

North West Local Housing Forum

June 2021 Highlights Report

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New Homes



LeatherMarket (CBS) working in partnership with the council to provide 40 new homes at Joseph Lancaster Estate as well as gaining approval to develop the design proposals for another two sites, with the sites at Elim currently in planning. Achieved planning Fendall Street and Maltby Street:

- Fendall Street will provide 16 council homes within a 5 storey building. Fendall Street will provide improvements to the surrounding landscaping of the existing St Saviours Estate and provide communal amenity space for future occupiers and existing residents
- Maltby Street scheme will to provide 24 council homes within a 5 storey building. The proposal also seeks to provide landscaping around the building and the re-provision of the existing children's play area.

New Homes



- Styles House - The proposals comprise a new 14-storey residential tower, at the junction of The Cut and Hatfields, which will provide 25 new homes, all of which will be for social rent.

Other schemes in the earlier stages of the programme include Leroy Street Garages, Creasey Estate and 49-56 Dodson Street. In addition rooftop Homes projects at Rockingham Estate, Gaywood Estate and Lancaster Estate have been consulted on and included in the programme.

Asset Management



In line with government guidance, the Repairs Services is moving towards the resumption of a full service in a phased manner and hopes to be fully operational again from 21 June, subject to the progress of the pandemic and available resources.

Communal / Emergency Intelligent Lighting Installations are now complete at Porter St, Park St, Green Walk, Prioress St, Rephidim St, Tabard St, Thurnham House, Potier St and Rothsay St.

Communal / Emergency Lighting Installations are progressing at Quentin House, Gray St.

Asset Management



QHIP major works schemes are on site at Haddonhall Estate and Rowland Hill House on Nelson Square Gardens Estate, with work due to finish soon. Heating works at Albert Barnes are due to finish this year.

Work to the underground mains at Setchell Estate is due to begin in the summer. A dozen schemes are now in design and looking to start early in the next financial year. These include Rockingham Street, Applegarth, Helen Gladstone and Vaughan Houses on the Nelson Square Gardens Estate and Redman House, Haddonhall Estate Phase 2, 33-37 Southwark Bridge Road.

Resident Services



Arica House, Slippers Place- the existing cameras will be upgraded to improve the security of residents and tackle vandalism and anti-social behaviour

During lockdown the problem of fly-tipping has increased considerably and we are exploring ways to keep our estates free from this. We are currently piloting a scheme in Borough and Bankside in partnership with our colleagues in Cleaning to ensure all bulk is removed when seen without having to secure authorization from the back office first. This seamless approach will be reviewed and if successful, rolled out to the rest of the North Area.

Communities



Work continues implementing the new Resident Participation structure. Since March, this has included: developing the forward plan for resident participation (the business to be addressed by residents and the council); refining the new strategic bodies (Tenant Forum, Homeowner Forum and Joint Tenant and Homeowner Forum); and consulting with residents and other stakeholders in respect of independent advice contracts for residents (currently provided by the Southwark Group of Tenants organisations and the Citizens' Advice Bureau).

Approval has been given for a project to commence looking at the council's support offer to residents, in the light of financial challenges imposed by the Covi-19 pandemic. The council will be convening a working party of residents who – supported by officers from Exchequer Services, and serviced by the Smith Institute – will produce a report later in the year on ways in which the council can best support residents in relation to council income recovery measures.

Communities



Following successful completion of a Digital Innovation Fund project on the use of digital tools to engage younger and harder-to-reach residents, the council has consented to the Tenant and Homeowner Involvement team commissioning a project in the current financial year aimed at developing some specific tools in this regard. The aim of the project is to ensure that those residents who want to utilise digital technology for the purposes of making their voices heard can do so.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



Grounds Maintenance:

We are making the transition from petrol to electric machinery.

We are helping deliver community gardening schemes across the borough in conjunction with the community gardening coordinators.

Covid-19 restrictions in our vehicles are still having an impact on service.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



ASB:

We saw significant demands on our service from the year of April 2020 to the end of March 2021. COVID was a main factor of this especially in relation to lockdowns during the year.

