



City of Westminster

Committee Agenda

Title: **Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee**

Meeting Date: **Wednesday 27th January, 2021**

Time: **7.00 pm**

Venue: **This will be a virtual meeting**

Members: **Councillors:**

Barbara Arzymanow	Guthrie McKie
Antonia Cox	Matt Noble
Elizabeth Hitchcock	Andrew Smith
Ian Rowley	Hamza Taouzzale

This will be a virtual meeting. Members of the public and press are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussion Part 1 of the Agenda.

[Link to live meeting](#)

This meeting will be live streamed and recorded. To access the recording after the meeting, please revisit the link.



If you require any further information, please contact the Committee Officer, Artemis Kassi (akassi@westminster.gov.uk).

Corporate Website: www.westminster.gov.uk

Note for Members: Members are reminded that Officer contacts are shown at the end of each report and Members are welcome to raise questions in advance of the meeting. With regard to item 2, guidance on declarations of interests is included in the Code of Governance; if Members and Officers have any particular questions they should contact the Head of Committee and Governance Services in advance of the meeting please.

AGENDA

PART 1 (IN PUBLIC)

1. MEMBERSHIP

To note any changes to the membership and to elect a chairman.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive declarations by Members and Officers of the existence and nature of any pecuniary interests, or any other significant interest in matters on this agenda.

3. MINUTES

To agree the minutes of the meeting of the Environment, Highways and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 7th October 2020.

(Pages 5 - 10)

4. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING SERVICES

Councillor David Harvey, the Cabinet Member for Housing Services, to provide an outline of his portfolio and a verbal update to the Committee on current and forthcoming issues in his portfolio and to answer questions from Members.

(Pages 11 - 24)

5. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES AND REGENERATION

Councillor Heather Acton, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration, to provide a verbal update and outline of her portfolio to the Committee on current and forthcoming issues in her portfolio.

(Pages 25 - 30)

6. WORK PROGRAMME REPORT

To discuss the Committee's work programme for 2021.

(Pages 31 - 32)

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

To note any other business.

Stuart Love, Chief Executive
27 January 2021

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CITY OF WESTMINSTER

MINUTES

Environment, Highways and Public Protection Policy & Scrutiny Committee

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a virtual meeting of the **Environment, Highways and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Wednesday 7 October 2020**.

Members Present: Councillors Antonia Cox (Chairman), Barbara Arzymanow, Elizabeth Hitchcock, Ian Rowley, Paul Dimoldenberg, Aicha Less and Pancho Lewis.

Apologies: Councillor Tony Devenish

Also Present: Councillor Heather Acton, Cabinet Member for Licensing and Public Protection, Wayne Chance McKay, Head of City Operations, Mark Lawrence, Superintendent at Met Police, Elizabeth Barrett, Scrutiny Officer and Kisi Smith-Charlemagne, Senior Governance and Committee Officer.

1. MEMBERSHIP

1.1 The Chairman sought any absences, apologies or substitutions to the committee's membership. There were no changes to the membership of the Committee.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 The Chairman sought any personal or prejudicial interests in respect of the items to be discussed from members and officers, in addition to the standing declarations previously made.

2.2 There were no declarations made.

3. MINUTES

3.1 Councillor Heather Acton requested paragraph 4.3 of the minutes to be amended to reflect that the BLM demonstrations were unsafe due to COVID restrictions.

3.2 **RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the City Management and Public Protection Policy and Scrutiny Committee held on 11 June 2020 be signed by the Chairman as a correct record of proceedings.

4. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR PUBLIC PROTECTION AND LICENSING

- 4.1 The committee received a portfolio update from Councillor Heather Acton, Cabinet Member for Licensing and Public Protection. Councillor Acton provided an overview of the portfolio, highlighting recent areas such as the consultation work carried out regarding the Street Entertainment policy and reviewing the council's Licensing Policy, as it was a statutory duty to do so, and this must be published by the first week of January 2021. Councillor Acton added that a Cumulative Impact Assessment was undertaken earlier this year which reviewed the cumulative stress that licenced premises cause on licensing objectives, looking at data from the past three years (pre-COVID). Councillor Acton advised the committee that work has continued towards the publication of a new Private Rented Sector Strategy. Following approval from the Cabinet Members for Public Protection and Licensing and Housing, the draft strategy went to consultation on 21 September 2020.
- 4.2 Members of the committee queried the change to the COVID legislation, how the City inspectors were responding to the increase of unlicensed music events and drug dealing operations linked to private properties. Committee members raised queries regarding the number of rough sleepers and the council's Tent Policy, specifically whether there had been any changes in the legislation. Members also raised queries regarding the number of homeless persons who were moved from the streets to hostel accommodation and then returned to being homeless. Members of the committee raised further questions regarding the reopening of theatres and whether Christmas tree lighting ceremonies would take place considering COVID. Members also queried the council's bulky waste collection, highlighting the need for a faster collections, flyers/poster to advertise the service and easy booking instructions for residents to follow.
- 4.3 Councillor Acton responded to the committee's questions advising that there had been a shift in working patterns for the City Inspectors due to COVID and that she believed that there were adequate resources. She also added that several e-mail addresses and phone lines had been set up for residents and service users to raise any concerns regarding COVID. With regard to unlicensed music events, Councillor Acton advised that some drug dealing had been observed, but that she was unaware of any specific drug dealing operations. Responding to the queries raised regarding tents and rough sleepers, Councillor Acton advised the tents can be removed if they are unoccupied or abandoned, however there was some risk involved due to drug paraphernalia.
- 4.4. Councillor Acton informed the committee that the council were changing the way in which it offered services to the homeless including finding accommodation. She added that of the 269 rough sleepers recorded on the streets of Westminster, most were EEA nationals with no recourse to public funds. Councillor Acton informed the committee that there was a small number of people who had returned to living on the streets, but that many others had been helped into employment and private rental accommodation. Councillor Acton advised that she would look into the arrangements for the Christmas tree lighting ceremonies and liaise with Councillor Harvey regarding flyers for the bulky waste collection.

5. UPDATE FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HIGHWAYS

- 5.1 The Committee received a portfolio report from Councillor Andrew Smith, Cabinet Member for Environment and Highways. It was advised by the chairman that any questions from the Committee were to be sent in writing and responses would be circulated after the meeting.

