

**Climate Action, Housing and
Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny
Committee**

Date: May 2023

Portfolio: Climate Action, Regeneration & Renters

The Report of: Councillor Matt Noble

**Report Author and
Contact Details:** Nikki Costain
ncostain@westminster.gov.uk

1. **Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 19 April 2023:**
 - **Walden House/Cundy Street Quarter**
2. **The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date.**

3. Climate Action

3.1 Westminster Green Investment 2028

Information on the investors to the Green Bond was circulated to Members separately, in response to queries raised at the 19 April Scrutiny Committee. Further details on specific projects funded by the Bond will be released in due course.

3.2 Green Doctors

As of the 18th May 2023, the Green Doctors service has delivered energy advice and support to a total of 261 Westminster residents (109 home visits, 152 telephone consultations). These figures are split between a number of funding sources: Public Health (allocation now complete); Westminster Carbon Offset fund (£45k allocated to support 400 visits – currently active); GLA-funded Warm Homes Advice Service (support for up to 75 visits – currently active).

Contract cost: The costs of the Green Dr service delivered by Groundwork and funded through the Carbon offset fund are set out in the table below. These costs cover: Groundwork staff costs, energy saving measures and other costs (transportation, technology etc).

Consultation Type	Tele	Home
No. of Consultation	275	125
Cost Per Consultation	£87.63	£168.51
Total	£24,097.91	£21,063.89
Overall Programme Total		£45,161.80

Advice and support provided: Energy advice given to residents during both home visits and telephone consultations consists of:

- General heating advice e.g. reduce the time period heating is on, reducing temperature, using radiator valves to control heating of individual rooms.
- Room-by-room advice on reducing energy consumption of appliances and reducing water usage.
- Wider advice on bills and onward referrals, covering fuel poverty, switching, smart meters, debt advice and income and financial support.

Free efficiency measures installed during home visits include, where applicable: low energy lighting, power down devices, radiator panels, draughtproofing and efficient shower heads.

Monitoring: Groundwork provides a range of monitoring information on a monthly basis, including energy, cost and carbon savings resulting from both over the phone advice and in-person support. Savings from installed measures provide an accurate indication of the likely savings made by residents as they are physical changes to support greater efficiency of energy within the property. Savings from behavioural change assume that the advice given is implemented by customers 100% of the time, which is unlikely to be the case. Officers are reviewing scaling-down the project behavioural savings to seek a more accurate indication of the likely savings associated with energy advice.

Furthermore, officers are exploring options to receive more qualitative data from users of the service to elicit user views on the most and least helpful aspects of the advice service. This will be used to inform future service design as we seek to deliver a longer-term support offer for residents.

3.3 Sustainable City Charter

The Sustainable City Charter was launched in 2022 and is an innovative, business-led climate action pledge for organisations. It contains eight commitments for reducing carbon emissions from non-domestic buildings. These cover areas such as energy use, procurement, transport, waste and deliveries, and include committing to net zero buildings by 2040 or earlier.

The Charter has now attracted expressions of interest from nearly 100 organisations, of which 26 have become full signatories. Upcoming activity includes ongoing promotion, targeted engagement with signatories to design a new expanded Charter toolkit and delivering a programme of knowledge-sharing events for signatories throughout the rest of 2023. Both the Technical Working Group and the Steering Group for the Charter are now at full capacity with a good range of signatories represented on each.

3.4 Citizens' Climate Assembly Update

The Westminster Citizens' Climate Assembly will be taking place on the 24th and 25th June, and 15th and 16th July at City Hall. The Assembly will focus on the remit question: 'How can we overcome the main barriers to Westminster becoming a net zero city by 2040 together? How do we ensure this is delivered in the fairest way?'

Cllr Noble will be attending the first session to welcome participants, and the last session to thank them for their time and recommendations. Participants will then present their final recommendations to the Climate Leadership Group in September. Assembly recommendations will then inform the update to the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

The participant invitation letter was recently sent to around 10,000 Westminster households, and 192 individuals signed up to take part. Sortition are now running their selection process and we are on track to achieve 50 participants who are broadly representative of the borough's demographics, whilst slightly oversampling young people, those from the North Paddington wards and those who are financially struggling given the Assembly's focus on fairness.

