

**Meeting: EXECUTIVE**

Portfolio Area: Housing, Health and Older People



**Date: 13 MARCH 2018**

**RETROFITTING FIRE SUPPRESSANT SPRINKLER SYSTEMS TO RESIDENTIAL TOWER BLOCKS – PROGRAMME PROPOSAL (SEE ALSO PART II REPORT)**

**KEY DECISION**

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**1. PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To seek approval to commence a programme of retrofitting Fire Suppressant Sprinkler Systems to all of the Council's 7 high rise flat blocks, including 2 sheltered schemes. These works will provide additional fire safety measures to our residential high rise flat blocks. The budget for these works is not covered in the HRA business plan.
- 1.2 As the financial implications detailed in the Part II report are above the Executive's contingency budget agreed by Council these proposals must be considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee before the Executive finalises its recommendations to Council.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That subject to the approval of the Executive, the proposals set out in this report and the related financial provisions set out in the accompanying part 2 report, be referred to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee before the final recommendations Council are approved.
- 2.2 That a Fire Suppressant Sprinkler System (FSSS) as specified by the Feasibility Study carried out by John Rowan and Partners (JRP) be retrofitted to all properties as stated in para 1.1. These works are fully endorsed by Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue.
- 2.3 That the retrofit programme led by the Investment Team will be delivered by a single appointed contractor.
- 2.4 That the contract be offered to market via advertised tender using the "Restricted Procedure" for a term of one year.

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- 2.5 That it be noted that these works are deemed improvements and as such will not be rechargeable to leaseholders.
- 2.6 That approval is given for officers to procure a Retrofitting Fire Suppressant Sprinkler Systems Contract in order to provide additional fire safety within all of our residential high rise flat blocks.
- 2.7 That all means of information and communication with residents, pertaining to the installation, ongoing maintenance and operation of the FSSS be utilised.
- 2.8 That it be noted SBC is undertaking this programme prior to the anticipated changes in regulations regarding Fire Safety and Building Control following the publication of the Building a Safer Future, Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety (Dec 2017) (Hackitt Report). It is very likely that further Fire Safety related works might come to force in the near future and that note be given to the outcomes.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower West London, SBC commissioned a consultant (John Rowan and Partners) to undertake inspections of our high rise flat blocks and provide a feasibility study in relation to the retrofit installation of a proprietary type sprinkler system.
  - 3.1.1 New build tower blocks over 30m in height require a sprinkler system installed under the Building Regulations Part B and this was enforced in 2007 but no legal requirement exists to have a sprinkler system fitted retrospectively.
  - 3.1.2 Following the Lakanal fatalities in 2009, HM Coroner issued a recommendation, known as rule 432, stating that social housing providers should be encouraged to consider the retrofitting of sprinklers in all existing high-rise buildings in excess of 30 meters in height, particularly those identified as having complex designs that make fire-fighting more hazardous and/or difficult. SBC does not have any high rise blocks identified as having a complex design.
  - 3.1.3 The Government has commissioned an independent review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety following the Grenfell Tower fire. The review is likely to result in changes to the current regulations; the nature of these changes will not be known until the review is complete but may include recommendations around the installation of sprinkler systems.
  - 3.1.4 Consultation with tenants and leaseholders should make it clear that proposed works are taking place before the review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety report is published, works may require alternative and or additional works.

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### **4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION & OTHER OPTION**

- 4.1 The Grenfell tragedy resulted in much scrutiny into fire safety measures across the country.
- 4.2 SBC carried out Home Safety visits to reassure residents and complete surveys of individual dwellings. There was generally a view that residents would welcome the addition of FSSS.
- 4.3 SBC officers consulted with the Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue who were also suggesting that retrofitting FSSS would enhance our current fire safety measures, help save lives and protect both residents and firefighters.
- 4.4 SBC subsequently undertook a feasibility study into the practicalities of retrofitting FSSS in 7 high rise blocks.

### **4.5 This section highlights how the project will be carried out and why: PROGRAMME PROPOSAL**

#### 4.5.1 Stakeholder Consultation / Information to Residents

The information for residents must achieve three objectives:

1. To provide knowledge of how the FSSS works.
2. To answer any questions and reassure residents of safety and reliability.
3. To highlight the process of installation and ongoing maintenance.

