

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT BY DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

TO:	POLICY COMMITTEE		
DATE:	19 FEBRUARY 2018	AGENDA ITEM:	8
TITLE:	REPLACEMENT OF WATER STORAGE, MAINS WATER SUPPLIES AND DISTRIBUTION PIPEWORK TO COLEY HIGH RISE TOWER BLOCKS AND INSTALLATION OF SPRINKLER FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEM		
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The report seeks the following approvals as part of the project to replace the existing water storage facility, water supply mains and distribution pipework at the Coley High Rise Flats in Wensley Road, incorporating the installation of a new fire suppression sprinkler system to each block of flats:

- Authority to award a contract for the works which are to be undertaken over two phases following a successful competitive tendering exercise; and
- Approval to spend a total of up to £2.5m (including a contingency sum of circa 10% of the estimated project cost);
- Approval to submit a Planning application for the ground level water storage tank and pumping station.

2. RECOMMENDED ACTION

- 2.1 That Policy 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 replacement of water storage, mains water supply and distribution pipework and the installation of fire suppression sprinkler systems to flats at Coley High Rise, Wensley Road, Reading, following the selection of a contractor after a successful competitive tender exercise.
- 2.2 That Policy Committee approves capital expenditure of up to £2.5m in the Housing Revenue Account across the financial years 18/19 and 19/20.
- 2.3 That Policy Committee approves the submission of a Planning application for the ground level water storage tank and pumping station required.

3.1 Introduction and background

Water Supply

- 3.2 Coley High Rise Tower Blocks are located off Wensley Road, Reading and provide accommodation comprising 267 two and three bedroom flats and bedsits, distributed equally over the three blocks. The blocks are approximately 50 years old. Internal water supply pipework is built into service risers running from ground floor to roof levels, located within the bathroom/kitchen areas providing potable water to the kitchens/bathrooms and to large roof mounted water storage tanks.
- 3.3 Due to the age of the pipework an increasing number of repairs are being undertaken by the maintenance team, receiving regular callouts to leaking water supply pipework throughout the risers. Repairs involve removing boxing and finishes to tenant's bathrooms for access, carrying out repairs in restricted spaces, followed by reinstatement and making good. In all cases there is inconvenience to our tenants. In some cases the leaks have caused damage to the flats below causing further disturbance and distress to our tenants and additional costs to the Council.
- 3.4 The water storage tanks have previously been lined to extend their lifespan, however, this lining is at the end of its useful life and there is an increasing risk of Legionella occurring within the tanks. A regime of regular monitoring, testing and treatment has been implemented to mitigate this risk and ensure the safety of tenants, however, this can only be taken as a short term solution and it is advised that the storage tanks be replaced as soon as possible. The instances of water supply pipework failure and leaks will only increase over time, along with potential for leaks to the storage tanks.
- 3.5 As part of a wider study of the feasibility of a district heating system to the local area, WSP Parsons Brinckerhoff, a specialist services consultancy, were instructed to also review the existing installation and concluded that the water supply pipework had exceeded its operational lifespan as had the water storage tanks and that the tank linings were decaying. WSP concluded that the main water supply system along with the water storage facilities require replacement.
- 3.6 The total cost of the replacement works to the water mains is estimated at £1.53m.
- 3.7 As part of the replacement works, the opportunity to relocate the risers from within the flats to the communal corridors is being taken. This will benefit both our residents and tenants by reducing the need to gain access to flats and associated inconvenience. Additionally costs will be reduced by removing the requirement to disturb internal flat finishes and reducing non-productive trade's team time due to improved ease of access to the installation.
- 3.9 As part of the project the water storage tanks in each block will be relocated from roof level to a single ground level storage tank. This is required to be compliant with current water regulations. Benefits include a more efficient, up

to date design and compact installation, compliant with current water regulations. The new storage tanks would be expected to have a minimum of a 20 year service life and would be more easily accessible for routine inspection, maintenance and cleaning.

- 3.11 The project as designed would also be able to be installed and tested up to the point of final connection within each flat. This would minimise disruption to our tenants and the possibility of loss of water supply.

