

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS & LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	14 NOVEMBER 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	13
TITLE:	INSTALLATION OF FIRE SPRINKLER SYSTEMS TO COUNCIL HOUSING PROPERTIES		
LEAD COUNCILLOR:	COUNCILLOR ENNIS	PORTFOLIO:	HOUSING
SERVICE:	HOUSING AND NEIGHBOURHOODS	WARDS:	BOROUGHWIDE
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report seeks delegated authority for the award of a contract for the installation of fire sprinkler systems to circa 280 Council properties in flatted blocks.
- 1.2 The expected contract value will be approximately £700,000.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Housing, Neighbourhoods & Leisure Committee provide delegated authority to the Head of Housing and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Housing to award a contract for the installation of fire sprinkler systems in specified Council flatted blocks.

3. BACKGROUND AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Despite the Council's high rise blocks differing in design to Grenfell Tower, the Council appointed an external qualified Fire Engineer to carry out a review of our fire safety practice and systems.

- 3.2 This review included undertaking 'Type 4' (intrusive) Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) of a sample of flatted blocks, to include: high rise blocks; flat types where full height composite windows are positioned directly above each other to identify if this poses an additional risk; Wates 3 storey blocks given their interior room configuration requiring exit through a living space; and the Hexham Rd blocks which are undergoing sequential refurbishment (both 'before' and 'after'). The company, Fireskills, were also asked for a professional view on whether additional fire precautions were advised in any of the building types surveyed, to improve the fire safety standard in the context of recent incidents nationally and the learning from those.
- 3.3 Overall FireSkills noted that the Council's Housing Service has a 'forward facing and proactive fire safety strategy'. Whilst the Council is fully compliant with current legislation, FireSkills recommended that the Council could consider implementing a number of additional fire protection measures. This includes installation of sprinklers in some circumstances. For the Coley High Rise blocks sprinklers are being commissioned as part of wider works to replace the water systems to the blocks.
- 3.4 This contract will cover sprinkler installations in other blocks including to certain types of flats where tenants have to escape through a lounge and lobby (which a kitchen leads off of) in the event of a fire. In these blocks the Council has therefore determined to install additional detectors and a fire sprinkler in the kitchen to improve protection to the main escape route through the properties in the event of a fire.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 Reading Borough Council's Housing Property Services manage the day to day repairs, planned maintenance and voids repair works to approximately 5,600 Council properties which are let throughout the borough. Elements of this work are contracted out through the use of contracts which are put in place to manage specialist types of work when there is no expertise within the in-house teams.
- 4.2 This work is of a specialist nature and Reading Borough Council through its Housing Property Services Team does not have the capability to deliver a project such as this in house.
- 4.3 Housing Property Services will work with Fusion 21 to access a specialist procurement framework to cover the design, installation and initial management and service of the fire sprinkler systems. All companies included within the allotted framework have been pre-vetted and can demonstrate exceptional value for money in terms of cost, quality and social value.

- 4.4 With all contractors being pre-selected the procurement and tender period can be reduced which will offer time savings to the project. From the initial framework a total of seven specialist pre-selected companies will be invited to tender.
- 4.4 The works are being tendered against a schedule of works and specification provided by Housing Property Services. The specification will ensure works conform to BS9251:2014. Tenderers will be invited to submit their costings against two fire suppression systems. The tender analysis will ensure the chosen system provides further value for money.
- 4.6 Contract duration will be 28 weeks for all blocks.

5. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

- 5.1 The contract will support the achievement of the Council's strategic aims of 'providing homes for those in most need' and 'remaining financially sustainable to deliver service priorities' by using a cost effective means of delivering improvements to the Council's Housing Stock.
- 5.2 The installation of the fire sprinkler systems will provide additional fire protection to the means of escape for all residents living within these properties.
- 5.3 The fire sprinkler systems will also provide additional protection by limiting and isolating damage to properties in the event of a fire.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

- 6.1 All residents will be informed of the installations of these systems and the additional safety benefits they will offer. The system cannot be isolated by residents.
- 6.2 Berkshire Fire & Rescue will be informed of the system installation and there will be additional isolation points for the Fire Authority to switch off the system in the event of a fire.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 There is no Equalities Impact Assessment required for this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The works are to be awarded under The JCT Intermediate Works with Contractor's Design contract.

- 7.2 A Fusion 21 Framework will be used to procure the works. An open tender option using our In-Tend system has been reviewed but this will not provide the pre-vetting and time saving options of the Fusion 21 Framework.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The value of expenditure is currently estimated on previous quotations obtained for similar sprinkler system works. The budget figure for the fire sprinkler systems is estimated at £700,000. Provision has been made in the Housing Revenue Account capital budgets to fund this work.
- 8.2 Ongoing maintenance and service costs will have to be provided each year. The estimated budget allowance is £50,000 and provision has been made in the Housing Revenue Account Budget and Business Plan.
- 8.3 It is intended as far as possible to ensure that the successful tenderers pay the living wage to all employees working on Reading Borough Council properties. Tenderers are advised that the Council's current Low Wage policy expects the payment of the Living Wage rate set independently by the Living Wage Foundation and updated annually in the first week of November each year.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1 Report to HNL Committee in March 2018 'An Update on Housing Fire Safety Considerations'.