

Housing, Finance and Corporate Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee Briefing

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1. Regeneration

Church Street

- 1.1. The Green Spine proposals are now moving into detailed design and a planning application for elements of the scheme where it is required is going to be submitted shortly. The project is still on course to commence delivery later this financial year.
- 1.2. The draft masterplan is due to be published for public consultation later in June, following the election period. The consultation will run for six weeks and feedback will then be collated and considered before a final version of the masterplan is submitted for adoption.
- 1.3. A number of other events and activities are planned over the summer and early Autumn period in Church Street. This will include an Arts and Antiques Fair which will be supported by the Council and run by the Antiques Traders' Association.

Ebury Bridge

- 1.4. The project team has concluded a detailed review of the Ebury Bridge project. Draft proposals for the project will be put to Members in due course, once we are satisfied that they will achieve the project's objectives, before wider consultation with residents.
- 1.5. Progress continues on rehousing tenants and acquiring properties from leaseholders by agreement.

Housing Zone

- 1.6. The claim for the first tranche of Housing Zone funding will be made in May. Discussions are taking place on the terms for the next, more substantial advance.

Tollgate Gardens

- 1.7. Progress continues to be good. Works to Tollgate House have commenced, these are primarily external cladding and improvements to the shared areas within the building.

Infill programme

- 1.8. The first sale has been completed, at a price in excess of our valuations, enabling the programme to be extended. Options to accelerate completion of new homes are being progressed. Design of the first new build homes is underway.

2. Affordable Housing

- 2.1. Octavia Housing is currently marketing 11 intermediate homes for sale and rent at their new development located at North Wharf Road in Paddington. These intermediate homes will be affordable to a range of households eligible for intermediate housing with incomes ranging from £29,000 to £60,000. This scheme, which also includes 16 social housing units, has been delivered by Taylor Wimpey as part of their affordable housing obligations secured through a s106 agreement and transferred to Octavia Housing. Westminster has 100% nomination rights to both the social and intermediate homes at this scheme. The social housing units are currently being let.
- 2.2. We are reviewing all our procedures and priorities for intermediate housing.

3. Housing Policy

Housing White Paper

- 3.1. The Government published its white paper "Fixing Our Broken Housing Market" on 6th February.
- 3.2. The paper asked for comments on 38 detailed questions dealing with proposed changes to national planning policies, strategic planning and the handling of planning applications. We responded by the May deadline.

Homelessness Reduction Act

- 3.3. This Bill got Royal Assent in April and it is thought it will be enacted in April 2018. We understand that the Government is updating the statutory code of guidance relating to homelessness.
- 3.4. Ministers have announced that they will make £61m available to local authorities to meet the additional burdens arising from the Act and that the Act is estimated to make savings for local authorities by year 3. The methodology for distributing the £61m nationally is unknown. We are doing our own modelling to estimate the additional costs that will arise from the Act.

Higher Value Voids Levy

- 3.5. The Government has announced that they will still go ahead with the policy but the first payment will be postponed until at least 2018. A consultation on the formula to determine the payment is expected. In May, the Government announced a regional pilot for the housing association right to buy extension until 2021 (the higher value voids levy is intended to fund the housing association right to buy extension).

Community Supported Housing Review

- 3.6. A review of our community supportive housing (CSH) stock is underway and will be completed in June/July. The review is considering:
- How well our CSH stock is meeting current demand and how well it will meet future demand;
 - How well our CSH is contributing to meeting the Council's key priorities and objectives;
 - Any changes that are needed (for the stock to better meet current and future demand the Council's priorities) and how they can be made.
- 3.7. The review responds to a number of factors:
- The future demand for CSH is uncertain;
 - Some stock is of poor quality and needs investment;
 - There are high numbers of studio's and properties which are not wheelchair accessible;
 - Demand from older council tenants in general needs housing i.e. those that might be under occupying are relatively low.

