

Date: 26 January 2022

Report of: Councillor David Harvey

Portfolio: Cabinet Member for Housing

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1. City for All Vision and Strategy (2021 – 2022) – Housing Services Priorities

1.1 Greener and Cleaner

1.1.1 Leverage Energy Efficiency Measures in Housing

We are still awaiting a response from BEIS regarding our £3.1m Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund bid. We have also approached the GLA for non-capital funding to support a PDHU river source heat Feasibility study and business case. If awarded we would receive £400k of funding and this would lead to a possibility to fund surveys and studies, commercialisation, tender documents, and a Client Project Manager for the scheme if it proceeds. A meeting was held with BEIS in December 2021 to discuss early preparation for a £5m Green Heat Network Grant application in Spring/Summer 2022 for the PDHU river source heat pump.

1.2 Vibrant Communities

1.2.1 Supporting Vulnerable Residents

Work is progressing well with our Changing Futures Programme. A marketing engagement event recently took place for the role of a Housing Support Worker to support residents experiencing multiply disadvantage in the Churchill Gardens estate. Market evaluations will take place the week commencing 24th January 2022. Carrying on with our work with the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA) we will also be trialling a casework management system in January to manage cases of domestic abuse.

1.2.2 Redesign of Service Model Through Shared Space and Maximising the Use of Public Buildings - Churchill Gardens Pilot

Several activities have been delivered from the community hall at Churchill Gardens and have increased and coordinated into one single programme to be circulated to Churchill residents in a pilot newsletter and displayed on estate notice boards from January 2022. Part funding to secure a small number of planters for a community gardening initiative has been identified with a meeting for interested residents scheduled on the 31st of January to follow up on discussions of a forming group and its associated governance. The pilot newsletter also covering other volunteering opportunities in partnership with Westminster Connects, promoting ASB drop-in sessions and dog fouling bags can be collected from the area housing office. A forward planning meeting with programme staff has taken place for priorities identified in 2022.

1.3 Smart City

1.3.1 Trial Smart Homes Technologies

We have successfully trialled the use of drones on eight housing blocks that are due for major works in 2022. This will help contribute to the specification of works and accurate billing for stakeholders. We are identifying additional sites for the drone surveys, including sites for responsive repairs. Our IT team has been working collectively with Housing business leads to scope and merge the information regarding our Housing stock with the supplier and how it is implemented onto our Housing management systems for our digital notice board

initiative. This is a key ongoing part of ensuring that the product is successfully launched. We have recently been appointed an IT project manager, which will assist us moving to the next stages of implementing the digital notice boards and sensor technology. The IT team will assist us ensuring that the technology communicates and implements effectively and safely with our systems.

1.3.2 Facilitating Broadband Connections

To date 95.12% of Westminster's Housing stock has now received access to top tier Broadband Services with thanks to our Broadband Team. Operators have been impacted in multiple ways in recent months mostly due to COVID-19 but also technician capacity issues, residents restricting access, height machinery being unavailable for such a multitude of sites, and permit issues inclusive of civils and pavement permits being required. This will lead to some properties receiving live services by the end of January which will take the total stock to 96.07%. We will be working on sites early in the new year that have been placed as unviable or that have long term access issues and anticipate once all arrangements are made, an opportunity to achieve 98.81% by the end of the financial year is achievable.

2. Cabinet Member Decisions

- Community Testing Facilities and Testing Delivery
- Rehousing Policy for Residents of Huguenot House
- Rough Sleeping Services Contract

3. Areas of Focus

3.1 Update on the Housing Restructure

The Housing Services restructure has reached the recruitment phase with over 50 roles being advertised. The Housing team is working with colleagues in Employment Services to ensure vacancies reach our local communities. This is a great opportunity for our residents to take on roles at all levels in service provision. The restructure aims to increase the number of front-line staff and reduces the number of back-office managers. In turn, this reduces the number of properties that each surveyor and housing officer manages, so that they are able to build a better knowledge and understanding of our estates, properties and customers and provide more customer focussed services.

3.2 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Update

This year we are taking a new approach to ASB enforcement. We have taken tenancy enforcement action for 40 ASB cases which includes the service of 35 Notices of Seeking Possession for breach of the tenancy agreement and applying for 17 Civil Injunctions, 12 of which have been heard and granted to restrict the behaviour of ASB perpetrators. This includes two estate wide injunctions covering the Mozart and Lydford Estates. Following the implementation of the estate wide injunctions we have seen a drop in reported ASB in these specific areas.

3.3 Major Works Update

Work on the Capital Programme continues to progress well in early 2022, from January to March we will have a total of 12 Capital Programme Projects starting, of which 9 will sit with United Living in the South and 3 with Axis Europe in the North. In the background our Commissioning Team are actively working through designs with our Service Providers to ensure they both have clear visibility and continuity as committed on our Partnering Programmes.

3.4 Repairs in Westminster and Response to Flash Flooding

Ongoing assessments have concluded that 14 homes damaged by flooding have now all had repairs completed. To date our Repairs Team and contractor Morgan Sindall have jointly inspected 9 properties post-repairs (with the remaining homes restricted due to COVID concerns pre-Christmas). All works have cost a

total of £145,005.7 which our teams are claiming insurance. A satisfaction survey will be provided to all residents affected once the final homes have been inspected in January 2022.

