

Housing, Finance and Corporate Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee Briefing

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Briefing of: Head of Cabinet Secretariat

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Housing, Regeneration,
Business and Economic Development

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Please find below an update on key areas of activity from the Housing, Regeneration, Business and Economic Development portfolio since the committee last met.

Housing

1. Delivering Housing Renewal

In the period since the last committee meeting there has been particular activity around Ebury Bridge, Tollgate Garden and Church Street

Ebury Bridge Estate

Since I last reported to the committee 25 leaseholders and 35 tenants have now been successfully decanted off the estate so far. This leaves 41 leaseholders and 71 tenants to be decanted before we begin the regeneration programme. Also, 18 of the remaining 71 leaseholders have accepted equity loans on the estate in the new build and so do not need to be decanted.

Over the next quarter, I expect us to be working towards appointing a preferred development partner to deliver the redevelopment. This will be alongside continuing negotiating to acquire third party interests.

Tollgate Garden

The compulsory purchase order has been set for the 9th June subject to any objection. Affinity Sutton has been confirmed as the Council's preferred development partner and I look forward to seeing this scheme start on site as soon as possible.

2. Church Street:

Luton Street

The next step is to work up detailed design for entire project in conjunction with the various stakeholders. View to submit planning application summer 2015.

Improving the public realm: Orchardson Show House

Practical completion is anticipated for August 2015.

Paddington Green

There have been updates since my previous report. The invitation to tender is out and expected to be back on the 11 May 2015. Planning and coordination of major works programme in Paddington is currently in progress and the commissioning of building surveys is due back on 27th June 2015.

3. Ashbridge Street

This former BT Reverter site was purchased by the City Council in autumn 2015, with the intention of bringing forward a new build redevelopment to provide affordable housing. I have secured £14m to be delivered for the project.

Pocket Housing has been appointed by the Council as the Interim Development Manager to take this project through to pre-planning application stage (RIBA). A professional team of architects, planning consultants and other disciplines have also been appointed to progress this scheme.

The draft design proposals are to be presented to Westminster by Haworth Tomkins on 29th May – these proposals include provision for up to 38 homes including a mix of 1 and 2bed homes built over five stepped back floors with provision of a courtyard amenity space at ground floor and roof terraces.

A meeting has been arranged with Westminster planners on 25th June 2015. Following consultation with local residents and stakeholders, it is anticipated that a formal planning application will be submitted in autumn 2015, with commencement of works in early 2016. The project is likely to take 18 months to build.

4. GLA Housing Zone Bid

Offers presented on the 13th of May to the Challenge Panel Group including the deputy London mayor for housing, for a grant for Church Street Phase 2 regeneration proposals, totalling £25.5m. Feedback is very positive and a final decision will be made at the Housing Investment Group on the 19th of June 2015.

5. 291 Harrow Road

The situation remains the same and discussions with representatives from the Department of Health are on-going.

6. The Supreme Court decision

As we said at the time, we were disappointed with the ruling as the court of appeal had previously upheld the council's decision on this individual case from 2012. Nevertheless, we have been taking on board what the court has said and we will continue to review our procedures and make any necessary changes to the way in which decisions are explained to applicants.

However, we are pleased that the ruling does not, in any way, bring into question the principle of this or other authorities housing people out-of-borough where it is necessary. This could have had major financial implications for central London authorities in particular.

7. Housing Strategy 2015-2020

By the time this paper is read the Housing Strategy will have been launched for consultation.

Economic and Growth

8. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

BIDs Update

The next Westminster member/BID meeting is on 30th June 2015.

Heart of London Business Alliance ballot of property owners for its Property Owner BIDs at Leicester Square/Piccadilly Circus and Piccadilly/St James's, the plans for which I endorsed on behalf of the Council, started on 21st May and closes on 19th June. Assuming that the votes by local property owners are in favour, the new HOLBA BIDs will be operational on 1st July. These would be the first property owner BIDs in the country. NWECA, are now preparing their own property owner BID to sit alongside its occupier BID and is intending to ballot owners in its area in October to be live with the new BID at the end of the year.

Edgware Road Group has now won support and funding from the Mayor of London to set up a BID for Edgware Road which is to be called the Marble Arch BID, and we will be asked for our views on the groups subsequent plans later this year.

