

**Title of meeting:** Cabinet Member for Housing

**Date of meeting:** 12 MARCH 2013

**Subject:** BIRMINGHAM BLOCKS EXTERNAL REFURBISHMENT

**Report by:** OWEN BUCKWELL – HEAD OF HOUSING & PROPERTY

**Wards affected:** Charles Dickens

**Key decision:** Yes – Over £250,000

**Full Council decision:** No

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**1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To seek permission to go out to tender and appoint a contractor to undertake planned maintenance works to 62-76 evens Astley Street, 1-8 Halesowen House, 1-12 Longbridge House, 1-24 Oldbury House and 1-48 Stratford House.
- 1.2 The works are required to ensure the integrity of the buildings and reduce their on-going maintenance.
- 1.3 If approved, it is anticipated that the works could commence by January 2014.

**2. Recommendations**

- i That approval be given to tender the works based on a total budget estimate of £775,000 including a £70,000 allowance for contingencies / unforeseen works, and £78,000 of fees.**
- ii That following a full tender evaluation authority to enter into contract with the preferred bidder is delegated to the Head of Housing and Property Services.**
- iii The financial appraisal is approved.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 The 5 blocks constructed in 1965 using a concrete ring beam method of construction contain a total of 109 no. maisonette properties of which 28 no. are leaseholders.

- 3.2 All properties above ground floor level are accessed via external communal walkways with a banister formed from metal railings.
- 3.3 Each property above ground floor level also has access to a small private balcony with metal railings present.
- 3.4 Following a survey of the blocks it has been found that the metal railings present to both the communal walkways and private balconies are corroding to the point where they now require replacement.
- 3.5 It is proposed to replace all the railings installing new galvanised steel frames with Trespa infill panels.
- 3.6 In addition to the works to the railings it is proposed to combine other associated works such as external decoration, asphalt renewal, emergency lighting installation and concrete repairs.

#### **4. Reasons for recommendations**

- 4.1 The works will ensure the structural integrity of the blocks and help protect against future deterioration, thus maintaining a lettable asset for Portsmouth City Council.
- 4.2 The works will ensure the on-going safety of residents and members of the public in the vicinity of the block.
- 4.3 The proposed solution should reduce future maintenance demands.
- 4.4 The project will improve the visual appearance of the blocks, helping to improve the external environment for both residents and neighbouring properties.

#### **5. Options considered and rejected**

- 5.1 An option considered and rejected was to repair the existing railings and decorate them. This was rejected as the existing railings are constructed from mild steel and as such will continue to weather and deteriorate and would lead to high levels of on-going maintenance.
- 5.2 Another option considered and rejected was to replace the existing railings with similar powder coated galvanised steel railings. Whilst this would offers good weather protection, eventually the powder coating would break down and required on-going maintenance that would lead to increased costs over time.
- 5.3 It is considered that once the proposed works are undertaken the blocks will continue to provide a good living environment for the residents.

## **6. Duty to involve**

- 6.1 Face to face consultation has taken place with all leaseholders of the blocks with a notice of intent being issued to them in July 2012. When tenders are returned section 20 notices will be sent to all leaseholders outlining their required contributions.
- 6.2 Planning permission was granted on 30 October 2012, which involved a statutory obligation to consult residents within the local area regarding the proposed scheme.
- 6.3 Prior to the commencement of works full consultation will be undertaken with the residents of both blocks. This will involve face to face consultation through door to door visits and resident meetings if deemed necessary. Letters will also be sent to all residents informing them of the works, start date and likely disruption.
- 6.4 Following completion of the works residents will be consulted in order gain to their feedback so that learning can be taken on to future projects.

## **7. Implications**

- 7.1 It is considered that the works will have positive implication by helping to maintain the properties whilst improving the visual appearance of both the blocks and the surrounding area.
- 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 implication due to the potential disruption to resident 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 potential for negative reaction from leaseholders due to the high costs they will be required to pay for the works however there are mechanisms in place to help spread the cost of any works.
- 7.5 The work is subject to the normal legal risk relating to building work, the financial and technical competence of the chosen contractor and the disruption that the work will cause to the occupiers generally. These should all be subject to existing risk control assessment and mechanisms for such work and as such minimised before work commences.

## **8. Corporate Priorities**

- 8.1 The report and the planned maintenance works will contribute to the following Corporate Priorities:

- Increase availability, affordability and quality of housing
- Improve efficiency and encourage involvement
- Regenerate the city
- Cleaner and greener city

## **9. Equality impact assessment (EIA)**

9.1 An EIA is not needed for this project. The project will not affect any equality group unequally and this 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 address 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.

## **10. City Solicitor's comments**

10.1 The legal risks referred to at paragraph 7.5 above will be addressed through a detailed procurement process in compliance with the Council's Contracts Procedure Rules and managed under the terms of the resulting construction works contract.

10.2 Under Part 2, Section 3 of the City Council's Constitution (responsibilities of the Cabinet) and further in accordance with the Scheme of Delegations at Appendix A to the Executive Procedure Rules in Part 3 of the Constitution, the Cabinet Member for Housing has the authority to approve the recommendations set out in this report.

## **11. Head of Finance's comments**

11.1 This scheme forms part of line 16, Major Repairs Specific Contracts (Dwellings), within the Housing Investment Programme which was formally approved by Full Council on 12 February 2013.

11.2 The scheme, which is funded by Housing Revenue Account Contributions and Leaseholder Contributions, will ensure the ongoing structural integrity of the blocks and help protect against future deterioration, reduce ongoing cleaning and maintenance costs and maintain their letability for the next 30 years.

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Signed by:

**Owen Buckwell – Head of Housing and Property**

**Appendices:**

Appendix A 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<sup>th</sup> March 2013

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Signed by:  
**Councillor Steven Wylie**