could do with enhanced greening on our estates such as Hall Park, John Aird Court, Holcroft, Church Street, and Mozart Estate.

### **Westminster Women's Safe Space Programme Update**

In July 2021, Westminster was awarded £451,210 funding to help ensure all self-identifying women who are rough sleepers and victims of domestic abuse receive access to accommodation, support, advocacy, and counselling in a safe environment. We are pleased to announce this funding has now been further extended until 2025, to secure Westminster Women's Safe Space Programme and a key part of combating Violence Against Women and Girls. Our strategic partners include St Mungo's, Solace and Standing Together who all contribute to the strategic oversight of this programme. The accommodation provision will provide 24-hour support and specialist accommodation.

### **Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) Update**

As the weather becomes colder the Council prepares to activate our SWEP protocols. The Greater London Assembly calls SWEP whenever the temperature drops below 0 degrees anywhere across London. Because of the difference in temperature between outer boroughs (such as Croydon and Enfield) and Westminster, we often activate SWEP before temperatures are below freezing.

The aim of SWEP is to prevent loss of life and to reduce rough sleeping during extreme weather conditions. We are therefore taking an approach that over Christmas and New Year we will focus on accommodating those identified as clinically vulnerable to Covid-19, flu and other health issues that include lung and respiratory conditions. In line with previous practice, we will work collaboratively with partners to ensure surge and additional winter pressure funding is implemented effectively across the rough sleeping service with our aims to reduce the numbers of homelessness rough sleepers.

### **Residents First Programme Update**

As part of the wider Residents First programme that launched over the summer, we continue to send letters out to residents introducing them to their housing officer, estates services officer and repairs surveyor. We have a regular feature in the YourHome e-newsletter on Community Thursdays dates that we are visiting, and a 1-page article in the YourHome November edition magazine.

We have created new features on the Rapid Mobile Solution so that staff are able to report issues quickly and effectively whilst on site at our estate. We have also created reports that are able to collate the information and provide key details about the estate on types of issues raised. We continue to review the Housing website pages which will focus on content and user navigation. Our aim is to make it more straight forward, ensuring key information is available and up to date.