



# City of Westminster

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

<b>Date:</b>	6 July 2023
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Climate Action, Regeneration & Renters
<b>The Report of:</b>	Councillor Matt Noble
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### **1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated June 2023:**

- No decisions have been made

### **2. The following report includes my priorities and delivery progress to date.**

### **3. Climate Action**

#### **3.1 Westminster Green Investment 2028**

Westminster City Council, in partnership with ethical crowdfunding platform Abundance Investment, launched the Westminster Green Investment Bond in March 2023 to help fund a range of green projects within the local community. The bond achieved the £1m target within nine days of launch. A list of investment opportunities has been identified and confirmed (see further information in the table in Appendix 1). To date, energy conservation measures have been installed in 7 sites at a value of £71k. Further measures (including solar PV and an air source heat pump) will be delivered across 7 sites by the end of 2023, bringing the total investment to £1m.

#### **3.2 Green Doctors**

As of the 30 June 2023, the Green Doctors service has delivered energy advice and support to a total of 281 Westminster households (116 home visits, 165 telephone consultations). These figures are split between three funding sources: Public Health (allocation now complete); Westminster Carbon Offset fund (£45k allocated to support 400 households – currently active); GLA-funded Warm Homes Advice Service (support for up to 75 visits – funding has now expired).

Officers have been exploring with Groundwork how to determine customer satisfaction with the current support offer. Groundwork currently conducts satisfaction surveys on a random sample of residents that receive their service across London. They do not currently have any data on Westminster residents so we have asked that this is addressed.

Separate to this, Officers are planning customer surveys and resident engagement to determine satisfaction with the service and will use this to inform the re-scoping and retendering of the service ahead of next winter.

### **3.3 Sustainable City Charter**

The Sustainable City Charter was launched in 2022 and is an innovative, business-led climate action pledge for organisations, containing eight commitments for reducing carbon emissions from non-domestic buildings. The Charter has now attracted expressions of interest from over 100 organisations, of which 35 have become full signatories. Upcoming activity includes ongoing promotion, targeted engagement with signatories to design a new expanded Charter toolkit and delivering a programme of knowledge-sharing events for signatories throughout the rest of 2023. Both the Technical Working Group and the Steering Group for the Charter are now at full capacity with a good range of signatories represented on each.

### **3.4 Citizens' Climate Assembly Update**

A citizens' assembly is a public engagement method, which involves a reflective sample of the population coming together to learn about an issue, discuss it, and reach a set of conclusions. The Westminster Citizens' Climate Assembly will bring together a randomly selected group of 50 residents who will be broadly reflective of the population of Westminster. Together, they will consider the remit question: 'How can we overcome the main barriers to Westminster becoming a net zero city by 2040 together? How do we ensure this is delivered in the fairest way?'. The Assembly will be supported by specialist organisation Involve, who will facilitate the sessions.

The first weekend of the Assembly took place at the University of Westminster on Saturday 24 and Sunday 25 June. In the sessions, participants heard from a series of expert speakers to introduce the process of an Assembly, understand the context of climate change and explore some of the barriers and opportunities for local climate action. Days 3 and 4 of the Assembly will take place on Saturday 15 and Sunday 16 July. Participants will develop ideas and prototype recommendations over Day 3 and have an opportunity to test these with external experts, before refining them. Participants will finalise and present their recommendations at the close of Day 4.

Following completion of the Assembly weekend, Involve will produce a full report of the Assembly process which, alongside the formal recommendations, will be presented to the Leader of the Council and his Cabinet Members in September. Officers will use those recommendations to help consider additional ways to address the problem of climate change and inform the update of the council's Climate Emergency Action Plan later in the year. The members of the Assembly will be updated as the council does this. Officers are considering further routes for continued engagement and opportunities for residents to be involved as part of the legacy of the Assembly.

### **3.6 Environmental Justice Measure**

The Environmental Justice Measure (EJM) is an interactive data tool that covers a broad range of indicators to present transparent information for residents to better understand how environmental change impacts their local ward. Westminster is the first local authority to create an interactive framework to enable residents to make informed decisions and act to reduce negative environmental impacts in their area. The tool has recently been used to help assess the Greening Westminster funding applications that came in, and to consider possible future locations for community air quality monitoring demand.

The EJM was presented with the Excellence in Local and Regional Public Sector and the Overall Award at the Geography on Government awards at the Royal Geographical Society on 14<sup>th</sup> June. Cllr Jude and Pedro Wrobel are also presenting the EJM the LGA Annual Conference on 5<sup>th</sup> July at the Climate Change session.

## **4. Regeneration**

### **4.1 Church Street Programme Update**

The Procurement process of a Development Partner for the delivery of Site A is progressing well. Bidder briefings and negotiations took place w/c 19th June. Initial Phase 1 demolition (Storage areas to the rear of Site A) has been completed and 'Fairer Westminster' branded security hoarding to be installed on the Broadley Street entrance.