6. SAFER WESTMINSTER PARTNERSHIP

- 6.1 The Committee received a report from the Director of Public Protection and Licensing. Wayne Chance McKay, Head of City Operations, presented the report advising the committee that the purpose of this report was to provide an overview of the Safer Westminster Partnership and the 2020/23 Strategy, and also highlight some of the challenges faced. He informed the committee that a strategic assessment was produced annually as required by the Police and Justice Act 2006. Mr Chance McKay explained to the committee that Covid-19 had a significant impact upon crime levels in the borough, particularly in reducing crime in the West End as the opportunities to commit crimes have diminished due to COVID-19 restrictions. He added that conversely the most vulnerable in our communities have become at increased risk of domestic abuse, child exploitation and the elderly to fraud and scams.
- 6.2 Mr Chance McKay advised the committee that the 2019 Strategic Assessment was used as the evidence base for the 2020/23 Safer Westminster Partnership strategy and a workshop was held on 29 January for partners to help develop the 2020/23 Safer Westminster Partnership strategy. He explained to the committee that the workshop covered three thematic areas: Victims, Offenders and the West End. Mr Chance McKay informed the committee that the vision of the SWP remains 'Making Westminster safer by working in partnership to reduce the risk and harm of crime and ASB, focusing on protecting the most vulnerable within our communities'. He added that This highlighted the priority of the SWP to focus resources towards protecting the most vulnerable within Westminster.
- 6.3 Mr Chance McKay advised the committee that a joint vulnerable adult's task and finish group with the Safeguarding Adults Executive Group had been set up with key partners to address the increased victimisation risk older residents face, in particular to becoming victims of financial abuse. He informed the committee that although most people are not victims of crime, those who are victimised consistently face the highest risk of being victimised again and that 20% of victims who were Westminster residents, were repeat victims. Regarding the most problematic offenders, Mr Chance McKay advised the committee that half of all crime is committed by people who have been through the criminal justice system already and therefore a small proportion of offenders are responsible for a significant volume of crime. Concentrating resources on these offenders will have the greatest impact on reducing re-offending.

- 6.4 Mark Lawrence, Superintendent at Met Police, addressed the committee confirming that enhancing the partnership response to countering terrorism and focusing on what matters most to residents, businesses and visitors was also a priority to the Safer Partnership. Superintendent Lawrence confirmed that due to COVID Westminster has seen the biggest reduction in crime rates, down by 20,000 compared to this time last year. He confirmed that COVID presented the Police with different challenges, but that the Police was working and communicating with partners was better than ever. Superintendent Lawrence informed the committee that as a result of the COVID legislation 159 sanctions were issued, which was the second highest of the London boroughs.
- 6.5 Going back to the Assessment, Superintendent Lawrence advised the committee that there was a focus to reduce crime hotspots, confirming that 58% of all crime in Westminster occurred in just two of its twenty wards, the West End and St James's. These are not just hotspots of crime and disorder for Westminster but for London.
- 6.6 Members of the committee queried that targets behind the partnership's objectives and how the partnership intended to measure and track its successes or failures. The committee members request copies of the targets, specifically youth crime. Members also felt that young people aged 18-25 found it difficult to access services, and members queried if officers were lobbying for this cohort to receive additional support. The members also questioned the Police's 5% rate of solving crimes and asked if increasing this was a priority. Members were also concerned with anti-social behaviour (ASB) in light of COVID and asked what the partnership's plans is for tackling ASB. Finally, members queried the partnership's plans for Autumn Nights operation.
- 6.7 In response to the committee member's queries Mr Chance McKay advised the committee that an action plan was developed alongside the strategy which contained clear targets and measures; the committee members requested copies of the action plan and targets. Mr Chance McKay also confirmed that the partnership was indeed lobbying for the for the reconstruction of services for young people aged 18-25. Superintendent Lawrence informed the committee that the solving crime rate was between 5-10% in the last 6 months. He said they needed to do better and that they were continuing to work with the CPS encouraging victims to support prosecutions.

6.8 Mr Chance McKay informed the committee that the partnership was working alongside WCC housing and tenancy management teams to tackle ASB, including operation Autumn Nights. He advised the committee that there were some challenges with young people aged 18-25 due to unemployment. The chairman thanked officers for their report, she noted that the London Probation Service requires improvement and advised that victim satisfaction had decreased which was unsatisfactory.

7. WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER

7.1 The Committee received a report from Director of Policy and Projects, the report asked the committee to agree topics for the 2020/21 work programme and to note the committee's action tracker. Members of the committee considered bringing forward the item on rough sleeping and queried how the committee will monitor and track the performance of services within its remit. The committee also wished to see 'High Level' COVID specific updates at each meeting going forward.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

7.1 The was no other business

The Meeting ended at 8:30pm.

CHAIRMAN: _____

DATE: _____

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City of Westminster

Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday 27 January 2021

Report Of: Councillor David Harvey

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Housing

Report Author and Contact Details: Alexandra Deolinda Severino
adseverino@westminster.gov.uk

1 Housing Priorities – City for All

Cleaner and Greener

Leverage energy efficiency measures in housing

- 1.1 Modelling has been undertaken to understand what is required to get the stock close to net zero carbon and the options for achieving that and analysis of the energy performance of the housing stock has been undertaken as a baseline. All but around 300 housing units are rated above the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) E rating.
- 1.2 The estimated cost of bringing the stock to an EPC B rating is £180M and between £230-£350M to reach net zero carbon. With limited external funding currently available, movement in the existing capital programme is required to accommodate this work. £145k of grant funding has been secured for E rated properties to benefit from internal wall insulation and heating upgrades and £300k to complete cavity wall insulation to over 350 properties.
- 1.3 Planned activities can be divided into reducing energy consumption and off-setting consumption. Work to reduce consumption/decarbonise the stock includes enhanced insulation and replacing traditional boilers with air source heat pumps. Options to off-set consumption include photovoltaic panels. The various technologies will be trialled so that the impact can be better modelled.

Vibrant Communities

Develop a new approach for major works for our buildings

- 1.4 The major works delivery process is under review which will result in a reduction in the process and improvements in the accuracy of indicative leaseholder bills. This year a programme management approach has been put in place to oversee delivery of the capital investment programme.

- 1.5** A new format is being developed for monthly project updates from the very start of the project which will be included on the project webpages for residents. This is in addition to the standard communication for each project and will standardise performance management across projects as they move through the milestones.
- 1.6** Operationally, COVID-19 has pushed major works communications to a digital approach and 42 online sessions have been held with residents since April, reaching new audiences. In addition, over 450 calls have been made to residents as part of the reassurance before restarting work onsite in July 2020.