Stakeholder engagement workshops are currently being led by Involve to introduce the Assembly, gain stakeholder buy-in, and capture perspective to inform session design. The timeline for these workshops is below:

- 24th May: Two online sessions (AM and PM) were held for external partners (Westminster based voluntary, community, public and commercial organisations)
- 6th June: Session for Council Services (i.e., CEAP action owners)
- 8th June: Scheduled to present on the Assembly at Loop Live and at session of the Climate Leadership Group meeting

An Advisory Group has been established to provide oversight of the Assembly process. Members of the Advisory Group include:

- Cllr Matt Noble
- Dr Amy Jones (Director of Environment)
- Pancho Lewis (Climate Citizens Project)
- Syed Ahmed (Energy for London)
- Prof Graham Smith (University of Westminster, Climate Deliberation)
- Rhona Cadenhead (Former Exec Director EDI, Waltham Forest Council)
- Teele Pekh (DD Foundation).

The first meeting was held on 18th May, where Advisory Group members discussed progress so far, as well as ideas of evidence/experts/resources we could use to explore barriers to net zero linked with fairness. Subsequent meetings are to be scheduled for before, between and after the Assembly sessions.

3.5 External Funding Bid news

The Planning and Climate Emergency Team were successful in securing external funding of £300,000 (details on funding source currently embargoed) to support delivery of the Taskforce's priority workstreams for the next two years. These workstreams include:

- Pilot projects to test boundaries of current planning policy and practice to explore innovative retrofit measures and approaches and inform policy and process improvements

- The development of building typology-based delivery approaches/procurement clubs - providing clear, actionable routes to delivering retrofit that simplify, de-risk, upscale and speed up delivery.
- A retrofit skills and training pilot to support the development of local skills base to enable retrofit delivery
- A stewardship programme providing a single, trusted source of retrofit advice and support, including online resource hub, bi-annual retrofit conferences and retrofit demonstrator home

North Paddington Team were successful in their application for the GLA Green and Resilient Spaces Fund. They have been awarded £40,000. Project text below.

‘Westminster City Council have an aspiration to truly transform the Grand-Union canal into a blue-green spine for the north of the city. We envision a waterway that is not only an effective walking and cycling corridor, but also as a place that can enrich lives and make a difference to the communities it runs through. This aligns closely with Canal and River’s Trust’s vision for living waterways, ones that are teeming with wildlife, heritage and people. This bid proposes a joint project between Westminster City Council and The Canal & River Trust, focusing on the North Paddington Canalside between Little Venice and Queens Park. The project will enable us to better connect local people with the waterway, make it more central to their communities whilst strengthening the area’s climate resilience and biodiversity.’

3.6 Environmental Justice Measure

The Environmental Justice Measure (EJM) is an interactive data tool that covers a broad range of indicators to present transparent information for residents to better understand how environmental change impacts their local ward. Westminster is the first local authority to create an interactive framework to enable residents to make informed decisions and act to reduce negative environmental impacts in their area.

The Climate Emergency and Strategy and Intelligence teams have recently won a number of awards for their work on the EJM, including the Excellence in Local and Regional Public Sector and the Overall Award at the Geography on Government awards. They are also presenting their work on the EJM at London Councils on 7th June and at the LGA Annual Conference on 5th July.

4. Regeneration

4.1 Church Street Programme Update

Following the unanimous planning decision for the Church Street Regeneration (Sites A, B and C) Scheme in March, progress around land assembly to enable construction work to begin continues at pace. All secure tenants have now been successfully re-housed (either temporarily or permanently). Initial demolition will take place of a storage area to the rear of Site A and the programme will continue as vacant possession is secured of further blocks.

The procurement of a strategic delivery partner is also progressing well. Following the evaluation of the initial selection questionnaires responses and shortlist of four bidders has been identified. Both successful and unsuccessful bidders have been informed of the outcome. The four shortlisted

organisations will receive Invitation to Participate in Negotiations and submit Tenders in the first week of June. Negotiations are scheduled to begin in August. Key to the procurement process is participation of Church Street residents. Recruitment of interested residents has been completed and two have appointed as part of the assessment panel process.

4.2 Ebury Bridge

Construction of Phase 1 continues to progress with completion anticipated summer 2024. This first phase will deliver 226 homes with half of these at social rent levels.

All residents and businesses (located in properties required to be vacated, in order for the Phase 2 blocks to be delivered) are receiving support from the team with their temporary/permanent moves away from the estate. It's anticipated that vacant possession of Bridge, Westbourne, Victoria and Rye Houses will be fully vacated by the end of May.

JF Hunt have been selected as the contractors to carry out the demolition of Phase 2 of the scheme and have begun mobilising in preparation for this work. It is anticipated that this programme of work will be completed by the first half of 2024 and will enable the chosen design and build contractor to begin work swiftly.

Consultation with residents and local neighbours is also taking place around reserved matters for Phase 2 of the scheme. This includes community facilities, public realm and the boundary treatment with surrounding buildings. Initial feedback on proposals has been very well received.