SASBU continued to manage increased levels of legal cases and across the borough we obtained, closure orders, injunctions, served Acceptable Behaviour Contracts and warning letters. We also issued Notices of Possession for the most serious of tenancy breaches when the law allowed us to do so given changes in legislation, again in respect of COVID.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



ASB cont:

We also saw an increase in Community Trigger requests. The Trigger is an application within the Anti-social behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 which enables an applicant to call a review on their reports to the partnership over a six month period.

Another key area for us was the Halloween and Bonfire period of which we saw an increase in disorder within the SE16 area. Working with communities and partners, we were able to identify those who were committing ASB with regards to firework misuse and all those identified were visited at their homes and appropriate actions and interventions were taken by the unit.

Anti social behaviour, grounds maintenance



ASB cont:

14 Notices of Possession

21 Injunctions

3 Court Undertakings against persons

19 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts

30 Community Triggers

31 Premises closed due to significant and serious behaviour

Exchequer Services



Homeowners

Leasehold building insurance contract – the council has extended the current contract with Zurich for a further twelve months from 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023. After assessing current insurance market conditions and a benchmarking exercise carried out with other local authorities, the Council decided to recommend a twelve-month extension with Zurich rather than procuring a new contract. Zurich offered to fix premiums at their 2021/22 rates and only apply the normal 4% uplift relating to building cost inflation (not including any changes to Insurance Premium Tax currently 12%). We think this is good news for homeowners. The proposal was put to the Leasehold Task and Finish group who supported the council's recommendation.

New Homeowner Loans Policy – the council has changed its discretionary loans policy for homeowners to bring it up-to-date with advances in technology and to allow more flexibility in the range of products available. It also allows for a regular review of the interest rates charged. The new policy also includes a new loan product for non-resident homeowners. The full report and decision can be found here

<https://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=7301>

Exchequer Services



Homeowners continued

Improving Section 20 Notices - Many day-to-day repairs requiring section 20 consultation cannot be properly costed until the scaffolding is erected and an inspection carried out. This often leads to leaseholders receiving multiple section 20 notices for the same job. Homeownership Services will shortly begin trial issuing *a single notice* describing the work that is believed to be necessary with a budget estimate. The actual costs will be billed as part of the actual service charge as usual. We are interested to hear from homeowners participating in the trial about what they think about this change.

Exchequer Services



Tenants

Paying Rent During COVID Although rent collection remained challenging during the pandemic, tenants had paid 97.58% of rent due for 2020/21 by the end of the year. We thank all those who paid their rent in what we know were difficult circumstances for many. But despite the efforts of tenants and the teams who collect rent, total council tenant rent arrears increased, rising by £3.8m to £16.8m by the end of the year.

Help to Claim Universal Credit Many more tenants claimed *Universal Credit* to help pay their rent during the pandemic. If you need to claim *Universal Credit* but face difficulties in doing so for whatever reason the Citizen Advice *Help to Claim* service can support you with your claim.

www.citizenadviceSouthwark.org.uk/helptoclaim

Exchequer Services



Tenants continued

New Rent Payment Options One positive change in a very difficult year was that many more tenants paid their rent by direct debit. About six thousand more tenants switched to direct debit - the easiest, least costly, and, during the pandemic, *safest* way to pay. From April we've added bar codes to rent letters – offering another simple and convenient option to pay rent.

A Supportive Landlord If you're a tenant and need help with paying your rent or are affected by COVID-19 please visit our website: www.southwark.gov.uk/coronavirus where you will find further information about how we can help you.

Modernise



Digital inclusion is about making sure our residents and community can take advantage of the opportunities the internet affords and we are working to ensure that “Nobody Is Left Offline”. As part of this programme, we are recruiting volunteer digital champions to support residents with their digital skills. Digital Champions will receive accredited training, support and more as part of this programme and can apply for the opportunity below:

https://forms.southwark.gov.uk/ShowForm.asp?fm_fid=1864

For any further queries please contact
Digital.Inclusion@southwark.gov.uk

Customer Experience



My Southwark Homeowners Service

Residents told us they wanted more information on how your estates are managed so we have set up a new webpage on how we manage your estates which gives you a range of information from our cleaning schedules to how to join an estate inspection. You will find it at <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/home-owners-services/how-we-look-after-your-blocks-and-estates>

Our office at the Blue in Market Place still remains closed but we are now providing face to face verification meetings with tenants going through the right to buy process at our Service Point in Peckham.

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