



CITY OF WESTMINSTER

# MINUTES

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

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Minutes of a meeting of the **Climate Action, Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee** held on **Monday 18th July, 2022**, Rooms 18.01 & 18.03, 18th Floor, 64 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QP.

**Members Present:** Councillors Patricia McAllister, Gillian Arrindell, Robert Eagleton, David Harvey, Alan Mendoza, and Cara Sanquest.

**Also Present:** Liza Begum (Cabinet Member for Housing), Matt Noble (Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Regeneration and Renters), Raj Mistry (Executive Director of Environment and City Highways), Debbie Jackson (Executive Director of Growth Planning and Housing), James Green (Director of Development), Neil Wightman (Director of Housing), Clare O'Keefe (Temporary Joint Lead Policy and Scrutiny Advisor).

#### 1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

- 1.1 Nominations for the post of Chair were invited. One nomination was received and seconded. There were no further nominations.
- 1.2 **RESOLVED:** That Councillor McAllister be appointed Chair of the Climate Action, Housing and Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny Committee.

#### 2 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- 2.1 The Chair welcomed Councillor Liza Begum (Cabinet Member for Housing) and Councillor Matt Noble (Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Regeneration and Renters) to the meeting.
- 2.2 The Chair welcomed the Committee Members and attendees and offered thanks for attending the meeting despite the heatwave conditions.

#### 3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### 4 CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING SERVICES - PORTFOLIO UPDATE

- 4.1 The Committee received an update from Councillor Liza Begum, Cabinet

Member for Housing Services, on priorities for the portfolio following the local elections in May 2022, and any major issues which have arisen. The Cabinet Member responded to questions on the following topics:

- The importance of the housing bidding system being transparent, especially considering the scarcity of social housing and long waiting lists. In addition, the importance of making sure that the filling of empty properties is not being held up by bureaucracy.
- The importance of working cross-borough when residents are moved out of Westminster; understanding that whilst it's important to keep residents in Westminster, this is a challenge at times so it is important to build and maintain cross-borough relationships.
- The importance of tying communities into infrastructure and major works; the programmes should be reviewed to ensure that they do the maximum to help people.
- The importance of looking at the decarbonisation of PDHU through the lens of residents to look at the service they receive and, when the consultation takes place, that residents' concerns, and needs are considered. Furthermore, investigating different funding streams to lessen the burden of the major work bills, both for the Council and residents is important.
- The importance of trying to ensure that hard to reach rough sleepers are taking up the support they are offered.
- The importance of engaging with tenants and their representatives and having a dedicated, named, officer who they can go to. Also, the importance of having engagement surveys with trusted results and recognising the significance of Residents Associations.
- The importance of identifying a long-term, sustainable, solution or change to procedure of Anti-Social Behaviour responses which concerns alcohol/ drugs and looking at samples of long-standing cases.

4.2 Other issues discussed included the Generation Rent report, ensuring that the rough sleeping count covers the whole of Westminster City, and the importance of measures being put in place for rough sleepers during the heatwave, including signposting the registered cool centres and hubs.

#### 4.3 **ACTIONS:**

1. That the bidding process is reviewed, and an update be provided to the Committee in due course.
2. That the Committee be informed of the PDHU strategic options paper when it has been published.
3. That the Committee be updated about the new rough sleeping commissioning strategy in due course.
4. That the Housing Service is made as accessible as possible for residents, including allocating named officers for tenants and looking into re-opening housing estate offices.
5. That regular tenancy checks in the Housing Service will take place.

6. That the Housing Service will confirm with St Mungo's that a full, City-wide, count takes place.
7. That the procedures for case handling on Anti-Social Behaviour will be investigated and reported back to the Committee.
8. That the Fire and Building Safety Bill be kept on the agenda to be looked into in due course.

## **5 CABINET MEMBER FOR CLIMATE ACTION, REGENERATION AND RENTERS - PORTFOLIO UPDATE**

5.1 The Committee received an update from Councillor Matt Noble, Cabinet Member for Climate Action, Regeneration and Renters on priorities for the portfolio following the local elections in May 2022, and any major issues which have arisen. The Cabinet Member responded to questions on the following topics:

- The importance of the local climate bond being a proper investment vehicle for Westminster residents and meeting income requirements by efficiently generating revenue whilst also providing social value.
- The importance of providing a balance between creating more homes and ensuring a good quality of life for residents by taking a community-centric approach and engaging stakeholders.
- The importance of assessing existing Council supply chains to make sure procurement is sustainable and ensuring that any carbon offset proposals are examined carefully before agreement to offset is made.
- The importance of engaging with residents on the allocation of social housing within the Balmoral and Darwin House Development Scheme.
- The importance of delivering more social housing in South Westminster, despite the challenges faced in the area, to reduce the amount of time spent on waiting lists.
- The importance of looking at sheltered housing when both reviewing and creating regeneration projects, especially prioritising family-sized units where multi-generational families can live together and maintain networks available.
- The importance of upskilling and retraining people to tackle climate change and meet climate action goals.
- The importance of liaising with other London boroughs to identify how to keep construction costs as low as possible as well as look for funding streams, work with construction experts and engage in value engineering to keep costs down.
- The importance of supporting residents with the energy bills crisis.

5.2 Other issues discussed included speaking to residents from generation rent and challenges in the portfolio such as limited power over landlords in the private rented sector and the limited space to work with regeneration projects despite the demand in Westminster.

5.3 **ACTIONS:**

1. That the possibility be explored for children over a certain age to invest small sums in the local climate bond or get school children involved in the thinking around the bond and tackling climate change.
2. That Scope 3 emissions are investigated so a stricter definition can be implemented to ensure sustainable procurement of supply chains.
3. That the Co-Chair of the Low Carbon Transport Programme Steering Group be invited along to the Committee at a relevant time to provide an update.
4. That the existing pipeline for social housing in South Westminster be examined and ideas for potential regeneration be encouraged from Councillors and residents.
5. That the Fire and Building Safety Bill be kept on the agenda to be looked into in due course.

## **6 WORK PROGRAMME**

6.1 The Committee reviewed potential items to be prioritised for the 2022/23 work programme, which included focusing on:

- Considering how to support communities and help people in social housing to lead good quality lives.
- Looking at supported housing to identify what the current provision is, what more can be done and what need will there be in the future.
- An update on the review of Anti-Social Behaviour procedures.
- Looking into empty properties and have an officer appointed to deal with this.
- Reviewing the Repairs team's function.
- Considering engagement with residents
- Investigating increasing biodiversity across the City.

6.2 The Committee recognised the risk of adding too many items to the work programme and acknowledged that the programme cycle spans four years and the workplan can be fluid in response to changing needs.

The meeting ended at 19:58

**CHAIR:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_