

Title of meeting: Housing Cabinet

Date of meeting: 24 SEPTEMBER 2013

Subject: ST JAMES'S ROAD IMPROVEMENTS

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

Wards affected: St. Thomas

Key decision: Yes – Over £250,000

Full Council decision: No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To seek permission to go out to tender and appoint a contractor to undertake planned maintenance works to 29-51 St James's Road and 53-75 St James Road.
- 1.2 The works are required to ensure the integrity of the buildings and reduce the 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 for a budget estimate of £385,000 including a £37,000 allowance for contingencies / unforeseen works.**
- 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.**

3. Background

- 3.1 The blocks 29-51 St James's Road and 53-75 St James Road are located within the St. Thomas Ward. Both blocks were built in 1966 using concrete ring beam construction method.
- 3.2 The blocks 29-51 St James's Road and 53-75 St James's Road contains 2No three bedroom flats, 4No two bedroom flats and 18No three bedroom maisonettes.

- 3.3 There are 3No Leaseholders within 29-51 St James's Road and 1No Leaseholder within 53-75 St James Road.
- 3.4 The key demand from both blocks is the poor decorative condition of the metal stairwell screens that are also indicating corrosion as well as contributing to issues with the communal flooring that becomes hazardous when wet due to the semi-open design. In addition the blocks require redecoration and spalling areas of concrete on the ring beams require repair.
- 3.5 The proposed works consist of complete replacement of the stairwell screens in order to fully enclose the communal stairwell, undertaking concrete repairs and other associated structural works across the blocks, fire safety upgrades, external and communal decoration and other associated repairs.
- 3.6 A Fire Risk Assessment undertaken to these blocks has highlighted planned fire upgrade works that will be incorporated into the scheme including installing FD30s rated fire doors to all property entrance doors and emergency lighting.
- 3.7 It is anticipated that the contract will commence during January 2014 with a contract period of 14 weeks.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The works will ensure the structural integrity of the blocks and help protect it against future deterioration, thus maintaining a lettable asset for PCC.
- 4.2 The project will improve the visual appearance of the blocks, helping to improve the external environment for both residents and neighbouring properties.
- 4.3 The works will improve the safety of the block by reducing the likelihood of a resident slipping or falling and thus minimising the potential for a claim to be made against PCC.
- 4.4 It is considered that once the proposed works are undertaken the blocks will continue to provide a good living environment for the residents.
- 4.5 The scheme will maintain the security of the internal communal areas.

5. Options considered and rejected

- 5.1 Due to the nature of the defects present to the building there are few alternative options available. The structural works are essential to ensure to the integrity of the building and fire safety measures are necessary due as a result of a Fire Risk Assessment undertaken to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 5.2 An option considered and rejected was to remove the existing stairwell screens and not to replace them. Whilst this would be a cheaper option it was rejected as additional works would be required to protect the building structure from the

weather and ensure that the floor surfaces were slip resistant when fully exposed to the elements, this would lead to increased on-going maintenance costs. The communal areas would also become unsecured which would be considered unacceptable by residents.

6. Duty to involve

- 6.1 Consultation has begun with leaseholders with the Notice of Intent letters being sent out to them in July 2013. Where requested members of the Leasehold & Commercial team have met with individual leaseholders to discuss the project.
- 6.2 When tenders are returned section 20 notices will be sent to all leaseholders outlining their required contributions when the work is completed. The earliest that any leaseholder is likely to receive a bill for the completed work is September 2015.
- 6.3 Flexible repayment plans with appropriate timescales will be discussed and agreed individually with each leaseholder. These include options to encourage leaseholders to increase their reserve fund contributions where appropriate to meet anticipated estimated costs of the work and ensure that they have sufficient reserve fund balances when bills are issued in September 2015. Access to Council loans is also available. If any leaseholder is identified who may not have sufficient reserve funds to pay the costs, they will be specifically and closely supported throughout by the Leasehold & Commercial team, to ensure appropriate repayment plans are agreed that are proportionate, lawful, accountable and necessary (PLAN).
- 6.4 Prior to the commencement of works full consultation will be undertaken with all 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.
- 6.5 Following completion of the works residents will be consulted in order to gain their feedback on the overall service they have received so that learning can be gained to improve the planned maintenance service.
- 6.6 A planning application has been submitted for the proposed work and a decision will be made in October 2013.

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 of the blocks and the surrounding area.
- 7.2 The works should have positive implications by ensuring that PCC maintains good quality housing that is secure and safe.

- 7.3 The potential disruption to residents during the works such as restricted access to their property together with noise and dust could have a negative impact. However a quality assessment of the tender and management of the successful contractor will reduce these occurrences to a minimum.
- 7.4 There is potential for a negative reaction from leaseholders due to the costs they will be required to pay for the works; however there are mechanisms in place to help spread the cost of any works. If there is a shortfall in funds, the Leasehold Service Officer will endeavour to assist the leaseholder in finding an affordable solution.
- 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. Legal Implications

- 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 Procedures 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 These works are part of a long term planned programme of works and are essential to ensure that the dwellings affected remain of a required standard for habitation. Funding has been allocated already for these schemes in the capital programme that was approved by Council in the February 2013, under line 17 of the Housing Revenue Account capital programme 'Major Repairs - Dwellings'. All funding is from HRA sources, specifically from revenue and leaseholder contributions.

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Signed by:

Owen Buckwell – Head of Housing and Property Services

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 24 September 2013.

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Signed by:

Councillor Darren Sanders