3.5 Lillington & Longmore Estates Update

In early December 2021 flooding was experienced on Lillington and Longmore estates by several households due to an unforeseen rise in water pressure. Our repairs team followed up quickly to assess the most urgent repairs, particularly in Forsyth House. Extra onsite support has been dedicated to residents during this time with officers going door to door and speaking to residents and identifying risks. To date we have had 27 surveys booked or completed and we are working closely with the Resident Association to encourage residents to take part.

3.6 Communicating with Leaseholders

We are working in partnership with our leaseholders to revise our estimated service charge invoice, which was advertised in our last 'YourHome Magazine' in December 2021. We will separate the service charge correspondence mailing into two parts this year. The first mailing in January 2022 will focus on help and assistance. The second mailing in February 2022 will only contain the service charge demand. Our aim is to breakdown and clearly explain the charges for the year ahead. We will send the 2022/2023 estimated service charge bill in February 2023 which will be a standalone document although we will host a web page with the documents and leaflets that we sent in January 2022.

3.7 Overview of the Current Supply and Allocations Policy

Our proportion of social lets are projected annually as part of the Supply and Allocation Report. To make these projections a range of different factors are taken into account such as demand, strategic priorities and costs. For 2021/22 the projections are: 32% to transfers, 34% to homeless households and 33% to housing register applicants. For 2021/22 a higher proportion of lets to care leavers (55) is projected compared with previous years, when there has been around 20 lets annually. This is due to rising demand from this group, their vulnerability, rising costs to the council in accommodating them and in view of the council's corporate parenting responsibilities.

3.8 Afghan Relocation Re-settlement Scheme Update

The Council has committed to securing 5 family sized properties for the Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy scheme (ARAP.) The details of the first of these private sector properties, to be let at LHA rates, has been sent to the Home Office who will then nominate a family to the property. Once the family has viewed and moved into the property, support will be provided through Children's, Health, Employment and housing related services to support the household to settle. Work is ongoing with landlords to secure the remaining properties, essentially waiting for final repair work to be completed ahead of a final inspection of each property.

3.9 Update on Sustainability in the Housing Service

Handover from the PDHU team to the Major Works and Repairs teams has been ongoing since November 2021. Surveys of over 800 homes have been completed and identification of in dwelling pipe work and service riser investment is currently underway. Dedicated Resident liaison officers and escalation addresses have been set up for Lillington and Longmore to provide additional support for our residents on the estate following the influx of water damage to properties in December 2021. A decarbonising assessment and feasibility works are in progress, led by Asset Strategy to provide an options and investment paper prior to March 2022 in time to apply for government district heating funding.

3.10 Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Update

Over the past few months we have been diligently planning our WCC Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) and our extended winter provision for people sleeping rough during 2021-22. The aim of SWEP is to

prevent loss of life and to reduce rough sleeping during extreme weather conditions. We are therefore taking an approach that over New Year that will focus on accommodating those identified as clinically vulnerable to COVID-19. We will be continually assessing the picture on the streets with outreach and other partners. A key aspect of providing any new emergency accommodation is our capability to do so safely.

In line with previous practice, we will work collaboratively with partners to ensure surge and additional winter pressure funding is implemented effectively across the rough sleeping service with our aims to reduce the numbers of homelessness rough sleepers. In 2021/22 the council will access up to three separate hotels between December and March 2022, where we have negotiated access to over 100 bed spaces available.

3.11 Resident Engagement Activities and Opportunities

This Christmas our Resident Engagement Team arranged for 1,000 festive hampers to be delivered by staff from across the Housing service to our older and vulnerable residents. 1,000 festive boxes went to residents over 80 in the general stock and some in sheltered housing. Additionally, we supported the delivery of 400 hampers from Age UK across the borough, 260 hampers via the Southwest bid, and 350 hampers from the Sir Simon Milton Trust are going to Adult Social Care residents. We had 71 volunteers drawn from across Westminster City Council, with the bulk coming from the Housing Service. In the new year we also plan to continue our fortnightly online briefing with our Residents Associations which has been well received and has helped to strengthen the relationship between the department and our partners.

4. Key Performance Indicators

4.1 Housing Management Contact Centre

In November the Housing Management Contact Centre received **21,462** calls, **70%** of which were answered within 30 seconds (performance above target range), with the longest call waiting time 20 minutes. **52%** of calls were resolved during first contact and resident satisfaction with call handling is at **74%** which is above target.

4.2 Satisfaction with Repairs Service

Overall tenant satisfaction with repairs has remained steady at **73%** in November 2021. **98.1%** of emergency repairs in this period were completed on the first visit.

4.3 Overall satisfaction with Housing Services

Tenant satisfaction that WCC provides a safe and secure home remains steady at **69%** for tenants and **64%** for leaseholders in November. Satisfaction with cleaning of communal areas is at **74%** for tenants and **64%** for leaseholders, while satisfaction with grounds maintenance is at **82%** for tenants and **75%** for leaseholders.