

**Date:** 14 November 2022

**Portfolio:** Housing Services

**The Report of:** Councillor Liza Begum

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- 1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 18 October:**
  - 24/10/2022 – The Passage – Bentley House
- 2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date of the new administration.**

### **Retrofitting Update**

We plan to submit a grant funding application for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) again this year which aligns with our goals to have homes in our Housing Stock be as efficient and environmentally friendly as possible. Green Homes Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase B (LAD1B) and LAS 2 Grant funded schemes have just ended and £800k of additional funding above the £3.3m SHDF funding has been received for these retrofit works to over 150 homes.

### **Update on VOIDS**

Works to 134 VOIDS are currently in progress as of 1 October 2022. 31 of which are undergoing retrofit works. This year, the average time taken to complete a VOID on properties requiring minor works is 11 days, and 16 days for more extensive works such as replacement of kitchen, bathroom, or rewiring.

New tenants are surveyed and encouraged to feedback with the condition of their new homes, and we are currently waiting for the guidance from the Housing Regulator to confirm on the guidelines and criteria of reporting satisfaction.

### **Major Works**

The Major Works aspect of the Capital Programme is being delivered across the city is on schedule and our spend in line with our forecast. In the South United Living are working on 11 live contracts and a further 8 Client Briefs are in development. In the North with Axis Europe, we are concluding 2 projects, with a further key 5 projects to start within October and November.

## **Repairs**

Following my substantive report from the last Committee dated 18 October officers have taken back feedback and continue to complete repairs as requests come into the service. To date most repairs received by the service are plumbing and leaks, carpentry works and communal district heating repairs on our estates.

We recognise a large proportion of the service disconnect that is received by our customer satisfaction is based around delays in getting access to homes and in turn delays to resolve leaks, delays in making good and decoration works (after a leak has been resolved) and communication updates on repairs, officers are taking this back and updates regarding improving disconnect on repairs will be brought back to this Committee in due course.

## **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Update**

The Housing ASB Team currently have 172 active open cases. 49 of these cases relate to verbal abuse/ harassment / intimidation, 42 cases relate to noise complaints, and 31 cases relate to drugs misuse. The area with the highest number of cases includes the Mozart Estate, Lydford Estate and the Avenues with 30 cases.

Two cases were heard in court throughout the month of October. 1 x Possession on discretionary grounds in regard to a property in the West. This case was adjourned to later this month, and 1 x Injunction against a resident in the West. The case was adjourned.

## **Autumn Nights in Westminster**

We want everyone to be able to safely enjoy Halloween and Bonfire Night in Westminster this year, that's why we have re-launched our Autumn Nights campaign running from 22 October 2022 to 5 November 2022. Teams are working together to ensure posters are displayed across estates regarding use of fireworks. Four Westminster Housing household occupants have been identified this year to receive a pre-Autumn Nights warning letter. These are individuals who came to notice last year due to ASB.

## **Fire and Building Safety Bill Update**

Additional revenue and capital budget has recently been agreed to fund the new requirements set out in the Buildings Safety Act 2022 and Fire Safety Act 2021. A 2-phase service provider framework project has commenced to procure the required services to deliver new services set out in the legislation recently given royal assent. Further detail on this will be brought to Committee in due course.

## **Rough Sleeping in Westminster**

227 rough sleepers were recorded during the September Street Count, down from 280 in the previous street count in July and returning to levels previously seen in June 2022. Housing Needs, together with our providers are working to engage rough sleepers with work options and for those who wish to return to their home country to support this process.

The hot spot areas where rough sleepers recorded in the September count (by ward) are St James's - 93, West End - 74, Vincent Square - 17 and Hyde Park - 9.

### **Supporting Residents Through the Cost-of-Living Crisis**

We have set aside a sum of £400k for a 'Hardship fund' for tenants to help residents through the Cost-of-Living Crisis. We have identified our tenants who are in receipt of Universal Credit of Housing Benefit who are also in arrears so that we can target our support to who would benefit the most from the hardship sum.

There are 844 accounts with a balance of £507k in arrears where we are working with our tenants to understand if a payment from the hardship fund will assist our residents to maintain their rent account.

### **Community Thursdays**

The Community Thursdays Programme has now completed its first round of visits with 18 sessions. Highlights to date include: 65 estates visited across 17 wards, 178 different members of staff have taken part, 12 different councillors have joined us, over 5000 doors knocked, and 2 homeless schemes visited. More information on this and the Residents First Programme will be available in my next report to this Committee in December 2022.