



City of Westminster

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

Date: 30 August 2023
Portfolio: Climate Action, Regeneration & Renters
The Report of: Councillor Matt Noble
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1. Key decisions made in the preceding period since my last Policy & Scrutiny report dated June 2023

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

3. Climate Action

3.1 Westminster Green Investment

The funds raised from the Green Investment scheme continue to be used to deliver carbon saving energy works at community buildings across Westminster. All works not requiring planning permission are due to be completed by the end of August (14 installations across 10 buildings) saving a total of circa 54 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per year. The remaining works (three sites) are due to be installed by the end of February 2024, subject to planning permission.

3.2 Home Energy Advice Service

Between June 2022 and July 2023, the Green Doctors service delivered energy advice and support to a total of 339 Westminster households. This includes 139 home visits and 200 telephone consultations. Delivery is split between several funding sources and contracts, including Public Health and the Mayor of London (allocations now complete) and the Westminster Carbon Offset fund (currently active).

As part of the comprehensive advice and support, the Green Doctors advise residents on the benefits and drawbacks of smart meters. The potential for energy companies to remotely switch smart meters to pre-payment is raised with residents. Those at risk of this are advised not to have smart meters installed and are supported to access energy grants and payment plans.

A phone survey of 30 recent service users is underway to provide insight on user satisfaction and impact on residents' energy use, financial status and overall health and wellbeing. Feedback received will inform ongoing service improvement.

The current contract with the Green Doctors has been extended until November to provide continuity of service while a new service is procured. This is anticipated to start in late 2023.

3.3 Sustainable City Charter

The Charter continues to grow and has now reached 40 signatories, with recent additions including the Howard de Walden Estate, Duke Street Properties and Soho Theatre. Our charity partner Centre

for London are progressing with their engagement of Westminster businesses to understand what businesses would want to see in a future Charter 'toolkit' of support and guidance for signatories. A survey is being circulated to this end and will run until 25 September, to be complemented by phone calls and workshops.

A Charter digital portal is in development that will streamline the application process for Charter applicants and host the Charter toolkit and associated support and guidance. The minimum viable product is due to be finalised by October.

We are continuing to develop our support offer for Charter signatories. An exclusive webinar on sustainable procurement and purchasing is scheduled for 20 September, alongside a short promotional event to re-engage businesses who have previously expressed interest in the Charter. A one-year celebration event is also planned to take place in November.

3.4 Citizens' Climate Assembly Update

The Citizen's Climate Assembly took place at the University of Westminster over two weekends in June and July. The final recommendations report from the Assembly is currently being produced by the appointed Assembly facilitator, Involve. The recommendations will be presented to the Council's Climate Leadership Group on 7 September by a delegation of Assembly participants. A report on the recommendations will go to Cabinet on 11 September and then Full Council on 20 September.

The Council is continuing to liaise with Assembly participants to clarify some aspects of the recommendations. All Assembly recommendations will be considered and assessed individually with a view to determining a response. This will have due regard to the council's ability to deliver on recommendations directly, in partnership with wider stakeholders, or via external lobbying or engagement (where actions sit outside of the council's direct control).

Officers are scoping opportunities for ongoing participant engagement and involvement post-Assembly. This will form part of an on-going process of working together with Assembly participants to explore progress on the recommendations and formulate wider activity to respond to the climate emergency. The Council is hosting an evening reception on 28th September at City Hall to express our gratitude to all of those involved in the delivery of the Assembly.

3.5 Local Area Energy Plan

Local Area Energy Planning (LAEP) is the process of gathering extensive data on a local area's energy system, and then using this data to model how the current situation could evolve to create a fully zero-carbon energy system by a given date. In Westminster's case, the outcome of this work should tell us on a practical level what changes we need to make to Westminster's heating and power systems to achieve net zero energy emissions by 2040. The final LAEP report will identify key actions and priority projects for the council to support and/or implement in different parts of the city.

We are now about two-thirds of the way through the LAEP process. Four 'test' future energy scenarios (do nothing / 2040 target with high heat networks / 2040 target with high heat pumps / 2030 accelerated target) were presented to a range of stakeholders on 25 July, including the LAEP Steering Group, BIDs, landowners, other Charter signatories and Neighbourhood Forums. The next stage will involve producing drawing up the final LAEP scenario and report, which will be ready for general review in late September. Officers are currently discussing ways to best widen stakeholder engagement for this final stage of the LAEP process.