Supporting Vulnerable residents

- 1.7** Reviews of the floating support contract and support arrangements for care leavers are underway to ensure that service users get the help they need to sustain their tenancies. The floating support service has been delivered by Single Homelessness Project (SHP) since July 2018, supporting people across Westminster that occupy their own homes and require support to sustain their tenancy and thrive. The service operates a holistic offer by not looking at single issues but at the person as a whole and the wider support they may require. The service helps them navigate any identified support issues, looking to improve their health and wellbeing whilst building their resilience generally to live independently.
- 1.8** The housing service is working with partners to establish a multi-agency framework to deal with mental health issues. This will lead to the establishment of a multi-agency panel to provide better support.
- 1.9** A new approach to involving residents in resolving anti-social behaviour (ASB) through a case review panel is being developed and will be piloted later this year. This pilot will run in two geographically distant wards and engaged residents from one ward will help peer review anonymised ASB cases relating to the other ward. It will give engaged residents the opportunity to sense check the council's approach to ASB management, establish an operating model for the group, and understand how well council methods and approaches align with resident expectations.
- 1.10** Work towards DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation is progressing. This is an in-depth piece of work expected to take a year to complete. Housing Solutions Service (HSS) is also working towards accreditation as a contractual requirement and repairs contractor Morgan Sindall is working with DAHA to develop a brand-new contractor's accreditation for responding to domestic abuse.

Redesign of service model through shared space and maximise the use of public building

- 1.11** As part of the vibrant communities initiative to review how services are delivered, the housing service is designing a project to improve wellbeing and community engagement and to ensure community assets are used to their full potential. Pilots that are currently being explored include working with our contractors Morgan Sindall and Continental landscape to improve the outdoor spaces in partnership with residents. Consultation will determine residents priorities and options to be pursued. Examples include rejuvenating the existing wildlife garden, building a wildlife friendly vegetable garden and engaging residents with the use of allotment planters. The project will deliver a series of pilot interventions to residents of Churchill Gardens in partnership with other services to create a more engaged, resilient community. Pilots will seek to strengthen partnerships, co-ordinate council and community services with better use of local assets.

1.12 Successful initiatives will be scale-able and will be rolled out citywide as appropriate.

Private rented sector strategy

1.13 The new Private Rented Sector Strategy (led by the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration) that was discussed by the committee and consulted on last year, is due to be published shortly. Nearly 100 responses were received including from tenants, landlords and advice organisations representing the sector. The Strategy includes a range of actions to support the sector including introducing a discretionary licensing scheme for all houses in multiple occupation across the city, subject to having considered the results of a separate consultation which closes in February.

Smart Cities

Trial smart homes technologies

1.14 The housing service is exploring the use of technology in homes and on estates with the intention to test a range of technology through small pilots to determine the benefits that may be delivered by roll-out across the city. The initial areas for exploration have been selected as offering significant improvement to the reliability of the repairs service, cost savings and to look to the future at what might be possible as follows:

- Sensors to detect leaks, trigger communal lighting etc.
- Drones - to view hard to reach areas that previously would have required scaffolding
- Digital noticeboards – to explore how we can improve the accuracy and timeliness of information to residents

1.15 Due diligence is being undertaken regarding the use of drones, including user identification, privacy, data protection and information storage and establishing arrangements for monitoring drone flights and calculation of comparable scaffold costs and savings.

Facilitate broadband connections

1.16 The project is in delivery phase and 65% of homes now have access to full fibre. Operators are on site or mobilising for work which when complete will bring this percentage to 72% and plans are in place to secure fibre broadband services for 80% of homes by March 2021.

1.17 Community Fibre and Hyperoptic are currently completing work in the borough with G- Network mobilising to commence their programme of works. Virgin Media have also signed the citywide wayleave however their plans have been paused due to COVID-19. We are also in discussions with Openreach with regards to the citywide wayleave.

1.18 The infrastructure work necessary is being completed by operators at no cost to the Council. The Council's staff costs associated with review and oversight of operator's infrastructure work is also covered by operators.

2 Housing Contact Centre

2.1 During Q3 a total of 71,432 calls were received into Housing Services, an increase in calls of 20% on the previous quarter. October saw c.30,000 calls into the contact centre - the highest volume received to date. This was as a result of the reintroduction of routine repairs, combined with the annual heating switch on and the posting of leasehold services charge

actual account. 19,643 calls were received in December into Housing of which 86% were handled.

2.2 Across Q3, five members of staff were redeployed from the contact centre to support Westminster Connects and an increase in sickness absence was recorded. With the substantial increase in call volumes all service level KPI's were impacted and despite performance above target being maintained over Q1 and 2, performance for year to date is now below target.

2.3 For the year to date:

- 172,910 calls have been received
- 12% of calls were abandoned (target 8%)
- 65% of calls have been answered within 30 seconds (target 70%).

2.4 Despite the challenges, customer satisfaction with the service remains high and year to date satisfaction remains above target at 89%.

3 Major Works and Repairs

3.1 The full repairs service was reinstated on 26 October 2020 and is performing well.

- **4,450** repairs have been raised and or completed since 1 October 2020
- **1,495** heating and hot water repairs since 1 October 2020
- **1,410** repairs currently in progress as of 6 November 2020

3.2 Gas compliance is currently 99.57% with 27 properties outstanding from a total of 6,566. Annual gas servicing was given no dispensation during lockdown despite access to many properties being understandably refused.

3.3 Statutory testing and inspection of services including gas appliances, water tanks, asbestos and fire risk assessments has continued, with staff taking additional health and safety precautions as appropriate. Compliance across the five areas of gas, electricity, water, asbestos and fire is excellent.

4 Housing Digital Projects

Integrated communications platform – 8x8

4.1 A new IT communications platform was launched in October 2020 called 8x8. This new technology has the functionality to manage all types of communications between staff and residents. Phase one of the roll-out provided new telephony and email services and Phase 2 and 3 will include text messaging and chat, contact centre workforce management tools, and a new PCI compliant payment solution. This technology has been rolled out to the housing contact centre, housing staff and the housing solutions service contact centre.

4.2 Preparation, testing and staff training have been delivered and go live dates are on target to complete at the end of January. The project team will continue to offer support to the service for two weeks after launch and address any identified issues. The project is due to complete by mid-February.

CRM

- 4.3 A knowledge base is being developed to provide the contact centre with the information they need to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact. Over 250 knowledge articles have been created including estate-based information.
- 4.4 Steady progress has been made in designing a general enquiry process and mapping housing data requirements. Customisation of Microsoft Dynamics CRM has also started.
- 4.5 The project team is working on a Housing CRM proof of concept to provide the service with an insight that allows them to experience using Microsoft Dynamics CRM after it is integrated with the main housing service database. Proof of concept is scheduled for delivery at the end of January and will inform our choices as we continue to develop a high-level design for the overarching CRM architecture.

Online services

- 4.6 A new on-line housing application form for the housing register has been developed and is being tested.
- 4.7 After going live with a self-help video on the website for residents, three further videos are in pipe-line. Animations have been produced and are now being scripted.
- 4.8 On-line appointment bookings for a digital surgery pilot is underway in Soho allowing residents to book a telephone or online video meeting with a Housing Service Officer to discuss any issues. The service is being evaluated to assess its effectiveness and fitness for rolling out to other areas of the city.

