

Agenda item:

Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Housing

Date of meeting: 14th July 2015

Subject: HAWTHORN CRESCENT BALCONIES

Report by: OWEN BUCKWELL – DIRECTOR OF PROPERTY AND HOUSING

Wards affected: Cosham

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 8no blocks of flats located within Hawthorn Crescent, Cosham.
- 1.2 The works are required to ensure the safety and 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 2016.

2. Recommendations

i That approval be given to tender the works based on a budget estimate of £1 Million, inclusive of fees.

li That following a full tender evaluation authority to enter into contract with the preferred bidder is delegated to the Director of Property and Housing.

3. Background

- 3.1 All the properties are located within the Cosham Ward and were constructed in 1961.
- 3.2 The site contains a total of 76 properties within eight blocks of flats which are a mixture of one, two and three bedroom flats and maisonettes.
- 3.3 There are 21No leaseholders and 55No PCC residents that are located within all the blocks.

- 3.4 All of the blocks have been evaluated, a full building survey has been undertaken, defects identified and relevant proposals put forward to address the defects.
- 3.5 The main area of works relates to the removal of rotten timber fins that provide shading to private balconies. These structures require removal and it is proposed to install half glazed aluminium screens in these areas that will reduce future maintenance.
- 3.6 In addition to the works to the balcony fins, general repairs to the external and communal areas will be undertaken along with decorations to these areas as identified from the survey.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 The works will ensure the integrity of the building fabric, help protect against future deterioration and reduce current levels of repair expenditure.
- 4.2 In particular the replacement of the balcony fins will eliminate the on-going costly repairs for this type of work as well as to remove the potential health and safety risk to the residents.
- 4.3 The project will upgrade the aesthetic visual appearance of the blocks and will improve the communal environment.
- 4.4 The scheme will provide a better safer living environment for residents and maintain good quality accommodation for families in the city.

5. Options considered and rejected

- 5.1 An option considered and rejected was to remove the timber balcony fins and not replace them, only adapting the existing balcony structure as necessary. This option was rejected following initial resident consultation where it became apparent that many of the residents rely on the balcony fins to provide shelter and privacy to their balconies.
- 5.2 Other options relating to the removal of the fins and various configurations of replacement screens were put forward as part of the initial resident consultation, however the most popular option was the half glazed full screen.
- 5.3 Initial evaluation included all 18 blocks within Hawthorn Crescent, however the other blocks are configured differently and the survey identified that they were in a better condition. Undertaking work to all blocks at once the site would become too large, so it was decided to phase the work focusing on the blocks with the highest priority issues; hence this project will focus on all blocks with timber balcony fins that require replacement.

6. Duty to involve

- 6.1 Thorough consultation will be undertaken with both residents and leaseholders of the properties.
- 6.2 Resident consultation was undertaken in March 2015 with those properties that have balconies that will be affected by the works. The results of the consultation were used to inform the balcony option chosen.
- 6.3 All leaseholders will be consulted at the Notice of Intent stage and Section 20 stages in accordance with the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act legislation. The Leasehold and Commercial team will make contact with all the leaseholders individually to discuss with them the works planned, their contribution to the costs and the various payment options that are available to them.
- 6.4 A planning application will be required to be submitted when all the residents and the local community will be consulted regarding the scheme.
- 6.5 All residents and leaseholders will be informed of the works prior to their commencement via letter and in-person visits where they will have the opportunity to discuss any issues with PCC and contractor staff.
- 6.6 PCC staff will remain in contact with residents during the works onsite to address any issues that may arise and following completion 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 improving the visual appearance of the blocks and the surrounding area.
- 7.2 The works should have positive implications by ensuring that PCC maintains good quality housing that can easily be rented to meet demand for social housing in the area.
- 7.3 There is the potential for negative reaction from leaseholders due to the costs they will be required to pay for the works; however the Leasehold and Commercial team will work closely with the leaseholders to agree appropriate repayment plans.
- 7.4 There is potential for negative implication due to the disruption to residents during the works; however the project will be managed to minimise the impact of any disruption to residents during the project.
- 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 will all be subject to existing risk control assessments and mechanisms for such work, as such the risks will be 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 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. Director of Finance's comments

- 11.1 This scheme forms part of line 11, Major Repairs Dwellings, within the Housing Investment Programme which was formally approved by Full Council on 10 February 2015.
- 11.2 It is anticipated that the complete scheme, which will be funded from 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 – Director of Property and Housing

Appendices:

Appendix A: Block List

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 14th July 2015

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Signed by:
Councillor Steve Wemyss

Appendix A - Block List

HAWTHORN CRESCENT (378-388)
HAWTHORN CRESCENT (390-400)
HAWTHORN CRESCENT (393-403)
HAWTHORN CRESCENT (402-412)
HAWTHORN CRESCENT (405-415)
HAWTHORN CRESCENT (414-424)
HAWTHORN CRESCENT (417-427)
HAWTHORN CRESCENT (492-502)