



**Climate Action, Housing and
Regeneration Policy and Scrutiny
Committee**

Date: 19 April 2023

Portfolio: Climate Action, Regeneration & Renters

The Report of: Councillor Matt Noble

**Report Author and
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- 1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated 2 March 2023:**
 - 02/03/2023 - Community Municipal Investment
 - 08/03/2023 - Service Change in Regeneration and Development
 - 14/03/2023 - Balmoral Castle and Darwin House - Approval of the Full Business Case and the Appointment of the Main Contractor to Deliver Phases 2,3 and 4
- 2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date.**

2.1 Climate Action

2.2 Sustainable City Charter (SCC) Update

Over 60 participants are now in the process of signing up to the SCC with 21 full Charter participants and a further 50 expressions of interest. We are pleased to say we have several key partners signed up including the Portman Estate, Axis Europe Plc, The Royal Opera House, Landsec, Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and Shaftesbury. A case study of the Charter has been accepted by UK100 and will feature in their monthly newsletter in April 2023. Further information on the Charter as well as a complete list of full participants can be found online on the Council's website following the link attached: <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/tackling-climate-change-westminster/business-climate-action/sustainable-city-charter/current-participants>

2.3 Westminster Green Investment 2028

In partnership with *Abundance*, the first round of the Westminster Green Investment 2028 (also known as the Green Bond) launched on 13 March and funded the full £1 million pound target in just 10 days officially closing on 23 March. 484 investors participated in this round of funding aimed to support a variety of green initiatives within Westminster. The money will be used for various projects such as glazing upgrades, heat pump technology, installation of solar PV and draught proofing. Further details on specific projects to be funded will be released in due course.

2.4 Greening Westminster Programme

Formerly known as the Open Spaces, Greener Places Programme (OSGP), Greening Westminster is an annual grant funding programme designed to improve and increase Westminster's green infrastructure and open spaces. The Greening Westminster fund is open to various applicants, such as Community groups, Neighbourhood Forums and Business Improvements Districts, and internal council departments. Every applicant will be asked to submit an expression of interest form to help determine which of the following categories they fall into, either Greening *Westminster Communities* or *Greening Westminster Professionals*.

Grants are awarded based on criteria shaped by our Climate Action Plan and the Fairer Westminster Strategy meaning proposals will be selected based on their contribution to the environment as well as people and communities. For this round of funding, expressions of interest must be received by 28 April 2023 and full applications received by 2 May 2023. More information can be found via the link below <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/place-shaping/greening-westminster>.

2.4. Biodiversity Update – Wild West End Partnership

The Council is now a Strategic Partner of the *Wild West End* (WWE) an organization with an ambition to create a network of green infrastructure through London's West End, to enhance biodiversity, and improve the local environment for residents, workers and visitors.

Together with our partners we will begin to green parts of the urban environment (including roofs, walls, and parts of the public realm) to create more wildlife friendly features and habitats, opportunities for small-scale food growing, and community gardening that are appropriate to the function and form of the West End Estates. Along with Councillor Dimoldenberg and officers, I will be attending future meetings to review the progress of creating a green network, share good practise / lessons learnt, and review opportunities for collaboration among stakeholders.

2.5. Climate Assembly Update

Our chosen supplier Involve has been onboarded and an inception meeting with officers from the Climate Emergency, Communities and Comms teams took place on 27th March. Prior to inception, Cabinet members inputted on potential Assembly themes.

We are working with Involve to finalise the Assembly remit wording. The Sortition Foundation will begin recruiting participants through May, to be onboarded in early June. We are aiming to commence Assembly sessions on the 24/25th June.

2.6 Green Doctors Update

In 2022/23 (as of end of March), the Green Doctors service has delivered energy advice and support to a total of 189 Westminster residents (91 home visits, 98 telephone consultations). Appointments can be booked online or over the telephone. Over 600 free energy saving measures have been installed to participating households, providing an average saving of

circa £250 per household. This has been funded through a combination of internal (public health grant, carbon offset funding) and external (GLA Warm Homes Advice Service grant funding) sources.

