

Agenda item:

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Housing

Date of meeting: 23rd September 2014

Subject: GROSVENOR HOUSE & WARWICK CRESCENT
REFURBISHMENT

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 1-54 Grosvenor House, 2-20 (Evens) Warwick Crescent and 22-44 (Evens) Warwick Crescent.
- 1.2 To seek permission to spend £3.1M to undertake works including external and communal decorations, re-roofing, new passenger lifts and lift shaft. The works are required to ensure the integrity of the buildings, reduce their on-going maintenance and improve the living environment for residents.
- 1.3 If approved, it is anticipated that the works could commence by April 2015.

2. Recommendations

- i. That approval is given to tender the works based on an estimated budget of £3.1M.**
- 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 All the properties in Grosvenor House and Warwick Crescent are located within the St Thomas ward. Grosvenor House was constructed in 1953 and both the Warwick Crescent blocks were constructed in 1967.

3.2 Grosvenor House contains 54no. properties whilst the two blocks in Warwick Crescent contain 10no. properties each. The properties are a mix of one, two and three bed flats and maisonettes.

3.3 There are no leaseholders present in any of the blocks within this scheme.

3.4 A key aspect of the scheme is the work planned at Grosvenor House. The block comprises two wings, one of 5 storeys and the other 7 storeys. Access to the upper floors is via a number of stairwells, two of which have lift shafts. Both of these are undersized and cause problems for residents living in the block, particularly families with pushchairs.

It is proposed to construct a new lift tower to provide two modern passenger lifts to the north of the east wing and also form a new communal entrance to the building at ground floor level.

3.5 Grosvenor House also suffers from a number of additional defects to the structure including corrosion of its steel frame to the blocks east wing.

It is proposed to undertake remedial structural repairs. These will include replacing sections of the steel frame to the east wing together with associated concrete repairs.

3.6 The roofs to all the blocks are in a poor condition and require new roof coverings and associated repairs.

It is proposed to replace the roof coverings with a new single ply including insulation to the roof. The rainwater will also be redirected to discharge externally and away from the private balconies.

3.7 The external and communal areas to all the blocks were last decorated in 2002; a number of areas are in a poor condition, where decorations are not flaking they are faded and require redecoration together with associated repairs.

It is proposed to redecorate all the external and communal areas and undertake associated repairs.

3.8 The blocks have various unsecured refuse areas that are not ideally located for collections; the ball court is a location for anti-social behaviour as well as not being extensively used since the Sedgely Close ball courts were constructed; the entrances to the blocks require reconfiguration and there is a demand for scooter storage.

It is proposed to relocate the refuse areas to more accessible locations, remove the ball court, reconfigure the main entrance and create scooter storage area. Options for cycle stores, additional sheds and car parking are also being explored.

- 3.9 A fire risk assessment has been undertaken and planned actions have been identified.

It is proposed to install emergency LED lighting to the escape routes of all the blocks.

- 3.10 The Grosvenor House site forms part of site 14 in the Area Action Plan (AAP) for Somerstown regeneration and the site is proposed as a park. The AAP is a document which is designed to allow the regeneration of an area over a long period of time, accordingly the demolition of this block and the creation of the park will not be removed from the AAP.

The consequence of the site being identified within the AAP is that there has been minimal investment in the blocks over a number of years whilst the regeneration plan has been developed and this has contributed to the extent of work now required.

- 3.11 A report to the cabinet member for Housing was approved in July 2012 to undertake the decorations and associated repairs as part of an initial phase of work with further phases planned to include the construction of a new passenger lift.

However further structural investigation delayed the commencement of phase one and it is now proposed to complete all the work required within one project.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The works will ensure the structural integrity of the building fabric, help protect against future deterioration and ensure the provision of good quality accommodation for families in the city whilst the remaining sites within the AAP are developed.

- 4.2 The scheme will improve the visual appearance of the blocks, thus improving the environment for residents to live in.

- 4.3 The installation of new lifts and reconfiguring the entrance will ensure residents can easily and safely access their properties.

- 4.4 The works should improve the living environment for residents and reduce current levels of repair expenditure.

5. Options considered and rejected

- 5.1 An option considered and rejected was to not construct new lift towers and to refurbish the existing lifts to Grosvenor House.

This option was rejected as the existing lift towers are not large enough to house bigger lift cabins or meet demand for residents accessing their properties.

- 5.2 An option considered and rejected was to phase the works over a longer period of time.

