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Report of: Councillor Heather Acton

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Communities, PPL and
Regeneration

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**1. City for All Vision and Strategy (2021 – 2022) – Communities, PPL and Regeneration
Priorities**

1.1 Cleaner and Greener

1.1.1 Code of Construction Practice (CoCP)

The draft Code of Construction Practice has been out to consultation over a 6-week period and the consultation responses are being analysed before preparing the document for final adoption in autumn.

1.1.2 Air Quality Action Plan

Westminster is taking part in the GLA's 'Breathe London' project to trial air quality sensor technology in London and to empower communities to measure and take action to improve air quality. We are planning to undertake a feasibility study and will run a communication campaign funded by DEFRA for the electrification of Paddington basin to potentially provide electric power for mooring canal boats to improve air quality along the basin. We will also be updating our plans in the future to reflect the recently updated Air Quality standards as set by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

1.1.3 Westminster Schools Air Quality Programme

Since my last report, a few real-time Air Quality monitors have been implemented through our IT team. This programme has been supported by environmental consultants WSP who carried out the audits and collated the results. All the schools that undertook an audit have received their audit reports and WSP has collated the findings and completed a final programme report.

1.2 Vibrant Communities

1.2.1 Westminster Connects

The teams across Westminster Connects have continued to provide support across the city through staffing vaccine centres, distributing food, and aiding refugees arriving from Afghanistan. To support Afghan Refugees, 6 van loads of donations of clothes, toys, shoes and toiletries were collected over three days and taken to the quarantine hotel to support the newly arrived evacuees. The Business Community Partnership has also raised over £49,000 in cash donations and goods to support the evacuees, including donations of suitcases, headscarves, long robes and Qurans.

1.2.2 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Update

Three injunctions covering the Mozart and Lydford Estate area were obtained on 13 July 2021. Two were against high profile individuals known to cause ASB in the area with the third against 'persons unknown' to prevent ASB in the area. If individuals are found to be in breach of the conditions of the injunction and the police are called, the individuals can be arrested for breaching the injunction and have to appear at court. We are working with the police regarding possible breaches and police continue to monitor

The Housing and PP&L services met on 7 September to plan actions around addresses that have been identified as potential contributors to ASB during the coming Halloween and Bonfire night period ('Autumn Nights'), and to discuss actions to be taken in advance.

The PP&L team conducted a successful operation in August on Edgware Road designed to put as many enforcement capabilities as possible into one area to effect positive change through visible deployment. 22 officers from 12 different teams across 5 organisations (Westminster City Council, the Metropolitan Police Service, Transport for London, HMRC and Immigration Enforcement) visited shops and businesses in the area and took formal enforcement action in 8 different premises. Since this operation we have seen the recruitment of additional CIs and an increase in enforcement in areas such as fly-tipping and commercial waste.

1.2.3 Church Street

Following Stage 2 pre-planning consultations, the design for Sites A, B and C is currently being finalised in collaboration with other departments in Growth, Planning and Housing. This is in line with preparation of the planning documentation and officers scheduled workshops during August and September to continue dialogue with key stakeholders. The Church Street Triangle project continues to be developed and recently consultations regarding Phase 2 (the public realm improvements) were well received.

1.2.4 Ebury

The necessary professional team appointments are mostly in place, together with dedicated internal resourcing to ensure the successful delivery of Ebury Phase 1. Local consultation and resident engagement continues on all aspects of the project. The team is liaising with all 'right of light' affected households in advance of formal appropriation and construction start dates for Phase 1 in addition to the engagement with leaseholders concerning acquisitions in order to bring forward future phases of the project. The Ebury Community Futures Group (CFG) also continues to meet on a monthly basis.

1.2.5 Darwin House Redevelopment

The Balmoral Castle/Darwin House scheme was approved at Planning Committee on the 8th of June. A total of 52 affordable homes will be provided, including 18 new high-quality, intermediate rented homes, prioritised for local residents, along with a new landscaped green space. The scheme also includes 34 new community supported homes which will enable the residents at Darwin House to enjoy significant improvement to their standard of accommodation. The development team is concluding the appointment of a main contractor, following which the site will be prepared and demolition will take place.