4. CityWest Homes (CWH)

Performance

- 4.1. CWH performed well against its 2016/17 Management Agreement targets, including exceeding the 'outperform' target for income collection.

CWH Board

- 4.2. The board has undergone much change in the last year, with six out of the thirteen members joining in the past six months. The new appointments have broadened the skill set of the board which is proving beneficial as CWH delivers its transformation programme and changes its service delivery model.

Service Transformation

- 4.3. Work continues on the development of a new service delivery target operating model, supported by a digital programme.
- 4.4. A new refreshed website is available for customer testing and feedback through CWH's existing website and the multichannel contact centre remains on track for full implementation in June 2017.
- 4.5. Housing management services currently provided through Pinnacle will transfer to CWH in June, to be consolidated into the new operating model and contact centre due to launch in June which will include:
- A dedicated multichannel contact centre which will aim to resolve 75% of queries/ calls first time.
 - Four area hubs with:
 - local dedicated teams to provide enhanced reception services;
 - specialist teams better able to resolve more complex queries and challenges;

- a range of 'in-the-community' resident access points, including surgeries, home visits, block inspections, pro-active contact with our most vulnerable;
 - Re-location of services from four estate offices (Lillington and Longmoore; Little Venice; Paddington Green and St John's Wood) to the area hubs.
- 4.6. Feedback from customer engagement sessions on the use of estate offices has been positive and the suggestions generated are being built into local service arrangements to ensure vulnerable residents are able to access services and will receive greater support than was possible through the previous service model.

Creation of a Subsidiary Company

- 4.7. In April, CWH established CityWest Homes Services, to support CWH in its delivery of services and to provide a vehicle for delivering future new business opportunities.

Repairs and Major Works Procurement

- 4.8. The letting of new repairs and major works contracts is on track for phased implementation between April-September 2017.
- 4.9. Consultation on staffing changes to support the new contracts is in progress. The changes are designed to improve the quality and accountability for stock investment decisions and to strengthen contract management arrangements.

5. Rough Sleeping

- 5.1. Our new Assessment Centre opened in the week commencing 22nd May for its first group of residents. The service will rapidly assess rough sleepers who have come to Westminster from other areas of the UK and elsewhere in order to provide a supported assessment and reconnection service. The maximum stay is 28 days and is being delivered in partnership with No Second Night Out (commissioned by the GLA) and other local support services.
- 5.2. In May 2017, the Rough Sleeping Team coordinated a cross sector working party on acquired brain injury (ABI); a condition described as an invisible disability with further cloaks including trauma, drugs, alcohol and physical health. There is a small emerging evidence base of the high prevalence of brain injury in the homelessness population and the working party has developed an action plan to improve awareness, skills and understanding of treatment pathways. The group included partners from NHS, adult social care and the specialist charity Headway. Case studies were brought to the group and the expert advice garnered has already made an impact. It is hoped this improved understanding will deliver improved outcomes for this client group in the long term.
- 5.3. Meanwhile the service continues to work with rough sleepers on our streets and in particular areas of pressure. Operations have been undertaken in recent months in partnership with colleagues in CMC alongside the Police and the Home Office.

6. Hubs

- 6.1. The Hubs Steering Group last met on 25th April. A recent piece of work to map how the Council's current spending on service delivery distributes across specific housing estates was presented to the Group for information and delegates were also updated on the Council's Corporate Property review.

7. Specialist Housing Strategy for Older People (SHSOP)

- 7.1. Main contractor tender returns for the new Beachcroft Care Home have been assessed and officers have formally issued their recommendation to appoint their preferred contractor. Subject to Cabinet Member authorisation, the contractor will be appointed via a two stage 'Design and Build' contract and will commence work in May.
- 7.2. Initial design options have been presented for both Carlton Dene and Westmead in line with the SHSOP projected care requirements. The design team are incorporating client amendments and I will have meetings with Ward Councillors as soon as the initial options have been sufficiently scoped.