

Housing, Finance and Corporate Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee Briefing

Date: 16th September 2015

Briefing of: Head of Cabinet Secretariat

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

Please contact: Jeremy Day x 5772
jday@westminster.gov.uk

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 and Church Street.

Ebury Bridge Estate

Since I last reported to the committee 30 leaseholders and 36 tenants have now been successfully decanted off the estate so far. This leaves 36 leaseholders and 70 tenants to be decanted before we begin the regeneration programme.

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.

2. Church Street

Luton Street

Luton Street Working Group is working up design plans with developers with a view to submitting planning for October. The Venables street market traders relocation planning application submitted and currently working on Blackwater House with a view to submit planning in the next two weeks.

Cosway Street

Officers submitted EMT Report – 13 July 2015 and are in the process of preparing a Cabinet Member Report.

Tresham Crescent

All modules now installed and project is currently on programme to be completed in November. Children's Services and Commissioners progressing relocations of Newpin, LEYF and WSPLD to be held at Tresham Crescent.

Lisson Arches

We are enabling works on site which are on-going to enable service diversions to take place and two-stage tender bids received from D&B contractor. The evaluation and recommendation for reserved bidder is now completed. Service diversion works to be completed in April next year and will start on site from May 2016.

Green Spine

A new WSP Conway Project Manager was appointed to help progress the scheme – Darren Pacey. Church Street design and place-making champion was also appointed – Keith Priest. The neighbourhood upkeep and green spine landscape architects procurements have been finalised.

3. Churchill Gardens

The Residents Hall has had an external consultant complete the initial information gathering. They are currently planning a workshop with the committee. Scale of repairs needed to the Hall is substantial and officers will begin discussing with the committee what the optimal approach is for the repair and improvement of the facility in the short and long-term.

4. Ashbridge Street

A Development Manager has joined the team and has been assigned to the project.

5. Housing Strategy Update

The draft Housing Strategy consultation period came to an end in August 2015. We received 57 responses from individuals and organisations. To see a full version of the consultation please read the Housing Strategy Consultation paper attached to this P&S agenda.

I decided with senior council officers to publish a direction of travel statement by the end of 2015. This will set out what will be the highlighting themes and approaches we as a council will take with the Housing Bill. Once they have been released we will be in a much better situation to formulate an effective housing strategy.

6. CityWest Homes

The strategy is being finalised and will be sent at the end of September.

Altair report

The first meeting between CWH and City Management and GPH was held to look at ways in which CWH can align their functions with the Council to generate efficiencies and savings. Issues such as shared physical assets; parking issues; human resources and IT discussed.

Infill programme

Meetings held with CWH and WCH to progress the infill development programme. In particular, the issue of tenure and size of units was discussed in the light of the Budget implications and this matter will probably need to be discussed with the Cabinet Member at a future briefing.

Capital programme

As per flash report sent separately by CWH, performance on delivery has improved compared with recent years.

CWH have become a member of the Institute of Customer Service and will be carrying out a customer satisfaction survey under their methodology in addition to the annual 'Housemark' survey that is carried out.

7. Rough Sleepers' accommodation services

I received the responsibility of overseeing hostels from the Rough Sleeping portfolio this spring, a post I have previously held.

Officers are close to completing a joint venture with Central London CCG, enabling the health service to spot purchase commissioned bed spaces from the Council for hospital discharge services for homeless people. Given the evidence around poor hospital discharge practices, we have launched a partnership to reduce instances of homeless people being discharged to the streets or being sent in an ambulance to Housing Options. Supported accommodation services across both rough sleeping and vulnerable adult pathways will benefit from targeted clinical support, commissioned by the CCG, in order to provide vulnerable adults 6 week placements with wrap around support and more sustainable housing outcomes.

The focus on the coming year will be on quality auditing services, decision making on a commissioning framework and ensuring the buildings our providers operate out of are fit for purpose and conducive to the recovery of the people who live there. Over the last few years, three hostels have been refurbished and this year, we have supported bids to apply for capital funding to refurbish a further two from the GLA and the Dep't of Health.

Our rough sleeper hostel services achieved 78 positive and planned moves throughout the pathway in Q1 15/16; 103 individuals were engaged in employment or training in the quarter with an additional focus on literacy and numeracy.

Economic and Growth

8. Employment

Work and Skills Group

A cross departmental Work and Skills Group met on 9th September and provided an overview of all Employment and Skills projects within the Council. The Group have since reported to me and will report to the Growth Board. Work underway includes a mapping of provision with colleagues from Adult Social Care and Public Health; a review of European Social Fund opportunities with a view of sustaining services beyond 2016 and, a review of Further Education (adult) skills provision in Westminster.

The work of the Work and Skills Group will be driven by the Employment Programme which sets the direction for the City Council's activities on employment and skills for the next four years incorporating the City for All Aspiration of reducing long term unemployment.

Key Employment Programme projects

Recruit London has recently filled six roles to support delivery of the project including a new Delivery Manager, a full time Specialist Workplace Co-ordinator and a new Workplace Coordinator role established with Capco.

FACES

The project is on track with recruitment of new advisors in progress and first quarter performance shows that 5 residents were supported into employment. A wider referral network is being developed with the service engaging with likely sources of candidates including local schools. It is anticipated this activity will lead to a consistent and reliable flow of referrals to the project.

LEST

This project is supporting long term unemployed residents who have completed the work programme without a job. The two employment coaches are on track with performance and have supported 7 residents into work since April 2015, with a further 20 being referred and starting training or other progressions.

9. 'Made At Somerset House'

Refurbishment works begin this month at Somerset House. The first phase of works will transform a disused 'street' of vaults into affordable workspace for 18 creative and maker SMEs, who will benefit from 6 month - 2 year tenancy agreements. Works will be completed before the end of the year with subjected phases of refurbishment completed over 2016. Overall 100 small businesses will benefit from the project. As part of the Council's funding terms, Somerset House Trust will propose to all tenants to accept 1 work placement per organisation with an expected uptake of 25 per year. The Trust will then work with the

Council and our Education Business Partnership (One EBP) to pair appropriate institutions with schools, colleges and pupils. The Council's investment in the project is matched by Somerset House Trust and the Foyle Foundation.

10. Westminster Enterprise Week

Plans for the inaugural Westminster Enterprise Week (16th-22nd November) are well underway, targeting local young people. A programme of activities will take place featuring a Dragon's Den competition; inspiring talks in enterprise assemblies at local schools; open house sessions co-working spaces; business start-up workshops; and a youth enterprise summit. Officers have secured the support of various partner organisations including The Prince's Trust, Bright Ideas Trust, and many others. A flagship event will take on Thursday 19th November with contributions from Margaret Mountford and Tim Campbell of The Apprentice. Over 1,000 young people will be engaged during the week.

11. Markets

The council is considering how the new pitches for Berwick Street market could be curated to improve the offer for local residents, workers and visitors now the streetscape works have been completed. This would operate for a trial period initially and if successful could be rolled out to our other street markets.