The Fitzrovia BID is still in discussions with us about extending its relationship with businesses in Westminster along our side of Tottenham Court Road and Charlotte Street and we are cooperating with the BID on this and talking with Camden officers.

A major conference on BIDs is planned by UK BIDs and the Mayor of London on 25th June where we expect to find out what actions the new Government propose as a result of the consultation.

9. Employment

Working Capital (ESF Funded Central London Forward ESA contract)

The tender process is on track with an expected completion date in June/July this year.

JSA Work Programme Leavers (funded via DWP)

The programme is in the first month of delivery and both employment coaches are building up their caseload at a good rate. Since April, 40 long-term unemployed clients have been engaged to the programme and 30 are active on the programme. Clients have been referred by local JCP officers and participate on the programme on a voluntary basis developing refreshed action plans with clients, detailing steps to move closer and into sustainable employment. Coaches are providing a holistic support package - advising and signposting on a range of barriers to employment including housing and health, whilst utilising the network of local employment and skills providers to refer clients to range of sector specific skills training courses such as SIA and forklift training.

WCC FACES update

The WCC delivery team had a successful pilot year in 14/15. Working with a combined caseload of 83 residents. Qualitative feedback from clients has been positive, demonstrating that the programme has filled an urgent gap in local employment provision for vulnerable/at risk young people and families.

In this financial year, the service will grow – with additional funding from New Homes Bonus and continued funding. To support this expansion a new Service Manager was recruited in April 2015 who will lead a team of 6 employability coaches (4 in post and 2 currently being recruited) and a part-time business support officer, as well as oversee 2 embedded JCP staff who are due to start in June.

The council staff will work with 400 clients in the year and aim to achieve 100 job starts. Targets for JCP staff are being developed in collaboration with JCP managers. The head of service will work closely with economic development colleagues during the year to source new funding.

CLF Construction Careers Programme

This is a 2 year sector specific skills training and job brokerage programme being developed in partnership by the 8 inner London CLF boroughs with the support of industry professionals. Design work for the specification of the programme is in progress and once commissioned delivery is expected to start in late 2015/16.

10. 'Made At Somerset House'

Utilising 36,000 sq. ft. of derelict space within Somerset House New Wing, 'Made At Somerset House' represents a new flagship enterprise space project for Westminster and will be announced as part of the West End Partnership launch.

Supporting a community of around 250 micro businesses, 'Made At Somerset House' will offer affordable co-working spaces, small studio spaces, and public facing events and pop-up spaces.

With funding support from the Council's LEP funded 'Places of Work' initiative, refurbishment works will begin on 'Maker Street' comprising 18 vault spaces in the summer and be completed in autumn 2015. The funding provided by the Council will have conditions attached designed to maximise benefit for local people. For example, businesses based at Somerset House will take part in outreach, youth enterprise, and work experience opportunities working closely with One EBP service (our Education Business Partnership').

'Made At Somerset House' spaces will have a limited tenure of between 6 months and 2 years during which they will receive affordable space and a programme of business support. Beneficiaries will be selected through an application process overseen by a volunteer 'Curatorial Board' consisting of four industry-leading external practitioners.

Enterprises focussed on the following sectors will be sought: Visual artists; creative technologists; dance-makers; designers and critical engineers; makers; musicians and composers; producers; speculative architects; software engineers; and theatre creators.

11. Global Entrepreneurship Week

This year, the Economic Development Unit will facilitate a series of events to coincide with Global Entrepreneurship Week – the world's largest campaign to promote entrepreneurship. The events (for example, 'Dragon's Den' style events with test trading grants, business space and mentoring prizes) will encourage the next generation of entrepreneurs to consider starting up their own business. We will mobilise businesses and enterprise support providers across Westminster to volunteer their support for this initiative which will take place 16-22nd November.

12. Workspace Plus

The Council is working with Capital Enterprise and a range of different enterprise space / business incubation providers to submit an ERDF funding application to the London Enterprise Panel (LEP) for a new 'Workspace Plus' initiative.

WorkSpace Plus would represent the biggest partnership of workspace providers in the UK, and support 500 businesses over a 3 year period. LEP funding would enable co-working space providers to deliver enhanced business support services to early stage growth-potential businesses in a range of sectors including health, food, creative, cultural, digital, retail, consumer businesses operating in the city's co-working spaces.

The Council will be co-leading the bid with Capital Enterprise who would lead programme management.