5 Resident Engagement

- 5.1 A review of the citywide resident engagement framework is underway and residents will be asked for their views on the proposed framework to ensure the framework meets residents' needs and expectations. Feedback from residents will help to refine and improve the proposed approach and will inform the implementation of a more effective engagement framework. The consultation will also help shape terms of reference and ensure involved residents feel ownership of proposed engagement forums.
- 5.2 Consulting on our engagement approach will ensure compliance with relevant regulatory requirements.

6 Housing Operations

Rents- income collection

- 6.1 Our first priority has always been to support and protect residents, particularly in times of uncertainty to sustain their tenancies. COVID-19 has created challenging conditions for many households financially and rent collection performance is at 97.59% at the end of December 2020 compared with 98.57% at December 2019.
- 6.2 To make best use of the team resources to support residents who require the most assistance, a core of 1,500 more complex cases are being prioritised and the work on these

cases shared across the team. Throughout the pandemic we have kept a complete record of any reference to COVID-19 raised by the tenant or a member of their household. We have supported initiatives such as the employment assistance programme, referrals to Westminster Citizens advice or the charities we have close working relationships with. Debt support advice has been offered by Westminster Citizens advice and the business and enterprise team. The income team has helped to promote two social value initiatives run by Morgan Sindall who have offered help to low income residents who use gas and electricity pre-payment meters. For our residents who require the most support we have been liaising with adults and children's services to ensure our residents are receiving the appropriate level of support.

- 6.3** Current eviction restrictions were due to end on the 11th January 2021 but have now been extended again until 21 February 2020. A section 21 notice must give at least 6 months' notice and we can only apply to the courts after the end of the notice period. The courts are still open with many remote operating hearings, but there are now large backlogs in some areas. Presently only instances of substantial rent arrears prior to COVID-19 and egregious ASB cases are being considered for action.
- 6.4** Bailiffs are not permitted to carry out section 21 evictions until after 21 February 2021. There are some exceptions to the rules, but government says this is only for the most egregious cases such as those involving domestic violence or anti-social behaviour.
- 6.5** The approach to income collection remains support focused and no evictions have taken place this year.
- 6.6** Universal Credit claims have increased by 74% from the start of the year and by 57% from 1 March 2020. This is an unprecedented rise from any prior year.
- 6.7** Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) are promoted, with communications sent by text and letter to a targeted audience. DHP can only be made as a top-up to housing benefit or universal credit where tenants are in receipt of either benefit. Tenants will continue to be encouraged to claim DHP for a fixed period unless there are exceptional circumstances. There are no time limits on backdating a DHP award.

Leasehold Services

- 6.8** Lessee service charge collection performance remains good and we are yet to identify an increase in arrears on the portfolio comparable with the increase in arrears on the rent accounts.
- 6.9** The service charge team are monitoring all service charge accounts and are keeping a log of any references to COVID-19 which may impact on our leaseholder's ability to pay their service charge. Once again, no standard debt recovery action is being taken at this time. Payment reminders are being sent with an emphasis on support and assistance.
- 6.10** The actual service charges were debited to the accounts in September 2020. The net debit to the account was in the sum of £2.6m. Most of the costs related to an increase in responsive repairs from 2019/2020.
- 6.11** Virtual surgeries were held 5-8 October 2020 and the uptake was tenfold compared to the physical surgeries held in the area office in March 2020. Residents were able to book a 20-minute appointment with our advisers and had an opportunity to provide us with information in advance of the call.

Following the success of the virtual surgeries we have now extended the service. From November 2020 we have held virtual surgery sessions every Wednesday to give our residents the opportunity to discuss any queries directly with Leasehold Operations. Residents are able to book a 20 minute telephone appointment between the hours of 9am – 8pm with one of our leasehold advisors.

Once our residents have booked their appointment they receive an email to confirm their upcoming booking. Residents can manage their own booking, they can reschedule or cancel their appointment at any time. We ask residents to provide a summary of what they would like to discuss on our call to help us to prepare for the appointment. We call our residents after 10 minutes of the appointment time if they have not joined the call.

- 6.12** A 'virtual' leasehold conference was held on 17 October 2020. A number of sessions were offered with presentations from the Leasehold Advisory Service and Citizens Advice. Attendance at the all-day conference was high, with all 200 available places booked. Attendees heard presentations on how Westminster is tackling short lets and how leaseholders can kick off the process of extending their lease.
- 6.13** The 'Your Lease Explained' video guide which has been very well received and will be followed up with 'Ways to Pay Your Service Charge' and 'How to Extend Your Lease'.

Area Housing Teams

- 6.14** The Housing teams continue to deliver services to residents with new ways of working, such as virtual property viewings and online sign ups.
- 6.15** 60% (208) of actions set out in Estate Action Plans have been completed and work is underway to complete plans for over 80% of the stock by year end. The next phase of the plan will explore how the redesigned frontline service and resident engagement models might respond to resident priorities, further developing the next iteration of the Estate Action Plans to include more aspirational targets.
- 6.16** The final phase of Traffic Management Order implementation is in progress, completing all areas and making amendments to some locations where requested by residents.

Anti-Social Behaviour

- 6.17** The Antisocial Behaviour (ASB) Team handled a total of 335 new cases between August 2020 and the end of December 2020. 25% of these cases were related to noise, 21% to verbal abuse and 16% related to misuse of drugs/drug dealing. December had the highest increase in cases with 40 cases reported in 2019 and 52 cases in 2020, a 30% increase.
- 6.18** Resident satisfaction with ASB management is above target at 65% YTD and 71% recorded in December.
- 6.19** The progression of court cases is restricted to those sought on mandatory grounds for possession and no evictions have been carried out this year. Applications have been made

for bailiff's warrants to evict tenants at two properties and one possession hearing is due in January.

- 6.20** Other legal tools have been used to provide residents with some protection from ongoing ASB, including civil injunctions, solicitors letters and premises closure orders.
- 6.21** In December 2020 the ASB team started a trial of the 'The Noise App'. This enables residents to record anti-social noise coming from their neighbour's property and send in recordings to their case manager via the app. This is something we are hoping to take forward and use full time. We are currently trialling the app with longstanding noise cases across the borough, the end for this trial is the 21 January 2021 when its impact will be evaluated.

