

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	HOUSING, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE		
DATE:	14 MARCH 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	11
TITLE:	PROGRAMME OF WORKS TO COUNCIL STOCK 2018/2019		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Reading Borough Council's Housing Property Services manages the day to day repairs, planned maintenance, cyclical repairs and void works to approximately 5,600 Council homes.
- 1.2 This report highlights key achievements over the past financial year and sets out the work programme for the Council's housing stock for the next financial year.
- 1.3 A further linked report on this agenda provides an update to Committee on the independent review of fire safety practices in respect of the management and maintenance of Council housing stock. This sets out recommendations in respect of additional fire precautions to improve the fire safety standard in high rise and other blocks, in the context of recent incidents nationally and the learning from those.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee note the improvements implemented in the past financial year and the planned programme of works to Council stock for 2018/19.

3. POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 Housing Property Services has a responsibility to ensure that the housing stock is well maintained in accordance with the Decent Homes Standard and that Council homes are safe and healthy places to live.
- 3.2 In addition the service continues to pursue a programme to improve the thermal efficiency of its stock so that homes can be heated efficiently and cost effectively, thus reducing their carbon footprint and reducing fuel poverty. Beyond bricks and mortar the service also works to improve the wider environment on housing estates to meet the needs and aspirations of tenants.

3.4 Repairs and maintenance of the stock are delivered predominantly by an in-house workforce. Some works are sub contracted through the use of measured term contracts to allow for fluctuations in volumes, specialist work or where it is more cost effective to do so.

4. KEY IMPROVEMENTS 2017/18

4.1 Key improvements delivered by the Housing Property Services Team in 2017/18 include:

- Consolidating the work from the Home Improvement Agency contract, clearing the backlog on jobs and significantly reducing the turnaround time on completing major adaptations
- Completing the refurbishment of the second of five blocks of flats as part of the Hexham Road refurbishment project
- Developing an innovative scheme of 28 units of modular temporary accommodation at Lowfield Road for homeless families
- Housing stock was benchmarked as the most energy efficient within our peer group of 20 similar social housing providers by Housemark, an independent benchmarking organisation.

5. WORKS PROGRAMME 2018/19

5.1 The detail of the planned works programme for the following year is set out in Appendix 1. The table below summarises the budgets associated with the different elements of the programme:

<u>Works to Council Housing Stock 2018/19 Budget</u>	
	£'000
<u>Responsive Repairs</u>	
Responsive Repairs	2,300
Garage Repairs	50
Estate Maintenance	100
Temporary Accommodation Repairs	120
Voids (includes £400k Capital work)	1,250
<u>Planned Programmes</u>	
Tenants' Improvement Fund	100
Gas Servicing and Domestic Legionella Checks	320
Essential Cyclical	325
Pensioner Decorations	175
Common Areas	160
Garages Planned Maintenance	60
Electrical Checks	110
External Repairs and Decorations	1,000
<u>Major Capital Works</u>	
Special adaptations	500
Roofs	200

Structural Works	160
Rewiring	440
Smoke detector replacement / CO detectors	155
Windows and Doors	520
Central Heating and Boilers	1,000
Fire Protection works (*see 5.2)	980
Insulation	40
Kitchens & Bathrooms	1,800
Door Entry Systems	30
Communal Lighting	200
Asbestos / legionella	400
Decent Neighbourhoods Works	250
Hexham Road Flats	1,200
Coley mains water (*see 5.3)	200
Lifts	230
Storage heaters	260
Major Repairs	460
Communal Flooring	100
Feasibility	25
Contingencies	400
	£15.620m

5.2 A further linked report on this agenda provides an update to Committee on the independent review of fire safety practices in respect of the management and maintenance of Council housing stock. This sets out recommendations in respect of additional fire precautions to improve the fire safety standard in high rise and other blocks, in the context of recent incidents nationally and the learning from those. A provision of £5.5m has been made within the Council's capital programme and the HRA business plan to fund these works, with spend profiled over 5 years. Anticipated additional expenditure of £900,000 of this provision has been included in the capital works programme for the next financial year.