Sprinkler System

- 3.12 Whilst there are two means of escape via staircases, fire doors and compartmentation within the block there is no form of fire suppression system currently installed.
- 3.13 The retrofitting of sprinkler systems in high rise blocks is not a current legal requirement, although subject to recommendations arising from the review of regulations and public inquiry following the Grenfell Tower fire, it may become a requirement in the future.
- 3.14 Despite the Council's 7 high rise housing blocks differing in design to Grenfell Tower, the Council appointed an external qualified Fire Engineer (FireSkills) to carry out a review of our fire safety practices. This included an 'intrusive' fire risk assessment and review of the safety systems in place in our high rise and selected other flatted blocks. The Council has not made any announcements in respect of sprinkler installation pending receipt of Fireskills reports and any additional fire safety measures recommended for the high rise and other blocks which they have assessed. Fireskills have completed their review and reported that retrofitting a sprinkler system is recommended for the Coley high rise blocks. Fireskills final report is awaited which will include recommendations in respect of other measures which would further improve fire safety. A report will come forward in due course to Housing, Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee, but these further measures are not not dealt with this through this report and would be subject to separate procurement processes.
- 3.15 By including a sprinkler system installation within the water main replacement project, RBC have an opportunity to procure the works in the most cost effective way and to minimise potential tenant disturbance. The total cost of providing a sprinkler system to all three blocks is estimated to be circa £750,000.

4 CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Ridge and Partners have been engaged under the City West Housing Framework

(a) to prepare and issue a scheme for the replacement of the water storage and distribution facilities. Ridge completed a review of the WSP report referred to above and have prepared a full design, specification and schedule of works documents and a tender package on behalf of RBC. They are also

preparing the Planning application and liaising with statutory authorities to complete the package ready for RBC to issue in due course.

(b) to prepare a feasibility and proposal scheme for a new retrofitted sprinkler system including all associated pipework within the Coley High Rise Blocks.

Timescales

4.3 It is anticipated that subject to Committee approval, the project would be issued to tender during February 2018, with an anticipated commencement on site of May 2018.

5.0 CONTRIBUTION TO STRATEGIC AIMS

5.1 The proposed works will deliver improvements to Council housing stock and contributes to the corporate aims to 'provide decent homes for all' and 'to promote equality, social inclusion and a safe and healthy environment for all'. This project will improve and future proof water supply to Council high rise blocks in Coley as detailed above. The tenants will also have potential to reduce their ongoing water rate bill by easier installation of water meters should they wish to explore this option. The installation of a sprinkler system to the blocks will improve fire safety for tenants.

5.2 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. All providers appointed are expected to pay a living wage in accordance with this policy to all staff working on Reading Borough Council contracts. The UK Living Wage for employees outside of London is currently (November 2017) £8.75 per hour.

6.0 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND INFORMATION

6.1 There will be a process in place to engage with tenants (and any leaseholders) in the blocks. Occupants will be provided with written information and advice during both the planning process and during the works on site.

6.2 In conjunction with Tenant Services and the contractor, drop in sessions will be put in place for occupants in order to answer specific enquiries and to provide reassurance. The contract will state that the successful contractor will be required to appoint and maintain a tenant liaison officer on site for the duration of the works.

6.3 Tenants will be provided with details of the work programme dates and the contractor will engage directly with them to agree convenient access to transfer each tenant's water supply onto the new installation.

6.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimization and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 6.2 No Equalities Impact Assessment is required for this contract.

7.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This contract will be procured in accordance with the current Reading Borough Council Procurement rules and awarded using the Joint Contracts Tribunal (JCT) ‘‘Intermediate Form of Contract - 2016’’.
- 7.2 Due to the condition of the storage tanks there is an increasing risk of Legionella outbreaks. The council as land lord has a duty of care to minimise and prevent this. Failure to do so could lead to action being taken against the council.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Contained within the HRA 30 year plan is a budget allocation of £1.53m for the water main replacement works and £750,000 for the installation of sprinklers in the Coley High Rise blocks as part of a wider provision for sprinkler installation. The overall spend approval at £2.5m allows for a contingency of £220k or circa 10% of the estimated project cost - this is prudent as, given the nature and complexity of the works, costs are an estimate. Given current market demand for sprinklers costs may be inflated. Expenditure is anticipated to be spread over two years - split between circa £1m in 18/19 and £1.5m in 2019/20.
- 8.2 The work identified in the project is funded from money contained within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), the authority to expend these funds is granted under Delegated Powers. Management of this spend will be carried out using existing resources delivering value for money through strict budgetary control.