Registered Providers

- 6.22** We continue to meet quarterly to exchange best practice, challenges and ideas. As ever, where we encounter problems for residents (except in extreme cases) the statutory framework means that our tools are limited to persuasion and cajoling. Registered providers (RPs) continue to offer services in a similar way to the Council during the pandemic, with many staff working remotely from home. With some exceptions, public facing offices have remained closed or with restricted access. Services such as repairs and lettings had been returning to business as usual including during Tier 4 with new practices to minimise the risk of COVID-19 implemented.
- 6.23** However, with the move into Tier 5, landlords are now revisiting their risk assessment and capacity issues. While most landlords wish to carry on business as usual on repairs, capacity issues and concerns for the spread of COVID-19 may result in some landlords reverting to emergency and urgent repairs for the time being, with routine repairs being delayed. Compliance matters will continue as normal as will essential maintenance, work to voids and external works. There is enhanced cleaning to estates and communal areas in RP blocks.
- 6.24** RPs are keen to continue with lettings as normal, but virtual viewings and digital sign ups is the preferred option. Some RPs are still facilitating actual physical viewings following a risk assessment and with COVID-19 safe procedures being employed.
- 6.25** RP websites are being regularly updated to inform residents of operating arrangements. RPs are operating welfare calls for vulnerable residents and some are also carrying out food deliveries, working with local charities and volunteer groups.
- 6.26** 201 new affordable homes have been delivered to date in Westminster during 2020/21, 22 of which are RP homes. RPs have successfully let to 148 Westminster nominees between April and November 2020, representing 36% of all lettings.

Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs)

- 6.27** All TMOs are now following the City Council in undertaking only urgent in-flat repairs, planned maintenance (where delegated) and communal repairs. They are running full estate services, with increased cleaning on main touchpoints throughout their buildings. TMO staff are undertaking a mixture of homeworking and office based work but the offices

are currently closed to residents. Although we have had instances of TMO staff having to self-isolate, we have had no instances Coronavirus amongst staff.

- 6.28** The Government has extended the deadline for annual general meetings until the end of March 2021. Currently, 75% of TMOs have held their AGMs, although current awaiting confirmed dates, the remaining two should be completed in line with the deadline given.

7 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

Homelessness and Housing needs

Housing Solutions Service (HSS) Contact Centre

- 7.1** The HSS contact centre is operating as normal and since April 2020 the service has received 49,500 calls. Customers are currently advised to contact the service via telephone or by going online to complete the online assessment form.
- 7.2** The majority of HSS contracted staff continue to work from home with a skeleton appointment only service operating from the Family Hub at Bruckner Street.
- 7.3** There has also been a review of the complaints procedure to deal with Stage 2 and Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) complaints regarding the HSS service. Process changes to improve the process and outcomes have, focussed on increased transparency and visibility of process, action planning around remedies and improvement where fault is found.

Allocations

- 7.4** Following the lifting of lockdown, allocations increased with 219 lettings made during Q3, 49% were made via Choice Based Lettings and 25% were to units managed by Registered Providers. This compares with 131 lettings in Q3 of 19/20 of which 57% were via CBL and 38% were managed by RPs.
- 7.5** Following the initial lockdown measures in March 2020, allocations returned to a new business as usual in August, with some processes such as e-sign-ups and virtual viewings remaining in place to ensure staff and applicants are safe and adhere to the latest Government advice. These processes have remained in place and continue to offer protection to all involved in the current lock-down.

Homelessness prevention activity

- 7.6** Homeless approaches to the Housing Solutions Service from October to December 2020 were 13% higher than the same period in 2019, with homeless applications down 27%. The main reasons we are seeing applicants approaching the service is due to family exclusion followed by private sector tenancy coming to an end. Although approaches remain high, homeless applications are lower as a result of the new HRA application process being introduced.
- 7.7** As part of the process a full assessment is carried out within 7 days, usually on the day of approach. This allows caseworkers to advise applicants and issue decisions quickly. This approach means that applicants who don't qualify for TA or an Allocation of social housing

choose not to proceed with their application, the new process is more efficient and better manages expectations.

- 7.8** Homelessness preventions are 7% higher compared with the same period in 2019/20, this figure comprises a combination of positive outcomes in the “Prevention” stage and the “Relief” stage of the Homelessness Reduction Act. The ban on evictions coupled with an increased number of lettings via the Westlets team has enabled a greater number of positive prevention outcomes compared to last year.

Mental Health Pathway Activity

- 7.9** Clients are being reviewed who are ‘tenancy ready’; have no recourse to public funds; CHAIN verified; non S117 and Care Act ineligible, to expediate moves onto independent potentially private rented sector and registered social landlord nominations. Referrals across the board have demonstrated an increase in this quarter for clients with Mental Health support needs who have a Rough sleeping history.
- 7.10** Mental Health providers continue to practice protective measures/ infection control in line with government guidelines on COVID-19 management. Public health and MH commissioners are offering additional support measures which has included staff training via Public health and Find and Treat.
- 7.11** A service level agreement between the Mental Health providers, Housing, Adult Social Care and CNWL Mental Health Trust has been completed and distributed for agreement, to ensure that collaboration is key to service delivery with all partner agencies. A working protocol is currently being developed to ensure joint and effective working between Housing Management and CNWL and support community safety and tenancy sustainment.

Partnership engagement

- 7.12** the Housing Solutions Service Partnership with Shelter and the Passage have focused on continued service delivery for customers, and areas for development especially focussing on our prevention offer. Activity carried out by Shelter has included, responding and contributing to Westminster’s Private Rented Sector Strategy, engagement with the DWP to deliver improved early intervention opportunities, a targeted piece of work with out partner RP Peabody, around financial inclusion and
- 7.13** The Passage continue to provide holistic support for clients with specific support needs. These include Domestic Abuse, Drug and/or Alcohol, Language Difficulties, Rough Sleepers, Clients over 60, Physical Health, Mental Health, Welfare, Hospital Discharge, Prison Release, PRS/Tenancy Sustainment. The most common support needs related to Mental Health, PRS/Tenancy Sustainment and welfare needs. There has also been development around employment and development, following an increase in the amount of referrals received by HSS for clients seeking support with finding employment.

Domestic abuse

- 7.14** Although there has been an overall decrease by 27% in homeless applications between October and December compared to the same period last year, the data recorded currently

shows that there has been a continued increase in the number of applications where Domestic abuse (DA) is stated as the main reason for loss of settled accommodation.

- 7.15 DA was the main reason for loss of settled accommodation in 13% of homeless applications compared to the same period last year where it accounted for 5% of homeless applications.
- 7.16 Current year to date figures show domestic abuse as the 3rd largest cause of homelessness behind families being no longer willing to accommodate the applicant and the end of a private rented tenancy. HSS continue to work towards obtaining the DAHA (Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance) accreditation and have carried out reviews of their policies and procedures, continual staff training and individual case audits.

