

Decision maker: Cabinet Member for Housing

Subject: GRAFTON STREET/ESTELLA ROAD BALCONY AND ASSOCIATED PLANNED MAINTENANCE WORKS

Date of decision: 12th July 2011

Report by: OWEN BUCKWELL – HEAD OF HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Wards affected: Nelson

Key decision: Yes – Over £250,000

Budget & policy framework decision: No

1. Summary & Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek approval for the undertaking of works to re-surface all balconies, block off the existing internal rain water pipes and install new externally fixed rain water pipes. The works will also include brickwork and concrete repairs, roof eaves repairs, and removal of redundant balanced flues and making good holes in brickwork.
- 1.2 The works will benefit all residents of the block as it will reduce the risk of water penetration to their properties and all the associated difficulties with property damage and disruption that this can cause.
- 1.3 The works will also be of benefit to the day to day management of the properties as it will avoid the need for works caused by the current defects.
- 1.4 If approved it is anticipated that the works could commence in September 2011.

2. Background

- 2.1 Grafton and Estella are located in the Nelson Ward. The blocks have balconies on the rear elevation which in the upper storey, sit over the living room of the property below. These balconies frequently leak, and the rain water finds its way into the property below causing distress and disruption to the residents, and incurring repair costs and decorations costs each time. The situation is made worse by the design of the Rainwater system, which includes rainwater pipes inside the property – when these leak, they can cause problems to the properties on all floors of the blocks
- 2.2 The project is required to rectify these water penetration issues which will improve the living environment for residents whilst also reducing ongoing repair costs.
- 2.3 It is anticipated that one of the biggest areas of cost in carrying out these works will be the access scaffold, so it is considered prudent to carry out any other beneficial works to the elevation whilst the scaffold is in place to maximise its use and give better value for money.

2.4 These additional works include: brickwork and concrete repairs, decorations to balcony railings, and fixing of anti-pigeon spikes and netting.

3. Recommendations:

- i That approval be given to proceed with the scheme within the sum of £700,000 including a £85,000 allowance for contingencies/unforeseen works.
- ii That following a full tender evaluation authority to enter into a contract with the preferred bidder is delegated to the Head of Housing Management.
- iii The financial appraisal is approved.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The works will ensure the structural integrity of the blocks, thus maintaining lettable assets for PCC.
- 4.2 The works will improve the living environment for residents whilst also reducing ongoing repair costs.
- 4.3 The project will improve the visual appearance of the blocks, in turn improving the external environment for residents.
- 4.4 The works will help to contribute to PCC Corporate Priority 6 – “Increase availability, affordability, and quality of housing”.

5. Options considered and rejected

- 5.1 The current situation utilises the response repairs service, in a ‘fire fighting’ capacity to deal with individual leaks as they occur. This involves erecting scaffold at considerable cost and carrying out a repair which is often not fully effective, as the actual cause of the leak is not always known.
- 5.2 It was considered that patching, and re-asphalting individual balconies as and when a problem occurred was not the most cost effective way to rectify the problems.
- 5.3 Other repairs have been considered in the past such as applying a water seal product known as Acropol, but this is not a long term solution, and is not as effective as properly applied asphalt.

6. Duty to involve

- 6.1 The residents were informed of the proposed works in a letter sent 21st December 2010. This letter outlined the works to the front elevation which are currently underway, and brief details of the proposed works to the rear balconies
- 6.2 Prior to the works starting a full consultation will be undertaken with the residents of both blocks. This will involve face to face consultation through door to door visits and

residents meetings. Letters will also be sent to all residents informing them of the works, start date, likely disruption etc.

- 6.3 A notice of intent for phase 2 was issued to leaseholders in January 2011 – the notice describes in general terms the proposed works, and states the reasons for the works and invites written observations and where they should be sent. (30 days notice must be given)– no comments were received.
- 6.4 A section 20 will be issued when the costs from the winning tender are known. The section 20 notice is required under The Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002. The law requires that the leaseholder must be consulted before the landlord carries out works above a certain value. We must state why the works are required and the reasons for selection of contractors. Consultation notices must be sent to the Leaseholder advising of this and giving them 30 days in which to make observations or comments concerning the works.

7. Implications

- 7.1 It is considered that the works will have positive implications by helping to maintain the properties whilst improving the living conditions of the residents and at the same time improve the appearance of the blocks.
- 7.2 The works should have positive implications by ensuring that PCC maintains good quality housing that is easily lettable.
- 7.3 There is potential for negative implications due to potential disruption to residents during the works such as restricted access together with noise and dust etc. Measures will be undertaken to reduce these occurrences to a minimum.
- 7.4 There is also potential for a negative reaction from leaseholders due to the charges that they may receive however there are mechanisms in place to prevent financial hardship to leaseholders and to allow them to spread the cost of any works – Grafton has two leaseholders, Estella has none.

8. Corporate priorities

This report and the project it refers to contribute to the following Corporate Priorities:

- Increase availability and quality of housing
- Regenerate the city

9. Equality impact assessment (EIA)

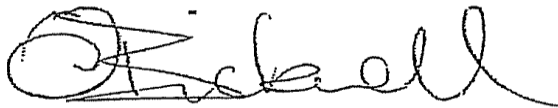
An EIA is not needed for this project. The project will not affect any equality group unequally and there is no adverse impact on people who belong to any of the equality groups. Residents who live in the blocks affected by the project will be consulted on the work, and specific needs will be addressed so that tenants with protected characteristics can be fully involved in the consultation. The project is expected to have positive outcomes for all current and future tenants and will benefit all PCC tenants by saving money in the long term

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 The Council will need to ensure that all commissioning exercises are carried out in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, under Part 3A of the Council's constitution.
- 10.2 Under Part 2, Section 3, of the City Council's constitution the Portfolio holder for Housing has the authority to approve the recommendations above.
- 10.3 The Council is designated as a local housing authority by the Housing Act 1985 (as amended) ("the Act"), and by virtue of section 9 of the Act is empowered to provide housing accommodation by erecting, altering or improving houses. Section 21 and section 27 of the Act permit the Council to carry out the general management, regulation and control of such local authority housing.
- 10.4 Pursuant to section 1 of the Local Government (Contracts) Act 1997 and section 3 of the Local Government Act 1972 the Council is empowered to procure the construction/refurbishment of local authority housing and associated services.

11. Head of Financial Services comments

- 11.1 The £700,000 cost of this project can be met from the £11,655,000 Dwellings budget for 2011/12, see item 29 in Appendix 1 to the Capital programme approved by City Council on 8th February 2011. A financial appraisal is attached showing the capital and revenue effects of this scheme.



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Signed by: **Owen Buckwell – Head of Housing Management**

Appendices:

Financial Appraisal

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

NIL

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by the Cabinet Member for Housing on 12 July 2011.

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Signed by: [**Councillor Steven Wylie**]