5.3 It should be noted that in addition to the provision within the 18/19 budget, £600,000 will be carried forward from 17/18 for the Coley water mains works. Provision for the first phase of sprinkler installation in 2018/19 is included in the £900,000 referred to above.

6. CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

6.1 The works programme will contribute to the following service priorities set out in the Council's Corporate Plan 2015-18:

- Safeguarding and protecting those that are most vulnerable; and
- Providing homes for those in most need.

6.2 New heating systems, insulation, new windows and doors contribute to the sustainability of the housing stock, helping to develop Reading as a Green City with a sustainable environment and economy at the heart of the Thames Valley and promoting equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all.

6.3 SAP rating is a measure of energy efficiency of the Council's housing stock - Reading is in the top quartile when compared to our peer group. The Council also compares performance in terms of 'non-decent' homes and again performs well with only 0.2% of our stock classed as non-decent last year (see 8.1 below).

7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

7.1 The Tenant Improvement Fund budget is used by RBC tenant groups to provide local improvements to housing estates areas. This has been used to improve lighting, notice boards and mobility access, as well as to add security features, tarmac paths and improved signs. It has also been spent on new drying and bin areas for flats. This budget is marketed as "tenant choice" at the request of resident groups and managed by the Tenant Services team.

7.2 Tenants also scrutinise the performance of the Council Housing Service and are currently reviewing fire safety practice with a particular focus on communication with tenants. The standard of these reviews is very high and they contribute to and help to performance improvement of the service.

7. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 There is no requirement for an equality impact assessment associated with this report.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The 2006 Decent Homes Standard is a government-set standard for council housing. The standard describes a decent home as one that is fit to live in, in a reasonable state of repair, having reasonably modern facilities and services, and being insulated to a reasonable standard and weatherproof. The standard was updated in 2006 to include the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

8.2 In addition work outlined in this report is covered by the following legislation:

- Landlord & Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Act 2004
- Secure Tenants of Local Housing Authorities (Right to Repair) Regulations 1994
- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Building Regulations Act 1984
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, Sections 2, 3 and 4
- Equality Act 2010
- HCA - The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England from April 2012

8.3 Within this legal framework, programmes are aimed at ensuring the quality of accommodation, meeting the 2006 Decent Homes Standard (or standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built if higher than the Decent Homes Standard) and providing a cost effective repairs and maintenance service that meets applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The budget for the works programme 2018-19 is £15,535,000 (including provision in-year for additional recommended fire safety works as detailed above) and is funded through the Housing Revenue Account. The budget is set as part of the Council's annual budget setting programme.
- 9.2 The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) deals with council housing finance. The main income is housing rent, and all expenditure related to council housing is charged to this account. The Housing Revenue Account is 'ring-fenced' (separate) from other Council activity (this is accounted for through the 'General Fund' account).
- 9.3 The Council regularly updates and revises assumptions in a 30 year business plan for the HRA. This includes a comprehensive 30 year programme for replacing major components of homes (roofs, windows/doors, kitchens, bathrooms etc.) and maintaining them to decent homes standards.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Appendix 1 - Works to Council Housing Stock 2018-19

APPENDIX 1

WORKS TO COUNCIL STOCK 2018-2019

RESPONSIVE REPAIRS

1. Day to Day Repairs £2,300,000

Benchmarking costs against other social providers (with similar size and type of stock) shows that repair costs have remained comparatively low, this can be attributed to an investment in planned and replacement programmes over many years.

Repairs are delivered predominantly by an in-house workforce, with some works (to allow for fluctuations in volumes) and specialist services delivered externally. Factors that influence service costs include:

 - Continued standardisation of parts to reduce costs
 - Improvements in IT/asset management systems - this has improved data and allows more in-depth repairs/cost analysis
 - Control of high cost jobs and the development of new programmes of work to redirect investment to planned work
 - Batched works to reduce cost - e.g. batched gutter cleaning works to reduce use of scaffolding cost
 - Use of new types of scaffold system which are quicker and easier to use and more cost effective
 - Additional and improved Health and Safety provision and monitoring, and training on legislation
 - Improved specifications for work
 - Improved customer feedback mechanisms
 - Extended guarantees on boilers
 - Increased budget on door replacements to reduce carpentry costs

2. Responsive Garage Repairs £50,000

This budget is for the provision of day-to-day repairs to the 1,060 garages which the Council owns.