8 Indoor Rough Sleeping

- 8.1 Building on the elements in our existing Rough Sleeping Strategy, Westminster City Council has embarked on a comprehensive review of our operational rough sleeping work which encompasses commissioning, challenging existing models, forming new strategic partnerships and integration with the wider work of the council. The Rough Sleeping Team now operate within the housing service and forms part of the Housing Needs, Support and Safety division. This strategy will be jointly worked on with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration.
- 8.2 The service recognises the need to innovate and change the operating models to reflect the new demographics teams are seeing on the ground but also the new direction we are seeking to take to work towards the new vision for the ways of working. Individuals being supported on the street are increasingly complex with behavioural issues and entrenched addiction and offending issues but we do believe that by taking more of a housing led approach, we can support these individuals quicker and more effectively to reduce the risk of them becoming more entrenched in the street population that we have locally.
- 8.3 While the volumes are challenging, we feel that by trying new ways of working and reflecting the collaboration across the council, we can begin to reshape our offer to provide more routes away from the streets based on joint single assessments and an improved throughput. This work has started with the following programmes of delivery demonstrated below.

Protect and Next Steps Accommodation Programmes

- 8.4 The Protect Programme launched in November and funded by MHCLG it supports the ongoing efforts of our work to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during the pandemic. This programme will help areas that need additional support most during the restrictions and throughout winter and to protect some of the most vulnerable rough sleepers in our communities from COVID-19.
- 8.5 The Protect Programme has enabled us to focus on protecting individuals who are clinically vulnerable during the winter. The 'Protect Programme' is supporting the most vulnerable rough sleeping clients recognising the average life expectancy for rough sleepers is 44 for men and 42 for women; many have coexisting conditions which puts them at increased during the pandemic.
- 8.6 Officers work with our clinical colleagues in the 2 specialist GP surgeries in borough to identify those who met the guidance definition of clinically vulnerable. We identified 58 people initially who have now moved into pathways and accommodation. A further 40 clients

have been assessed and will be supported through this programme of work. The numbers may increase slightly as we receive more information from our GP's on the health of individual rough sleepers.

- 8.7** Through £996k of Protect Programme funding we are mobilising a further 119 bed spaces to support those at risk of Covid-19 and the cold weather. Within the Protect Programme we will also provide emergency accommodation during periods of extreme cold weather; we already have accommodated an additional 90 people, under the 'Severe Weather Protocol (SWEP)' and will secure sustainable move-on accommodation for many of these clients to prevent the need for them to return to the streets. Our outreach services continue to work with hard to house individuals, with provision in the Protect Programme who have historically been more challenging to engage or have not maintained accommodation.

The Protect Programme funding was also made available to support the additional pressures following the closure of night shelters in Westminster. Public Health guidance requires the protection of individuals from communicable diseases such as COVID-19 and night shelters with communal areas for sleeping and shared (air) spaces are not able to comply.

- 8.8** The flow of new rough sleepers to Westminster has not abated; since our street count of 242 in November 75 new rough sleepers have been met, and as above responding rapidly to the needs of those new to rough sleeping is at the centre of Westminster's response. We secured funding for additional outreach workers as part of the Rough Sleeping Initiative Year 3 to form an Assessment and Triage team who focus on rapid assessments for everyone, they accommodate in short term accommodation before their move on solution is realised.

- 8.9** In addition to our Protect Programme, Westminster secured £2.38m through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme from MHCLG in September. A further 153 individuals have been referred into a holistic range of services that provide accommodation to meet the need of the individual:

- 64 primarily new rough sleepers moved into our Rapid Triage and Assessment service to prevent entrenchment in rough sleeping.
- 40 individuals have moved into our Staging Post to provide the longer assessment period their multiple needs require.
- 39 have moved into our Private Rented Sector schemes with floating support to ensure the moves are sustained.
- non-UK nationals with complex immigration cases moved into emergency accommodation with caseworkers resolving their cases.

- 8.10** Westminster continues to deliver a wide range of active work to support rough sleepers off the streets and this will continue and meet the requirement to make thorough assessments and offers for current rough sleepers.

- 8.11** Outreach services also utilise bed spaces for newer rough sleepers through GLA provision at No Second Night Out and the GLA's Chorus hotel, as well as a multi-borough service hosted by the North London Housing Partnership in which Westminster has committed £144k of funding as part of the Protect Programme.

Protecting and improving the health of people sleeping rough

- 8.12** The health-led response for people experiencing rough sleeping during the COVID-19 pandemic has seen unprecedented levels of new and multi-disciplinary working between

health care, local government (public health, social care and housing), and homelessness service providers, including the voluntary and community sector.

- 8.13** From the start of the pandemic, we have taken a health led approach with our Homeless Health Nursing Team, the Joint Homelessness Team (Mental Health Team), GP led in reach and rapid access to prescribing for those who require it. We have put in place a comprehensive flu vaccination programme for those in hostels and have held a vaccination day for people who are still on the streets.
- 8.14** Our Public Health team supports us with outbreak management and in providing Standard Operating Procedures for every type of service that provides support to rough sleepers. Where someone tests positive, Find & Treat have been commissioned to rapidly test on the day and if there is a positive test, an active pathway is in place for our street population to get that person to hospital safely so they can be cared for. All clients who live in commissioned accommodation are supported to self-isolate with support on site.
- 8.15** In January Public Health co-ordinated the asymptomatic testing in Edward Allsop Court an approx. 80 bedded unit for older homeless men. This asymptomatic testing supports prevention of outbreaks (and associated complications and deaths) in Edward Allsop Court a fully occupied residential hostel for older men with a history of rough sleeping with high health/care needs. So far, all residents have tested negative and the testing regime will continue while we co-ordinate the vaccination programme for these residents.
- 8.16** Our work with ASC and Safeguarding continues with fortnightly Enhanced Vulnerability Forum (EVF) to review all cases that require a multi-disciplinary response in relation to Care Act Assessments and subsequent care plans alongside having safeguarding professionals around the table to review all safeguarding cases that are referred.
- 8.17** Officers continue to source additional accommodation solutions to ensure we can keep people safe. This will involve working with all our providers, including the GLA to take a multi-agency approach to support our rough sleepers to come indoors and off the streets of Westminster.

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City of Westminster

Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Wednesday 27 January 2021

Report Of: Councillor Heather Acton

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration

Report Author and Contact Details: Chloe Baker
cbaker@westminster.gov.uk
Ph: 07890 380122

1 Introduction

- 1.1 As the new Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration, my portfolio includes responsibility for the following areas:
- Regeneration and affordable housing
 - Community protection services and Police Liaison
 - Voluntary and community sector including inclusion and Westminster Connects
 - Community engagement and inclusion
 - Air Quality
 - Rough sleeping (street-based services)

2 Regeneration, affordable housing and engagement

Affordable Housing

- 2.1 The programme, working well from early design through to construction, sales and completion remains on track to meet the Council's 1,850 affordable housing target by 2023.