1.2.6 Harrow Road

300 Harrow Road will provide 51 affordable units and 61 private units as well as new public realm space and enterprise space. The enabling works continue to progress well on site and the commencement of main works commenced in September. This is the first project where Westminster Builds will be assuming the developer role.

2. Major Decisions

Since my last report to Committee, I have formally approved the following decisions:

- Approval of Expenditure from the Ward Budget of Harrow Road and Maida Vale
- Balmoral Castle and Darwin House Project Development Proposals
- Ebury Bridge Final Business Case Phase 1

- Expenditure from the Ward Budget - Holistic Advice and Advocacy in Westminster
- Farm Street: Intermediate Homes at Farm Street

3. Areas of Focus

3.1 Rough Sleeping

In July 2021, Westminster was awarded £451,210 of funding to help ensure women who are rough sleepers and victims of domestic abuse receive access to accommodation, support, advocacy, and counselling in a safe environment. The accommodation provision will provide 24-hour support for up to 16 women at a time and will be available from 1 October 2021.

3.2 HMO Licensing Scheme

The additional licensing scheme for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) came into place on August 30th. Applications for licences are already being processed using our new software system which allows landlords to make online applications and receive updates on progress when necessary. This scheme will focus on HMOs that fall outside of the national scheme of mandatory licensing, namely, S.254 HMOs. These are typically referred to as house shares, where occupants share basic amenities such as bathrooms, toilets, and kitchens. We estimate there are c.4800 of these HMOs across the borough, with 80% having serious hazards

In order for this scheme to be a success, a comprehensive review of the regulation of the PRS sector has also been carried out. Following this, officers have been regrouped into dedicated teams to deliver the service, and processes have been adjusted to reflect new priorities which have emerged, including the expanded licensing scheme.

3.3 Westminster Builds

The Westminster Builds Business Plan and corporate governance arrangements were approved by Cabinet in July 2021. The business plan will be updated following the 2021/22 CPSR process. The first acquisitions of units on Farm Street and West End Gate are nearing completion.

3.4 Infill Programme

Both the Thurso and Noel Coward schemes are due to be submitted to the local planning authority September. The schemes will provide 7 affordable homes which will be covered by the Local Lettings Plan.

3.5 Nuisance Vehicles Acoustic Camera Updates

The public consultation on a Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) has run from 21st July until 29th September, with over 80 responses received.. Ward Members for St James provided some ward funding to the MPS to allow for weekend police operations, including enforcement of traffic violations, and identifying nuisance driving in Waterloo Place. Locations were sought for two acoustic cameras to be placed in the areas most affected by nuisance vehicles, Waterloo Place and Exhibition Road. These cameras were installed by our highways contractors, FM Conway on Thursday 26th August and will be utilised for enforcement once the PSPO is in place. The project is on track to go live on 9th November 2021. We are currently working on identifying other hot spot areas in the city, where there may be potential to apply a similar approach.

3.6 Street Entertainment Updates

Our dedicated team of City Inspectors continues to be deployed 7 days a week, working from 12:00 – 22:00 enabling engagement with performers in the regulated area, both in a proactive way and in response to complaints, in order to raise awareness of the new policy and ensure compliance. Since 1st June we have issued an additional 64 licences, bringing a total of 126. Our main area of non-compliance remains in Covent Garden, but there is positive engagement with the Covent Garden

Street Performers Association. The first 'Buskers Forum' took place on 13th July with a good level of attendance from the street entertainment and busker community.

3.7 Updates on the Shisha Authority Working Group

Across the City, shisha cafes and bars have reopened and are subject to the range of legal obligations under existing legislation. Officers will continue to monitor premises and react to complaints in order to deal with any breaches under the Health Act, Planning law, Fire safety, Health & Safety and Trading Standards law. Following further meetings within the Local Authority Shisha Working Group a meeting with MHCLG was due to be held in September to discuss potential amendments to legislation including consideration of any existing powers that could be strengthened.