4. Regeneration

4.1 Church Street Programme Update

JV partner procurement is progressing well with negotiations ongoing. During July Cabinet gave approval for the council to 'make the CPO' which is anticipated in Q3 23/24. A new approach to demolition is being considered, looking at potential to separate residential and commercial demolition. Procurement for survey work, including asbestos and utilities are ongoing.

4.2 Ebury Bridge

Phase 1 construction continues. On Phase 2 the RIBA stage 3 design work continues and work is underway to incorporate the recent requirements around second staircases for high-rise buildings above 30 meters. Demolition of Phase 2 is underway.

4.3 Balmoral & Darwin House Update

Construction of Block A continues to programme with good progress on site. Piling is complete and ground floor slab is underway. Appropriation underway. Block B feasibility to begin during September.

4.4 Lisson Arches

Site completed and handed over to Housing, with residents moving into 'Daventry House' during August. Final highways work completing during September. Support is being provided to Penn House residents around the rehousing process with rents kept at the same levels as their existing homes. Procurement of the Enterprise Zone operator is ongoing.

4.5 Ashbridge, Ashmill and Cosway

Ashmill reached Practical Completion in February 2023, providing 2 family sized homes. Ashbridge completed 23rd June, providing 26 social rent homes.

Cosway Street is in the final stages of construction and is expected to complete end of August 2023. This project will provide 49 market sale homes to cross subsidise affordable delivery across the programme. As of 29 August, good sales progress has been made with 29 homes exchanged, 8 reserved or under offer, and 12 available. Completion in accordance with the revised timescales is the focus for the team.

4.6 Carlton Dene

Demolition completed 7 July 2023. The award of the main works stage 1 works has been formally approved by Cabinet Member and contracts have been executed. Planning amendments have been submitted for the proposed design changes i.e., tenure change (100% social rent). The project team including colleagues from Development, Adult Social Care (ASC) and Housing have considered a hybrid operator model whereby Housing would undertake all FM responsibilities, tenant management, and rent collection and ASC would manage the care service only. This was agreed in principle as a delivery solution and will be detailed prior to a Full Business Case being delivered.

4.7 Westmead

Full Business Case and main works Award of Contract have been approved by Cabinet Member. JCT contracts are being finalised and due to be engrossed during September. Project team kick-off meeting was held in August. Planning conditions discharge is progressing, and the Value Engineering design is underway with a pre-app due to be submitted during September.

4.8 Luxborough

Main works are progressing well at Luxborough as the Party Wall Attenuation tank was installed on the 4th August, manhole rings and sewer head completed, and rear Green Wall earth pits completed at Tower Gardens, among other site activities. The Boiler Flue settlement agreement and party wall

awards have been progressed at Newcastle House. A settlement with BT has also been approved internally and an offer is to be made under S202 powers regarding rights of light. The S73 Planning amendment for the tenure change has been submitted and is currently in consultation, being managed by Wates Planning Consultant Rapleys.

4.9 291 Harrow Rd

Consultant team procurement is progressing with a number of tenders going live, including the Architect tender, Project Manager Tender and Cost Consultant tender. The Gate 2 procurement papers for Structural, MEP, Planning and Landscape Architect have been endorsed by CGRB subject to minor amendments. The Leader of the Council has been briefed on 291 Harrow Road by the project lead.

4.10 Adpar, Queens Park Court, Torridon

Construction continues with good progress being made at all three sites. The ground floor slab at Adpar is now complete and the 1st floor slab is being cast. The Nursery Wall and Middle carpark programme are being finalised at Queens Park Court, and the Topping out Ceremony was held on 10th August. The flat block has also been topped out at Torridon, making further site progress.

4.11 Lisson Grove Programme

Lisson Grove Programme Board took place during July, and the collaborative Workshop Away Day also took place. UKPN Penetrative Test during August confirmed that the UKPN cable has been decommissioned. Bromley by Bow Centre have distributed the detailed analysis following engagement and workshops with the Council Services and Health and Community Groups. Levitts (Architects) have circulated the Options Review Documents for Lilestone St and Orchardson for review.