3. Estate Maintenance £100,000

A Tenant Services controlled budget to attend to day-to-day estate management issues.

4. Temporary Accommodation £120,000

A budget used for the repair and maintenance of temporary accommodation properties. In recent years the budget has decreased by £20,000, as anticipated extra repairs at Jimmy Green Court and 2 Wensley Road (since their refurbishment) have not materialised in the volume we expected.

5. Voids £1,250,000

The cost to repair homes between tenancies to an approved standard prior to letting is met from this budget. The budget has been reduced this year by £150,000 to £1.2m to reflect recent trends. This reflects the aim of keeping a good balance between expenditure, re-let times and re-let standards. This budget anticipates no change in specification.

PLANNED PROGRAMMES

6 Tenants Improvement Fund (Tenant's Choice) £100,000

This budget is directed by tenants groups to provide local improvements to council estates. Previously this has been used to improve lighting, notice boards and mobility access, as well as to add security features, tarmac paths and improved signs. It has also been spent on drying and bin areas in the borough. This budget is marketed as "tenant choice" at the request of resident groups and managed by the Tenant Services team.

7. Gas Servicing £320,000

Checks are carried within 12 months and at change of tenancy. Improvements have been made at gaining entry and access and the target of 100% compliancy remains intact for this key safety indicator.

8. Essential Cyclical Inspections £325,000

This budget has increased by £30,000 to reflect anticipated needs and covers work in the following areas:

- Basic lift maintenance and safety certification
- Warden call system maintenance
- Fire alarms, dry risers
- Fire extinguisher maintenance
- Checks and repairs to door entry systems
- Burglar alarms
- Communal lights maintenance
- Communal TV Aerials maintenance
- CCTV

Increases this year reflect additional maintenance at Cedar Court.

9. Pensioner Decorations £175,000

This is a three year cyclical programme. The town is divided into three geographic areas. This year the area of town covered by this programme includes Tilehurst, Dee Park, Southcote, Coley, and Woodley. Work is carried out by outside contractors. 347 addresses will be visited.

To be eligible, customers must be of pensionable age or receive a disability benefit and have no resource to an able bodied person who can do the work for them. The service is only provided where the condition of the existing decoration is poor.

10. Common Areas £160,000

A seven year cyclical programme is set, whilst maintaining additional budget for highly trafficked or vandalised areas in exceptional cases.

11. Planned Maintenance to Garages £60,000

Garage maintenance is done on a seven year cycle of planned maintenance. This budget is to keep garage sites in a lettable condition to maintain the revenue stream and the asset. Over the last decade investment in garages has much improved the appearance of estates and removed areas of neglect. Numbers of garages have fallen in recent years as sites are redeveloped or land is included in regeneration projects (such as at Dee Park).

This year, Coley, Whitley Street and Park Ward benefit.

12. **Periodic Electrical Checks** **£110,000**

An electrical check was, until recently, carried out every ten years or at a change of tenancy. Good practice has been reviewed at national level and now suggests checks should be made every 5 years. The electrical checks programme has been upgraded to move towards this and it is intended that the target of a 5 year programme will be met in two years' time. The data collected from the electrical checks is used to inform the rewiring programme and to upgrade and renew smoke detectors.

13. **External Repairs and Decoration** **£1,000,000**

Typically this includes a repair package, looking at the outside fabric of the homes and carrying out suitable improvements or repairs to:

- Roofs, down pipes and gutters and vent pipes
- Brickwork
- Windows and doors
- Porches, sheds
- Repairs to kitchens

An external painting programme follows the repair programme. Painting is subject to weather conditions and stops during the winter period.

Work is carried out on a rolling 7 year cycle, which this year is planned to cover Orts road estate, Park, Wensley estate and part of Southcote.