Promotion of the service have been delivered via a range of supporting communications activity and outreach, including:

- WCC website, the Cost-of-Living Hub and the Active Westminster website.
- Information has been included in the cost-of-living training sessions delivered to front line officers, including housing management.
- Public Health Community Champions have been notified of the schemes.
- Green Doctors have attended Housing advice sessions.
- Leaflets and posters have been distributed to WCC-managed community hubs (all 20 community halls, family hubs, leisure centres and libraries).
- Council social channels and newsletters, with further information planned from 1 April following the Government's Energy Price Guarantee change.
- Two videos for social media are being filmed with Green Doctors as part of the ongoing Cost-of-Living campaign.
- Stalls have been held at a range of outreach events:
 - Queens Park Community Winter Fair 10/12/22
 - Westminster Together forum 23/11/22.
 - Fairer Westminster resident event on 21/03/23.
 - Cost-of-living workshops at Queens Park and Paddington Libraries (07/03/22 and 14/03/22).

Further outreach opportunities are being explored, including:

- Green Live Learning Lab event
- Joint Green Live Learning Lab stall with WAES at the Westbourne Festival
- Grand Junction Spring Festival
- 3 x Housing monthly workshops

3. Regeneration

3.1. Updates to the Truly Affordable Housing Strategy

3.1.1 Westminster Builds – Registered Provider Status

On the 27th of March, the Shareholder Committee considered a paper which set out that the Council has provisionally secured £11.3m of GLA grant to fund the construction of intermediate rent homes. These homes are currently intended to be acquired by Westminster Builds; however, the terms of the grant require the homes to be held by a Registered Provider and, currently, Westminster Builds is not a Registered Provider. RPs are defined as organisations that are run independently from councils as the main developers of new homes in the social housing sector who provide housing for people.

The Westminster Builds' Board has therefore resolved to incorporate a new company as a Registered Provider in its group to retain the flexibility of the current approach, meet the terms of the grant funding and provide the Council with the option to purchase and retain ownership of the intermediate housing when complete. As required under the Articles of Association, the Board requires approval of the shareholder to incorporate a new company. The establishment of any new company is a retained responsibility of the Cabinet and is not delegated to the Shareholder Committee to act on behalf of the Council. Accordingly the Committee resolved to recommend this decision to a future Cabinet meeting, and this is planned for 15 May 2023.

3.1.2 Working with the Greater London Authority (GLA)

We are pleased to confirm that we are on track to unlock an additional £60m in funding from the GLA following the successful residents' ballots on our two major regeneration schemes at Church Street and Ebury Bridge. This funding will enable us to deliver more high-quality affordable homes in line with the Truly Affordable Housing Strategy.

3.2. Church Street Programme Update

Planning permission on our Church Street Regeneration Scheme was granted by the Council on 28th March for sites A, B, and C following the positive resident ballot that was undertaken in late 2022. These approved plans will ensure that all 228 existing homes for social rent will be reprovided as well as delivering an additional 156 social rent homes and 170 intermediate rent units. The regeneration scheme will also include an enhanced market infrastructure for Church Street Market, a new pedestrianised route, high quality green public spaces, and the creation of new jobs and training opportunities for the community. The planning application will now be referred to the GLA for Stage 2 approval.

3.4. Balmoral & Darwin House Update

In line with our Fairer Westminster Strategy officers undertook a review of the existing Darwin House and garages offering a sizable Community Supporting Housing (CSH) scheme and providing additional affordable housing units. With this review the Council has committed to providing the maximum possible affordable housing in the development, works will be phased to minimize disruption to residents, there will be a full replacement of all Council homes and the Council will keep residents at the heart of the development and design of the scheme.

Following the approval of the Full Business Case in mid-march, officers can now begin delivering the scheme which will take part in four phases: Phase 1 - demolition of the Balmoral Castle public house and 23 vacant garages, Phase 2 – delivery of 34 new homes - Community Supported Housing (CSH) (Block A), Phase 3 - the demolition of Darwin House and Phase 4 – delivery of 18 new homes – Affordable Intermediate Rent housing (Block B).

4. Renters

4.1 Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES)

Our new webpage dedicated to information on the MEES, including how to apply can be found here: <https://www.westminster.gov.uk/housing/private-sector-housing/landlords/landlord-energy-grant-scheme>. We currently have 16 properties which have been shortlisted and will be asked to apply but we hope that this number will continue to increase. Officers will now be writing to landlords of eligible properties and making use of existing landlord groups and networks to promote the scheme to reputable Westminster landlords.

We have already communicated with the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme, who distributed a letter on our behalf to their members and put an advert in their monthly newsletter. This went out earlier in March 2023. Officers will also be reaching out to Westminster's Landlords Forum, the National Residential Landlords Association, and the Green Doctors.