Church Street

- 2.2 Through the Site A, B & C pre-app consultation the Church Street team will ask the community for feedback about the designs for these three sites. The first consultation phase is planned to run for four weeks from late February, with the second stage following in summer 2021.
- 2.3 Current focus for the Church Street Retail, Business and Market team includes completing the Curation Strategy report, formulated to help transform Church Street into a destination with improved retail, market and evening economy.
- 2.4 A community project, 'Create Church Street' was launched which promotes local involvement in the creative arts. The team has also developed a youth strategy and is in the process of agreeing a youth group ambassador to lead this.
- 2.5 Construction of the Green Spine began in early January, which is the first step in the creation of more green space and park space in a dense urban area. Approximately 50 new trees should help improve

air quality, and planting has been selected to increase biodiversity. The new open spaces will mean people of all ages can meet, exercise, and play

- 2.6** During the third lockdown, the Church Street Regeneration Base is operating on an appointments only basis, to protect the health of staff and the community. All stakeholder and resident meetings are taking place online. Community members can make an appointment to speak to a team member, and can reach us via phone and email. We are still delivering the programme newsletter throughout the ward, and more targeted construction project newsletters too. We also continue to work with Public Health to support their important campaigns.

Ebury Bridge

- 2.7** Towards the end of 2020, the new Ebury Edge Meanwhile building was opened. The project has affordable workspace, community facilities and retail opportunities for start-up businesses and community groups. The scheme forms part of our commitment to invest in both the Ebury community and the local economy as redevelopment work progresses. From 140 applications 18 new businesses have taken up space at the Edge. A Social Enterprise Café, Fat Macy's, also opened their doors for takeaway meals on 12th January. An Early Years childcare provider is also now using the new community space.
- 2.8** Held in the external courtyard area at Ebury Edge, in December there was a festive celebration for Ebury Bridge residents. Sponsored by our contractors, the event was a 'thank-you' to estate residents for their patience and understanding during a challenging year. In total, over 160 residents enjoyed street food, served at a social distance.
- 2.9** Following the successful re-housing of more than 100 households in Phase 1 of the Ebury renewal scheme, the team has commenced engagement with residents living in Phase 2A. Existing homes in latter development phases are being prepared for families wishing to stay on the estate while their new home is being built.
- 2.10** The work to prepare the estate for the delivery of the new homes has included the removal of empty blocks and the start of groundworks which will enable contractors to begin building the new homes, following the determination of the current Ebury planning application.

Harrow Road

- 2.11** Our contractor Wilmot Dixon has started on site to prepare the ground for the development of 112 new homes, affordable workspace, replacement nursery and community centre and green space improvements at 300 Harrow Road. The existing LEYF nursery has been provided with a temporary site that has been built on Westbourne Green. As part of the social value offer, Wilmot Dixon provided food hampers to all of the families at the nursery for the festive period. They are now starting outreach work with schools.
- 2.12** Work has also been underway at 470 Harrow Road where we are constructing a Business School in an empty unit to support new businesses to start up. Work has taken place with existing businesses around Maida Hill Market as part of the revitalisation of the market area and curation of the street market at that site.

Regeneration Development Programme updates

- 2.13** All other programmes within the regeneration development programme are progressing well.

Westminster Builds

- 2.14** Westminster Builds was established in December 2017, following an independent option appraisal of the tools available to the Council that were most suited to delivering more affordable

housing for those wishing to live or work in Westminster. Only a housing company can legally hold affordable housing, neither the General Fund nor the HRA can do this.

- 2.15** The company's business plan sets out the way that Westminster Builds will deliver the objectives set for it by the Council. Each project is developed and approved through the Council's internal governance procedure. Westminster Builds is subject to scrutiny through the Council's Internal Audit function and all development schemes have full Council approval, use council staff and Council processes including Public sector procurement.

3 Communities

Westminster Connects

- 3.1** Since the start of the pandemic, Westminster Connects has provided support for vulnerable and sheltered residents across the borough, connecting them and their needs to the huge pool of volunteers.
- 3.2** Since October, the regular support to the shielding and vulnerable residents has been through a helpline, monthly automated calls to the shielding and vulnerable older housing tenants, support and referrals for food, shopping and wellbeing, and connections with volunteers for practical support.
- 3.3** The focus since November has been support for residents through a hardship fund, shielding calls and volunteers. Our programme continues to work closely with VCS organisations to address food need (foodbanks and community food initiative); wellbeing calls and mentoring for young people.
- 3.4** We have also offered a local track and trace service in order to contact residents who have tested positive but whom the national service have been unable to trace.
- 3.5** Both services will remain in place until the end of March 2021 and will be regularly reviewed in light of changing community need. The services are staffed by a team which has been redeployed from across the council. Outcomes to support residents during this period include:
- During the three week November lockdown, we provided support to 5.5% of the shielding, compared to a national average of 0.89%
 - Shielding provided with basic support: 972
 - Shielding supported with shopping referrals: 830
 - Referrals to foodbanks: 1752, average of 146 a week
 - Referrals for hardship support: 378
 - £252,000 has been distributed to 378 households and to support with food needs. A contingency budget of £32,000 is remaining and to be used for residents with severe hardship.
 - Track and Trace: (started November 18, 2020)- Numbers of local residents contacted and supported to self-isolate: 437
- 3.6** In the past 3 months, we have continued strong working relationships with local voluntary and community sector partners, through our Community Intelligence Forum and Food Network, supporting the development of new forms of community food support.

Volunteers and Community Projects facilitated by Westminster Connects

- 3.7** Over the last period, Westminster Connects promoted 51 volunteering opportunities and deployed 540 volunteers. This includes supporting foodbanks, homeless hostels, community

centres, befriending services, shopping services, employment and adult education services and museums.

- 3.8** As at the end of December Westminster Connects had also signed up 30 volunteers as employment mentors, helping unemployed residents through our Westminster Employment Service.

4 Public Protection

Private Rented Sector (PRS) Strategy

- 4.1** Westminster has the largest PRS in the country. We have worked alongside internal and external partners on a new strategy to ensure the proper management and regulation of this sector. The aim of the strategy is to safeguard vulnerable tenants, while also providing much needed advice and support to landlords and agents.
- 4.2** One key proposal included in the strategy is the introduction of an Additional Licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation to allow a more effective, targeted focus on properties most in need of improvement. The strategy also commits to increasing intelligence within the sector, building relationships and sharing information with both landlords and tenants, and also working more closely with key internal and external partners to ensure satisfactory standards are maintained within PRS properties.
- 4.3** The consultation has now concluded, and the final strategy will be published shortly.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Strategy

- 4.4** A new Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy is being worked on to address and combat anti-social behaviour across the borough.
- 4.5** There has been an increase in anti-social behaviour cases within residential environments, including neighbour disputes, verbal abuse, noise nuisance and unlicensed music events. This can be ascribed mainly to the situation with London moving into Tier 4 and then further lockdown.
- 4.6** Many of the increases are due by persons reporting non-compliance with COVID regulations, such as social distancing. Along with the police, the council's City Inspectors have been acting as COVID Marshalls, speaking to members of the public and, where appropriate, calling in the police to deal with significant non-compliance. The officers concentrate on hot-spot areas during at peak times.
- 4.7** Additional resources have been brought in for a short period to help manage this increased demand and new ASB caseworkers have been recruited.