MAJOR / CAPITAL REPAIRS

14. **Special Adaptations** **£500,000**

The purpose of this budget is to provide adaptations to properties in order to improve living conditions for customers with disability or mobility needs. The majority of the budget is spent on adapting bathrooms. This work was previously undertaken by Aster Living, but has now been successfully brought in house and enabled more adaptations to be done to meet the needs of tenants.

15. **Roofs** **£200,000**

This budget is for:

- Structural repairs and monitoring and tree control.
- £15,000 gully cleaning of accessible housing surface water gullies
- Roof replacements

Component lifetimes in the assessment of a decent home suggest that roof coverings should be considered old at 50 years of age for houses and bungalows and 30 years of age for flats. Reading has for many years had a 7 year cyclical planned programme repairing all roofs as part of the external repairs and decorations contracts and as a result of this strong maintenance programme the level of disrepair to roofs is low.

Over the next two years the priorities are;

- Provide lasting repairs to valleys or chimney flashings where they repeatedly fail on Wates flats.
- Focus on flat roofs that show high repair costs, specific 3 storey blocks with high and repeated repair costs from localised roof areas, e.g. 125 Basingstoke Road.

16. **Structural Works** **£160,000**

This budget is for:

- Structural repairs and monitoring and tree control.
- £15,000 Gully cleaning of accessible housing surface water gullies
- Various properties continue to be monitored and structural repairs remain at a low level
- Repairs to beams in crosswall properties

17. **Rewires** **£440,000**

Condition rather than age drives the rewiring budget. The need for full rewires has decreased. The focus has switched to upgrading systems. Rewires tend to be partial, focusing on circuit board replacement and socket upgrades. Selection for these upgrades is on the recommendation of the electrician's team (following electrical checks) rather than from general building surveys. Electric checks are done either as planned checks or checks at change of tenancy.

18. **Smoke Detector replacement** **£155,000**

Smoke detector replacement is generated from electrical checks, decent homes checks, gas service checks and specific checks of electrically heated homes.

The specification has been extended to include extra heat detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. The budget has been expanded to match this change.

Additional capital spend to support one off upgrades to fire safety systems is covered below (following an independent expert review in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire). Once completed this will increase the number of smoke detectors and will therefore add to the scale of the maintenance programme.

19. **Window and Doors Replacements** **Windows £420,000 / Doors £100,000**

Half of all carpentry repair costs relate to doors. 2018 continues an extensive door replacement programme, looking at 180 doors. Each door is individually surveyed. This year's programme will replace the windows in 72 Wates flats in Southcote and repairs and decorations to the exterior.

20. **Boilers and heating** **£1,000,000**

High investment in past years has made a considerable saving in repair costs and improvements in energy efficiency. An extended parts and labour guarantee of 10 years was negotiated on new boilers. The replacement of boilers is fixed on a 15-year plan and full systems every 30 to 40 years. The budget initially focused on boilers but in the last three years has covered full systems.

21. **Fire Protection Works** **£980,000**

Provision for fire protection works includes the start of a two year programme to upgrade fire alarm systems at a number of sheltered units. This year systems will be replaced at Weirside Court and St Stephens Court.

In addition, provision of £5.5m over 5 years has been made to further improve fire safety across the Council's high rise and other identified flatted block types. £900k of this provision has been included for 2018/19. This will fund a range of works including the first phase of installation of sprinklers in Coley high rise flats and upgrading smoke detector systems in sheltered housing and other specified blocks.

22. **Insulation** **£40,000**

Loft and cavity insulation remain the most cost effective measures that can be applied to the housing stock to reduce the carbon footprint. Of the 3,000 lofts in the housing stock most properties have over 200mm loft insulation fitted. Lofts that are not fully insulated are mainly inaccessible due to storage or boarding. Almost all cavity walls are insulated. In the benchmarking group where we are compared to 25 similar organisations we have the most energy efficient housing stock. Well insulated homes help address fuel poverty in council homes.

