



Housing, Finance and Corporate Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee Briefing

Committee date: Monday, 10th April 2017

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1. Regeneration

Ebury Bridge

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

Housing Zone

- 1.3. We anticipate that the first tranche of funding from the GLA will be received shortly.

Tollgate Gardens

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

Infill programme

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

2. Affordable Housing

- 2.1. Soho Housing Association is currently letting 5 new 1bed intermediate rented homes located at Maiden Lane in Covent Garden. These homes have been transferred to Soho Housing Association by the developer Capco as part of their s106 affordable housing

planning obligations. The lettings will be made to Westminster referrals that are eligible for intermediate housing (with incomes ranging from £32,000 to £42,000). The rents will include service charges ranging from £230 to £295 per week.

- 2.2. Four new social rented homes located at Plympton Place within Church Street will shortly be transferred by Howard De Walden to a local Westminster Housing Association as part of their s106 affordable housing planning obligations. These homes, to be let at target rents, will be made available to Westminster nominees under the Council's allocations scheme. Letting are anticipated to happen later in April.

3. Housing Policy

Housing White Paper

- 3.1. The Government published its white paper "Fixing Our Broken Housing Market" on 6th February.
- 3.2. The paper asks for comments on 38 detailed questions dealing with proposed changes to national planning policies, strategic planning and the handling of planning applications. We currently considering these proposals and will respond by 1st May.

Homelessness Reduction Bill

- 3.3. The Bill has completed its Lords stage with no amendments and is now pending Royal Assent. The date for this, and the enactment date, is unknown. We understand that government is updating the statutory code of guidance relating to homelessness.
- 3.4. Ministers have announced that they will make £48 million available to local authorities to meet the additional burdens arising from the Bill (£35.4 million in 2017/18 and £12.1 million in 2018/19 - after that "it is estimated that offsetting savings to local authorities will mean there are no costs thereafter". We are doing our own modelling to estimate the additional costs that will arise from the Bill.

Mayor's good practice guide to estate regeneration

- 3.5. The Mayor consulted on this between December and 14th March. The document sets out the principles the Mayor wants followed on regeneration projects and says that regeneration should only happen where:
 - there is a clear statement of the aims and objectives of the borough or housing association in maintaining and improving at housing estates;
 - there has been full and transparent consultation and resident engagement;
 - proposals should offer full rights to return for displaced tenants and a fair deal for leaseholders;
 - demolition should only be followed where it does not result in a loss of social housing, or where all other options have been exhausted.
- 3.6. The document does not support ballots for regeneration to proceed. It is expected some of the principles from the final document will be incorporated into the draft London Housing Strategy which is being published in May.
- 3.7. We responded to the consultation setting out that while we are already working to many of the proposed principles we do not support the document being overly detailed and prescriptive and that it needs to recognise that different approaches work in different areas.

Planning and Affordable Housing for Build to Rent

- 3.8. Government is consulting until 1st May on proposals to support the (private) Build to Rent sector through the planning system in order to boost supply, provide quality and choice and speed up development on sites that might not otherwise have come forward. It proposes revising the National Planning Policy Framework to refer to Build to Rent as a form of housing which should be considered by local authorities and it also proposes that discounted private rent (defined as a minimum of 20% in perpetuity) could count as a form of affordable housing on Build to Rent sites. The consultation also asks if there should be a minimum scheme size for Build to Rent schemes i.e. 50 units. A response is being prepared.

Community Supported Housing Review

- 3.9. The Housing LIN/Archadia Architects have been commissioned to undertake a review of the council's Community Supportive Housing (CSH – sheltered) stock by June 2017. The review centres around 3 questions:
- i. How well is CSH meeting current demand and how well will it meet future demand?
 - ii. How well does it contribute to meeting the council's key priorities and objectives? (this includes Adult Social Care, Public Health and Health and Wellbeing Strategy objectives as well as Housing ones)
 - iii. What changes are needed (for the stock to better meet current and future demand the council's priorities) and how can they be made?
- 3.10. The need for a review was identified in the housing strategy direction of travel statement 2015 and it responds to:
- an aging stock which needs improvement;
 - a stock which doesn't meet modern aspirations and requirements i.e. a predominance of studio's;
 - uncertain future demand – the stock is becoming less attractive to council downsizers (which could free up stock for homeless households) but at the same time higher demand from older private tenants;
 - and the rising cost of care.
- 3.11. A workshop was held with officers on emerging findings from the review and to test out emerging ideas in order to help inform the final report. A similar workshop session is being held with Policy and Scrutiny on 10th April.
- 3.12. Emerging findings include:
- Demand will continue to outstrip supply
 - There is a different offer across our schemes i.e. it is not consistent
 - Many CSH residents have security concerns
 - Adaptations and renovations are well received by CSH residents
 - Some older council tenants don't have much information about CSH.
- 3.13. We are looking at what our template for sheltered housing should be and how we will work towards it.