Serious Youth Violence and the IGXU

- 4.8** The Serious Youth Violence Reduction Board was held on 18 January 2020 and updates given as to the levels of youth violence and actions taken. Levels of violence have been lower as a result of lockdown measures, but outreach from the IGXU and youth providers is also hampered, and so the situation is being monitored carefully, and support given to the greatest extent possible. Links have been made with some of the community activities in the regeneration projects – such as Westminster Wheels in Church Street, and Ebury Edge in the south.

Waste Enforcement

- 4.9** Waste enforcement since March has been affected by COVID-19. With the closure of commercial premises there was a reduction in waste being left on the public highway. City Inspectors were redeployed during this period to assist in the Council's response.
- 4.10** A new Waste Enforcement Policy was approved in July, which included a review of our Enforcement approach. City Inspectors have received training on the new process and the street digital platform. As a result of the impact of Covid-19 and redeployment of some IT colleagues the full implementation of the digital platform has been delayed until the beginning of February.

Partnership working with Police

- 4.11** The council continues to work in close partnership with the police across a range of enforcement and community-based areas. One area of business which has been particularly successful is the joint approach taken by the police and council in dealing with Unlicensed Music Events (UMEs), in both dealing with the events as they happen or through subsequent enforcement against organisers, lease holders or owner/occupiers. The partnership was successful recently in applying for a closure order based upon infringement of the COVID regulations. This was the first such successful case nationally.
- 4.12** With London entering Tier 4 and then a further national Lockdown, the council and police are working closely to deal with other COVID regulation infringements such as social distancing, the wearing of masks and shops flouting non-essential sales requirements. Joint partnership work dealing with ASB and crime continues, unaffected by the national lockdown.

5 On-Street Rough Sleeping

Rough Sleeping Strategy

- 5.1** Building on the elements in our existing Rough Sleeping Strategy, Westminster City Council has a comprehensive review of our operational rough sleeping work underway which encompasses commissioning, challenging existing models, forming new strategic partnerships and integrating this within with the wider work of the council. The rough sleeping team now operates within the housing service and forms part of the Housing Needs, Support and Safety division. Therefore, the strategy sits under both the Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration (on-street rough sleeping) and the Cabinet Member for Housing (indoor rough sleeping and homelessness).
- 5.2** The service recognises the need to innovate and change operating models to reflect the new demographics teams are seeing on the ground, but also changing direction so that we can work towards a new vision for ways of working, some of which has transpired through the experience of COVID-19. Individuals now being supported on the street are increasingly complex with behavioural issues and with entrenched addiction and offending issues. However, we do believe that by taking more of a housing-led approach, we can support these individuals more effectively so as to reduce the risk of them becoming more entrenched in the street population.
- 5.3** While the numbers are challenging, we feel that by trying new ways of working and reflecting the collaboration across the council, we can reshape our offer with more routes away from the streets, based on joint single assessments and an improved throughput. This work has started with the following programmes as demonstrated below.

Protect and Next Steps Accommodation Programmes

- 5.4** The Protect Programme launched in November and funded by MHCLG supports the efforts of our work to provide accommodation for rough sleepers during COVID-19. This programme will help with additional support where it is needed most during the restrictions and throughout winter and also to protect some of the most vulnerable rough sleepers in our communities from COVID-19.
- 5.5** Through £996k of Protect Programme funding we are mobilising a further 119 bed spaces to support those at risk of both Covid-19 and the cold weather. Within the Protect Programme we will also provide emergency accommodation during periods of extreme cold weather; already we have accommodated an additional 90 people, under the 'Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP)' and will secure sustainable move-on accommodation for many of these clients to prevent the need for them to return to the streets. Our outreach services continue to work with individuals, who are not easy to house, or have been challenging or not sustained their accommodation, with provision in the Protect Programme.
- 5.6** The flow of new rough sleepers to Westminster has not abated since our last street count of 242. In November 75 new rough sleepers have been recorded, and we know the importance of responding rapidly to the needs of those new to rough sleeping. We secured funding for additional outreach workers as part of the Rough Sleeping Initiative Year 3 to form an Assessment and Triage team who focus on rapid assessments for everyone, and they are accommodated in short term accommodation before realising a move-on solution.
- 5.7** In addition to our Protect Programme, Westminster secured £2.38m through the Next Steps Accommodation Programme from MHCLG in September. A further 153 individuals have been referred into a holistic range of services that provide accommodation to meet the need of the individual.
- 5.8** Westminster continues with a wide range of work with its partners to support rough sleepers off the streets and this will continue and meet the requirement to make thorough assessments and offers for current rough sleepers.
- 5.9** Outreach services also utilise bed spaces for newer rough sleepers through GLA provision at No Second Night Out and the GLA's Chorus hotel, as well as a multi-borough service hosted by the North London Housing Partnership.



Communities, Regeneration and Housing Policy & Scrutiny Committee

Date:	27 January 2020
Classification:	General Release
Title:	2020/21 Work Programme
Report of:	Richard Cressy, Head of Cabinet and Committee Services
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Communities and Regeneration and Highways and Cabinet Member for Housing Services
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	All
Report Author and Contact Details:	Lizzie Barrett x 3103 ebarrett@westminster.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

1. Following the changes that were agreed at full Council on 20 January 2021, this committee has a new terms-of-reference. This report asks the committee to discuss topics for the remaining 2020/21 work programme. The committee might also want to ask the Cabinet Members and officers present at the meeting if they have any suggestions for topics for the committee's work programme.

2. Remaining meeting dates for the 2020/21 year

- 2.1 The remaining meeting dates for the 2020/21 year are:
 - 15 March 2021
 - 21 April 2021

3. Suggested topics

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to discuss topics for the remaining 2020/21 work programme. Some suggested topics are:
 - Air quality
 - Ward budgets (*the programme is being reviewed and officers would like to get feedback from P&S*)
 - Rough sleeping

- Modern slavery
- Domestic violence

If you have any queries about this report or wish to inspect any of the background papers, please contact Lizzie Barrett.

ebarrett@westminster.gov.uk