4.3 Balmoral & Darwin House Update

Construction of Block A commenced during March 2023 and is due to reach practical completion in November 2024. This phase will provide 34 Community Supported Homes (CSH), including a warden flat. Reaching this milestone prior to the GLA's March 2023 deadline has unlocked £5m of grant funding with £3.6m claimed to date.

The current design for Block B will provide 18 intermediate tenure homes and works will start in February 2025, following completion of the first block, and will begin with the demolition of Darwin House. A further £1.5m GLA grant is allocated to this phase and the majority of this will be claimed once works start. On 16th April a scheme ground-breaking event was held, attended by Cllr Noble, representatives from the contractor Wates, along with local resident groups.

4.4 Lisson Arches

The Lisson Arches scheme will provide 60 new community supportive homes, 59 of which will be new social rented one-bedroom apartments, along with a two-bedroom scheme manager's residence. There will also be a 1300sqm enterprise business space which forms the base of the building. Construction started in 2020 and completion is expected during summer 2023. Residents of Penn House are due to be moved into their new homes in August 2023.

4.5 Luton Street Award

Following completion at the end of 2022, the Luton Street and Fisherton Street development scheme won the 'Built Environment Award at the Better Society Awards in May 2023. The scheme won the award in a category that celebrates schemes that have contributed to making the environment a better place, in terms of accessibility, use of sustainable materials or energy efficiency.

4.6 Melrose and Keith, Ordnance Mews, Helmsdale House completion

In March 2023, three infills projects; Melrose and Keith, Ordnance Mews, and Helmsdale House reached completion, providing 15 brand new social rent homes.

4.7 Ashbridge, Ashmill and Cosway

The Ashmill development scheme reached practical completion in February 2023, providing two larger sized social rent homes for local families. The Ashbridge scheme is approaching the final stage of completion and will deliver 26 brand new social rent homes.

The Cosway scheme is delivering 49 market sale homes to provide cross subsidy for the development programme and completion is expected in July this year.

4.8 Carlton Dene and Westmead

Construction activity started at the Carlton Dene and Westmead development sites, meaning that the projects have successfully met the GLA's 31st March funding deadline and as a result over £22m grant funding has been secured.

Carlton Dene is delivering 65 self-contained extra care flats along with 22 social rent homes. Following tenure changes agreed during 2022 Westmead is now a 100% affordable scheme delivering 34 social rent and 31 intermediate tenure homes.

5. Renters

5.1 Private Rented Sector Strategy 2021 - 2025

We are now in year four of the five-year Strategy. Key work this year is to develop a Private Rented Sector Charter to raise awareness of tenants' rights, the required standards in the sector and inform tenants and organisations about accessing advice and support.

The Private Rented Sector Strategy Group, which includes members from the advice and landlord sectors, continues to meet regularly to help ensure the Strategy is delivered and to better understand the market. Feedback on an initial outline of the Private Rented Sector Charter was obtained at the last meeting on 17th May

Private rents in Westminster continue to rise with a two-bedroom median home now costing £724 per week in April 2023 compared with £594 in April 2022¹. The gap between 30th percentile rents and Local Housing Allowance rates is also widening, with the difference now £258 per week compared with £135 per week one year ago for a two-bedroom property.

¹ Hometrack

5.2 Renters Reform Bill 2023

Introduced on 17th May, the Bill follows a White Paper in August 2022 [Fairer Private Rented Sector](#) and a consultation on applying the Decent Homes Standard to the sector. It is widely supported. The main provisions are:

1. **The Abolition of Section 21**, 'no fault evictions', which means landlords will have to seek possession on specific grounds. There will be new grounds to allow eviction based on consistently unpaid rent (at least two months arrears at least three times in three years) and if the landlord wishes to sell the property. There are further grounds for anti-social behaviour, such as noise complaints, where the notice period can be shorted to two weeks
2. **Ending of Fixed-term Contracts** i.e., assured shorthold tenancies will be replaced with open-term tenancies with a requirement for two months' notice
3. **New Housing Ombudsman** for the sector which will help to resolve low-level disputes between landlords and tenants, and which will be mandatory for landlords to join
4. **New Register and portal for landlords** where tenants can check if their landlords are compliant with legislation. It will also provide tenants with the opportunity to rate their landlords and look at their letting history to improve accountability
5. **Limits on rent increases**, increasing the notice period from one to two months and only enabling increase once a year
6. **Tenancies can no longer be refused on certain grounds** i.e., having children, receiving benefits or having pets (unless the landlord can justify why having pets is unreasonable etc.)

Local authority enforcement powers are also strengthened and the new Decent Homes Standard for the sector is likely to go ahead.

Officers are working to fully understand the implications of the Bill for tenant security, on the local market and for our enforcement services.