5. Renters

5.1 Private Rented Sector Strategy 2021 - 2025

A key action from the Strategy is to develop a private rented sector (PRS) Charter and work is continuing on this. The Charter is intended to inform and empower tenants, while at the same time highlighting routes by which landlords can access support. It should also provide a useful signposting tool for local partners. The Charter is being developed with the PRS Strategy Group and will be next discussed in September / October.

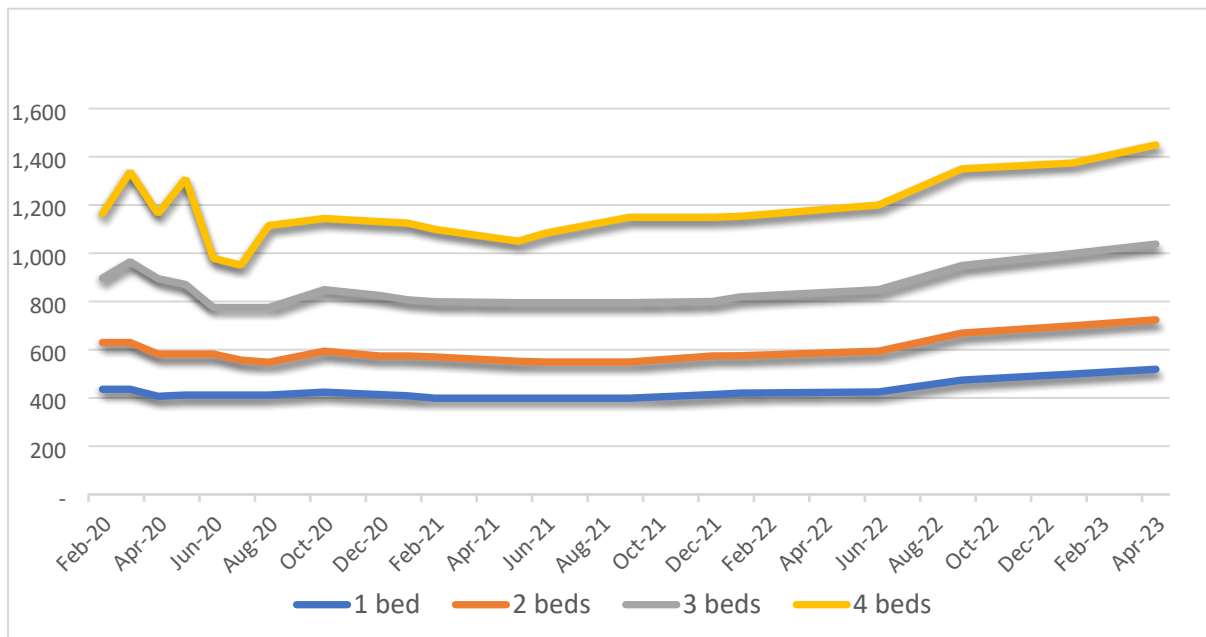
Regular Landlord Forum are also part of the PRS Strategy and the next one is planned for the Autumn and is likely to cover the Renters Reform Bill.

5.2 Private Rented Sector Market

The PRS Strategy Group regularly considers the local market changes. Rents are continuing to rise across all bedroom sizes in Westminster as the table below shows. The gap between Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates and lower end rents is also widening – rising from £135 per week in June 2022 to £258 per week in April 2023¹.

¹ Based on Hometrack data for 30th percentile rents compared with LHA rates for central London

Table: Median Westminster Rents (Hometrack)



Advice organisations are seeing rents increasing, rising evictions due to this and huge demand for properties with tenants having to pay significant amounts up front to secure a property. Multiple reasons are likely to be causing these increases including rising interest rates, the resumption of the student market, energy prices and the legacy from Covid.

These market changes are seen across London, with a recent report commissioned by the GLA² finding rental listings 41% down in 2023 compared with 2017 and asking rents 20% higher compared with March 2020. Between January – March 2023 only 2.3% of listings were within LHA rates.

² www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/members-area/member-briefings/housing-and-planning/private-rented-sector-supply-london#:~:text=Initial%20research%20commissioned%20by%20Capital,the%20pre%2DCOVID%20quarterly%20average