As we prepare for the construction work to begin at Site A of the regeneration scheme, significant progress has been made in assembling the land. Although only ever used as a last resort, Compulsory Purchase Order powers may be necessary to ensure the scheme can progress. A report has been submitted for a decision at the July Cabinet meeting to determine whether the Council will proceed with making a CPO.

We received a hugely Positive GLA Stage 2 Planning report on 13th June. This is the culmination of the Planning Process following approval of the scheme by the Local Planning Authority (LPA). Detailed discussions with the LPA, Transport for London (TfL) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) will now take place on the s106/107 agreement, once approved the final planning decision notice can be released.

### **4.2 Ebury Bridge**

The construction of the first two buildings in Phase 1 is continuing at pace. The frame construction is in place and the exterior façade work is underway. Weekly design sign-off meetings implemented to speedily progress design drawings and technical submissions. The internal 'first fix' internal fitout on lower levels of the Block 7 and 8 has commenced.

The Scheme was recently recognised at the Planning Awards where it successfully took home two awards. Nominated in the 'Planning in Affordable Housing' category the scheme also scooped the top prize chosen by the editor of Planning News.

The Ebury Bridge regeneration scheme also featured heavily in a recent Evening Standard article detailing how the project is challenging the 'Lights Out' super prime developments in central London. Delivering over 380 council homes for social rent in addition to new homes for market sale the scheme will deliver a vibrant alternative to neighbouring luxury apartments that are not always occupied all year round.

116 Secure Tenants and 21 Resident Leaseholders are returning to Ebury – 60% and 51% respectively

### **4.3 Balmoral & Darwin House Update**

Construction of phase 1 continues with good progress on site and completion expected early 2025. During June the crane has been erected and the PDHU was successfully diverted. A residents notice board has been installed in Darwin House and the contractor Wates has been briefed on content. Phase 2 is forecast to start in 2025 following completion of phase 1.

We continue to engage with residents around Churchill Gardens and Darwin House specifically to manage construction disruption appropriately. A recent 'Groundbreaking' event signified the start of the formal construction work and a 'topping out' ceremony will follow towards the end of the year/early 2024.

Our contractors, Wates, have deployed their Wellness bus as part of their social value commitments while working in the city. The bus recently visited Church Street where residents received treatments

such as massage and engaged in wellness activities such as meditation. The bus will visit other sites over the course of the year.

#### **4.4 Lisson Arches**

Practical Completion of the building is forecast June 2023 with residents expected to move into 'Davenport House', a name selected by the neighbouring Penn House residents, from August 2023. The external landscaping and public realm works will continue, and completion is expected in September. Resident viewings are complete and all Penn House residents have selected their new homes. Support is also being provided to Penn House residents around the rehousing process with rents kept at the same levels as their existing homes.

The discharge of planning conditions continues in addition to final building testing work. The procurement of the Enterprise Zone operator is now live with a selected operator likely to be in place in the coming months.

#### **4.6 Melrose and Keith, Ordnance Mews, Helmsdale House completion**

All the new properties are fully occupied, and residents have reported how much they are enjoying their new homes during face-to-face engagement visits. Using the Structural Insulated Panel construction method, the homes are highly energy efficient and are an attractive addition to the local street scene in these areas.

#### **4.7 Ashbridge, Ashmill and Cosway**

Ashmill reached Practical Completion in February 2023, providing 2 family sized homes. Ashbridge is reached Practical Completion on 23 June 2023, providing 26 social rent homes. A ceremony marking the completion of the event took place on Monday 25 June.

Cosway Street is expected to complete in August 2023. This project will provide 49 market sale homes to cross subsidise affordable delivery across the programme. As of 23 June, good sales progress has been made with 23 homes exchanged, 7 reserved or under offer, and 19 available.

#### **4.8 Carlton Dene and Westmead**

Demolition works at Carlton Dene are reaching a conclusion with all asbestos removal now complete. Stage 1 award for main works has advanced with Lovell being recommended to Cabinet Members at CRG on 20 June 2023 and CGRB on 28 June 2023. Pre-app date secured for the proposed design changes i.e. tenure change (100% social rent), podium roof reduction and AECB energy standard reduction.

At Westmead demolition is also progressing well. Main contractor procurement continues with decision and contract execution by August. FBC is being drafted and reviewed with Legal, Finance and Procurement. Appropriation Cabinet Member Report issued to CM for decision.

#### **4.9 Luxborough**

With piling works now complete, construction activity began on 3<sup>rd</sup> July to deliver the water attenuation tank excavation. This work requires an addendum to the enabling works party wall award and negotiation with neighbouring party wall surveyors is in underway.

A significant milestone in the project will see a tower crane delivered to site and is due to be erected 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> July. Communication/Engagement with residents is taking place to inform them of plans. A meeting is scheduled with the Chair of the Luxborough Tower Residents Association to approve the installation of the door entry panel.

#### **4.10 291 Harrow Rd**

Acquired by WCC in 2022, 291 Harrow Road & 1-2 Elmfield Way comprise 18 Learning Disability (LD) Care Home beds managed by several providers. The Redevelopment of this site is part of the Adult Social Care LD Capital Strategy but also provides an opportunity for delivery of new affordable homes in the area.