Work and Pension Committee enquiry into Universal Credit (UC)

- 3.14. This re-launched enquiry was seeking evidence on the progress and impact of UC until 20th March and we are making a late submission. UC hasn't been fully rolled out yet and only new single applicants currently receive it in Westminster.
- 3.15. Our response therefore is based on practical knowledge of 60 council tenants that receive UC and includes wider lobbying points. The wider lobby points centre on how UC/welfare reform objectives are misaligned to other national objectives. We also ask for more flexibility for local authorities to request direct payments to protect revenue from the HRA which is used to develop new homes which is a key national objective and for UC payments to be made in advance to help residents in their transition towards independence.

4. CityWest Homes (CWH)

Performance

- 4.1. CWH continued to perform well against Management Agreement targets and are on track to achieve targets for income collection and savings.

CWH Board

- 4.2. At the end of February, CWH sadly lost Mary Holt, resident board member. Mary was appointed to the Board in December 2012, and had chaired the Remuneration, Employment and Diversity Committee since January 2014. Mary was also Chair of the Thurso and Dundee Tenant Management Organisation. Mary valued diversity and CWH is introducing a staff award in her memory to recognise significant contributions to equality issues.

Service Transformation

- 4.3. Work continues on the development of a new service delivery target operating model, supported by a digital programme.
- 4.4. Development of a refreshed website is due to go live in April 2017 and the multichannel contact centre is on track for full implementation in June 2017.
- 4.5. Customer engagement on the use of estate offices has commenced and local sessions with residents are due to take place in April.
- 4.6. The new model impacts on a number of teams and staff consultation on the supporting structures is in progress. The transition is being phased to reduce and manage any disruption to the business and service to customers.
- 4.7. Housing management services currently provided through Pinnacle will transfer to CWH from June 2017.

Creation of a Subsidiary Company

- 4.8. Good progress has been made to establish CWH' new subsidiary company 'CityWest homes Services' and the company is due to 'go live' in April 2017. All new staff from that date will be employed by the new company.

Repairs and Major Works Procurement

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

5. Rough Sleeping

King George's hostel

- 5.1. King George's hostel accommodates 68 former rough sleepers with complex needs including substance misuse, physical and mental health needs. In March 2017 a recording studio was installed in the basement using charitable income to provide new ways to engage with residents and help build confidence and promote recovery. The studio offers many ways to embed basic skills development (literacy, planning, timekeeping, communication skills) along with the positive impact on wellbeing.

Safe Space' night centre

- 5.2. In February 2017, the Rough Sleeping Team learned they were successful in their bid to the DCLG domestic abuse funding round; £190k was secured to fund a 'Safe Space' night centre for rough sleeping women experiencing domestic and sexual violence. The Safe Space will create an additional 10 bed spaces, 365 nights of the year (opening hours 21:00 – 08:00). Women will be supported for up to 14-days while the specialist caseworker establishes appropriate and sustainable housing options, providing support for women at risk.

6. Hubs

- 6.1. The Hubs Steering Group met on 14th March to "stocktake" the work undertaken so far within the three main workstreams (Older People Hubs, Family Hubs and Newman Street) and look at other projects the Council is carrying out that align with the aims of the hubs programme.

7. Specialist Housing Strategy for Older People (SHSOP)

- 7.1. The development of the new Beachcroft Care Home was approved at Planning Committee on 14th March with Committee Members voting unanimously in favour of the scheme. Committee Members commented on the need to redevelop the site, the quality of the architecture and the importance of the care home given our ageing population.
- 7.2. Main contractor tender returns were received on 20th March and are currently being evaluated, with the aim of selecting a preferred contractor by the end April.
- 7.3. A design team has now been appointed to progress design options for both Carlton Dene and Westmead in line with the SHSOP projected care requirements. I will have meetings with Ward Councillors as soon as initial options have been scoped.