23. **Kitchens and Bathrooms** **£1,800,000**

Kitchens and bathrooms will be replaced across all areas of the borough based on the condition of existing facilities (and their age). In the last 7 years half of all kitchens (2,889) and over a third of all bathrooms (1,983) have been replaced.

There are 1,165 kitchens and 842 bathrooms that will require replacement in the next five years. New kitchens take account of the size and range of tenant's 'white goods' and are individually designed to accommodate these (space permitting). The kitchen specification use thicker carcasses, hinges that open doors 180 degrees and metal draw runners that are designed to last. The specification on standard bathrooms includes lever taps and offers shower facilities and an upgraded appearance of sanitary-ware.

24. **Door Entry Systems** **£30,000**

This budget upgrades and replaces older door entry systems rather than fitting new systems. Addresses are not pre-decided. The programme responds to systems that become inoperable and irreparable as the year progresses.

25. **Communal Lighting** **£200,000**

Investment in communal lighting results in substantial returns both in terms of the energy saved and in a reduction of the number of electrical repairs to failing lights and fittings. In the last four years lighting has been replaced in most blocks of flats. Lights dim to a tenth of their energy output and only fully activate when they detect movement. They are fully guaranteed for 5 years and are LED low energy fittings. This saves on both repair and energy costs.

In October 2017, 2,046 flats had communal corridor areas that benefitted from this programme and a further 582 are planned. 25% of all electrical repairs in 2010 related to communal lighting repairs. This figure fell to 9% in 2016 and continues to fall. External flood lighting is also upgraded to LED lighting using this budget. In some communal areas electric bills have more than halved following this programme.

26. **Asbestos and Legionella** **£400,000**

Asbestos surveys occur before many programmes of work can take place. The whole property is surveyed.

27. **Decent Neighbourhood Funding** **£250,000**

This budget is designed to fund minor works that improve the neighbourhood and communal areas for tenants. Strong investment choices follow from developing clearer plans for neighbourhood renewal and improvement. With this in mind, full surveys of all blocks and communal areas have been commissioned and a dedicated officer has the responsibility for checking safety in communal space and advising of any required works. The need for drying areas, paths, lighting, landscape and boundaries are also considered. Within communal areas - entry doors, door closers, mat wells, stairs and balustrades, finishes, stores, security and refuse disposal are also considered. The Stock Survey team work closely with Tenant Services and Building Maintenance to develop a detailed improvement programme.

28. **Hexham Road Estate Flats** **£ 1,200,000**

This budget is for a flagship project over five years to greatly improve the four storey block properties at Hexham Road Estate. This affects 135 flats in total and each year work is carried out on a block of 27 flats. Two blocks are now complete and work on the third block is now underway at Kielder Court. In 2018/19 work will begin on Redesdale Court.

29. **Coley Water Main** **£200,000**

This budget is to fund the programme of work to replace the water mains in Coley high rise. The work is being carried out to reduce leaks from the existing failing system and to achieve compliance with recent regulations. The programme will take 3 years and will cost circa £1.8 million in total.

30. **Lifts** **£230,000**

An extensive survey of lifts was undertaken 5 years ago to provide better long-term investment planning. Surveys continue to be undertaken and the provision of alternative lifts in sheltered blocks has done much to improve the welfare needs of customers should an individual lift fail. This year work will focus on lifts at Weirside Court, Christchurch Court and St Stephens Court

31. **Storage Heaters** **£260,000**

This budget is to fit new heating systems and replace older type storage heaters with gas central heating or other improved heating. The programme should allow better heating control and reduce any damp conditions.

32. **Major Repairs** **£460,000**

Major repairs are batched together for increased efficiencies. Work includes a variety of projects such as replacing fencing, flooring, damp treatments etc.

33. **Communal Flooring** **£100,000**

£70,000 of the budget is earmarked to provide new flooring, replacing badly damaged flooring or concrete finished. This investment is a response to customer feedback from a tenant survey which highlighted the appearance of communal areas as an area of concern for tenants.

34. **Feasibility** **£25,000**

£25,000 is earmarked for remodelling / development projects.

35. **Contingencies** **£400,000**

This budget covers unforeseen events.