Procurement of a multi-disciplinary consultant team including PM, architect and cost consultant is underway and expected to conclude in September. A 'Report on Title' has been submitted by WCC Legal team.

#### **4.11 Adpar, Queens Park Court, Torrington**

Construction continues across all three sites with good progress being made. A topping out ceremony is planned for end of July. The ceremony will take place at Queens Park Court but will also cover the Adpar and Torrington projects. Appropriation reports for all three sites have been approved by Cabinet Member.

At Queens Park Court Piling works are complete and works have progressed to the fourth floor, with works now starting on roof. At Torrington Piling works and the structural frame are complete, the block work for the townhouses is underway and has progressed to the fourth floor for the structure. At Adpar Groundworks and the substructure are underway and the crane has now been installed. Close working with Major Works team due to proximity of Brathwaite Tower.

All three schemes are expected to complete Spring 2024.

#### **4.12 Lisson Grove Programme**

Extensive community engagement has taken place with local voluntary sector organisations in order to develop initial proposals for the scheme. This work has been captured in a scoping document which will be communicated with local residents during forthcoming consultation on the scheme.

Meetings between Adult Social Care, Corporate Property and Development have taken place to discuss options. A meeting with Directors from ASC took place 13th June and Head of Corporate Property on 15th June, to discuss options to be explored. Joint Cabinet Member briefing scheduled during July. Cost consultant and architect services procured.

### **5. Renters**

#### **5.1 Private Rented Sector Strategy 2021 - 2025**

We are now in year four of the five-year Strategy. Key work this year is to develop a Private Rented Sector Charter to raise awareness of tenants' rights, the required standards in the sector and inform tenants and organisations about accessing advice and support.

The Private Rented Sector Strategy Group, which includes members from the advice and landlord sectors, continues to meet regularly to help ensure the Strategy is delivered and to better understand the market.

Work continues to develop a Private Rented Sector Charter, with the full involvement of the Strategy Group. Following initial feedback, the draft charter is being amended and enhanced to provide better information on emerging priorities such as evictions, and to ensure it informs and empowers tenants, at the same time as supporting landlords and mobilising partners in a signposting capacity. A revised version of the charter will be reviewed by the Strategy Group at a meeting after the summer break.

## **5.2 Private Rented Sector Market**

The current picture of the PRS market is challenging with rising mortgage rates and interest for property owners, combined with rising rental rates for tenants.

- By the end of June, 4.2 million households in Britain are expected to see their mortgage rate change since the Bank of England started increasing rates in December 2021. This is over half of all mortgaged households (56 per cent), with the remaining 3.3 million households (44 per cent) yet to see their fixed-rate deal expire. Those renewing their property loans next year will end up paying out on average an extra £2,900 annually.
- By the end of 2026, almost all British households with a mortgage (7.5 million) will have moved on to a higher rate and are set to end up with annual mortgage bills that are £2,000 higher on average compared to December 2021.

### **Impact of rising interest rates:**

While the direct impact of interest rate rises on homeowners within Westminster may be somewhat limited, it is essential to consider the broader implications for the local housing market and rental sector:

- **Housing Market Stability:** Interest rate rises can affect the overall stability of the housing market in Westminster. While a smaller proportion of properties may be directly impacted by mortgage rate increases, changes in interest rates can influence buyer sentiment, affordability, and demand for properties.
- **Rental Market Dynamics:** Interest rate rises can indirectly impact the rental market in Westminster. Higher borrowing costs for landlords may limit their ability to invest in and maintain rental properties. This could lead to a tightening of the rental supply and potentially result in increased competition among renters, driving rental prices upward.

### **The council's Cost of Living response:**

Work is underway to ensure private renters are aware of the support available across the city such as:

- Targeted communications in areas that are likely to have a high proportion of private renters
- Putting information about rent increases and what to do on the Support Hub and highlighting Discretionary Housing Payment (which can temporarily help where Housing Benefit or LHA doesn't meet rent)

## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Green Bond – Planned Works

ENERGY CONSERVATION MEASURE	Phase 2 - Programme of Works To Be Funded by Green Bonds									
Site	Draught Proofing	Pool Covers	Pipework Insulation	Pumps and Valves	BEMS	Cooling / AC	Heat Pumps	LED Lighting	Solar PV / Battery	Cost of Measures £ Exc VAT
Beachcroft House Care Home			Y		Y				Y	£88,142
Mayfair Library	Y		Y		Y			Y		£46,985
Marshall Street Leisure Centre		Y								£48,190
Porchester Leisure Centre		Y								£47,179
Queen Mother Sports Centre		Y								£99,975
Robinsfield Infant School									Y	£133,250
Queen Elizabeth Jubilee II School						Y				£5,070
Queens Park Primary School						Y				£8,751
The Tresham Day Centre							Y			£516,443
Dementia Centre - 42 Westbourne Park Rd					Y					£2,990
Soho Estate Office, Broadwick Street, 60-62					Y					£2,990
Westminster Central Reference Library					Y					£2,990
										£1,002,956