This option was rejected on the basis that the block is currently in a poor condition decoratively and structurally. A number of properties have already been decanted due to the structural works, it is essential that the works are completed as quickly as is reasonable practical to ensure that the block remains a lettable asset.

The works required now all impact on each other and it would not be cost effective to delay any aspect of the proposed work to a later phase.

- 5.3 An option considered and rejected was to demolish the blocks and provide alternative accommodation within the Somerstown area.

Demolition of these blocks at this time would not be financially viable for Housing & Property Services as it would lose 74no. properties that are predominantly three bedroom. These properties are the highest demand for housing options within the city, removing these assets from the Housing & Property Services portfolio of stock before the completion of alternative family properties within the area would adversely impact on the local community.

6. Duty to involve

- 6.1 Thorough consultation is ongoing with residents of the blocks in order to keep them informed of the proposed works, gather their opinion and identify any issues that they may have.

A PCC Resident Liaison Officer has consulted the majority of households on a one to one basis in order to build up a resident profile so that any elderly, disabled or vulnerable residents who may be affected by the works can be identified at an early stage and consideration given to as how to minimise disruption to them.

- 6.2 Fourteen properties in the east wing require decanting and rehousing in order for the structural works to be undertaken. This process has commenced and currently nine of the properties are void.

Residents are consulted prior to any move and their preferences are taken into consideration, 80% of those that have vacated their properties have opted to remain in the Somerstown area. All residents decanted have the option to return to the block on completion of the work; however half of those that have moved have decided to make the move permanent and will not be returning to Grosvenor House.

- 6.3 An initial open day was held on 11th June 2014 for all residents in Grosvenor House and Warwick Crescent in order to show them designs for the blocks. 45% of residents attended of which 80% were in favour of the current proposals. Of

those not in favour, 12% were because the location of the lifts would not suit the location of their particular property.

Following the open day resident comments have been reviewed and where feasible will be incorporated into the final scheme. Aspects of the scheme being further developed as a result of the consultation include refuse disposal options, removal of fencing between blocks and removal of the ball court with an option to re-use the area as car parking.

- 6.4 Further consultation and open days will be undertaken at various stages including before the designs are finalised, when a contractor is appointed and at various stages during the construction of works on site.
- 6.5 A Planning Application will be required to be submitted at which point all residents will be notified and have the opportunity to comment on the proposals.
- 6.6 All residents will be informed of the works prior to commencement via letter and in-person visits, they will have the opportunity to discuss any issues with PCC staff at this time.
- 6.7 Neighbouring properties will also be informed of the works prior to commencement so that they are aware of any disruption that may occur.
- 6.8 PCC staff will remain in contact with residents during the works onsite to address any issues that may arise and following completion of the work customer satisfaction surveys will be undertaken by a PCC Resident Liaison Officer in order to gain feedback as to how the service could be improved.

7. Implications

- 7.1 It is considered that the works will have a positive impact by helping to maintain the properties, whilst also improving the visual appearance of the blocks and the surrounding area.
- 7.2 The works will have positive implications by ensuring that PCC maintains good quality housing that is easily lettable.
- 7.3 There are no leaseholders within any of the blocks so there are no implications regarding the cost of the project or charges to leaseholders.
- 7.4 There is potential for negative implication due to the disruption to residents during the works. Measures will be undertaken to manage this risk and keep resident disturbance to a minimum during the 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 together with 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.
- 8.2 Shaping the future of Portsmouth, a strategy for growth and prosperity, action no. 16, to improve the housing stock, including carbon emissions.
- 8.3 Shaping the future of housing, a strategic plan for Portsmouth for better housing and better health. The maintenance of Portsmouth's stock of residential properties is a priority as detailed in theme 5.

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 capital scheme aims to undertake essential maintenance works including external and communal decorations, re-roofing, new passenger lifts and lift shaft. The works are required to ensure the integrity of the buildings, reduce their on-going maintenance, improve the quality of the living environment for residents and ensure that the dwellings remain letable in the future.
- 11.2 The scheme forms part of line 11 of the Housing Investment Programme (Major Repairs - Dwellings) which is included within the Housing Council's overall Capital Programme 2013/14 to 2018/19 which was approved by Full Council on 12th November 2013, and funded by Housing Revenue Account contributions.

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Signed by:

Owen Buckwell – Head of Housing and Property Services

Appendices:

NIL

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 23rd September 2014

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Signed by:

Councillor Steve Weymss