#### 4.5.2 Pre-installation communication and information provision will take four forms:

- **Face-to-face:** open days; utilising existing residents' groups and forums; collaboration with other front line staff (e.g. SHO, Tenancy Officers, Caretakers); the appointed contractor's Resident Liaison Officer and Herts Fire and Rescue representatives; in extreme cases home visits (as per Home Safety Visits).
- **Leaflets and posters:** two individual leaflets to be designed: Installation process and Sprinklers 'how they work & what they do' including FAQ; general information posters to be displayed lobbies, lifts and other communal areas.
- **Online:** dedicated information page containing both 'installation' and 'sprinklers' information; emails to the dedicated Fire Safety inbox.
- **Telephone:** relevant staff will be provided with brief script as well as the information leaflets; Herts Fire and Rescue will endorse the programme should anyone call their numbers.

#### 4.5.3 Throughout installation the following personnel will continue to provide information and support:

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- Contractor's Resident's Liaison Officer.
- Contractor's Site Managers.
- SBC's Project Officer.
- SBC's Project Manager.

4.5.4 Post installation communication will focus on the ongoing generation and reinforcement of behaviours and will include:

- Website.
- Leaflets to be included with any new tenancy agreement.
- Periodic reminders.
- Presence at forums.

4.5.5 Proposed timings of the information campaign:

- 60 days before the works commence residents will be mailed relevant information.
- 40 days before the works start posters will be displayed.
- 30 days before the works begin introduce contractor at open days and face-to-face meetings.

4.5.6 Strategies to deal with **NO ACCESS** and works refusal:

- Although tenants, under the terms of their tenancy agreement, cannot refuse or decline the works, access to each property will be key to the successful delivery of the installation.
- Although leaseholders, under the terms of their lease agreement, cannot refuse or decline the works, access to each property will be key to the successful delivery of the installation.
- The pre-installation communication and information provision stage will need to stress SBC's importance of and legal obligation to carry out Fire Safety related works. The relevant SBC departments will need to contribute towards minimising issues and gaining access where required.
- Residents must be fully informed about the benefits of the works, but also about the consequences refusal of the works might lead to.

## **4.6 Contractor**

4.6.1 The contractor will be appointed in accordance with SBC's procurement policies and procedures. At around the same time SBC is entering into the Major Flat Block refurbishment programme and the FSSS works will have similar requirements which may result in competitive pricing.

4.6.2 The overall timeframe for all aspects of the proposed works including procurement, consultation, installation and commissioning, will be approximately 9 to 12 months.

4.6.3 The appointed contractor will:

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- Assist with information provision via meetings, forums, post etc.
- Comply with CDM 2014 (e.g. site set up, welfare facilities)
- Provide Residents' Liaison Officer.
- Provide required documentation and certificates.
- Propose programme/schedule of works.
- Supply skilled, trained and reliable workforce.
- Ensure flexible approach to appointments (e.g. offer weekend appointments if necessary).
- Design, install and commission FSSS in accordance with BS9251:2014.
- Carry out regular quality and compliance checks throughout the works.
- Provide a completion certificate, operational manual and schematics.
- Provide costs for the option of ongoing maintenance.

4.6.4 The proposed schedule of works is contained below:

- The works will take approximately 20 weeks at 6 days per week.
- The works are based on block-by-block, sequential programme.
  - Suggested start: Brent Court – 28 days.
  - Harrow Court – 28 days.
  - High Plash – 14 days.
  - The Towers – 14 days.
  - Shaftesbury Court – 12 days.
  - High Croft – 14 days.
  - Gladstone Court – 12 days.

4.7 The main objections or concerns anticipated to the retrofit of FSSS are detailed in the table below along with responses to each matter:

<b>Objections/Concerns</b>	<b>Response</b>
Access to 100% of flats.	The information campaign will raise the issue of importance from the very first conversation/interaction. The Project Lead will work closely with the Contractor and the Tenancy Team to enforce 100% using the terms of tenancy/leaseholder agreement.
Installation and maintenance costs recharges to residents.	There will be no installation charge to residents and no maintenance cost to residents in year 1. In subsequent years, the maintenance costs will be recuperated via service charges.
Disruption, duration and aesthetic issues.	Main inlet pipes run through corridors at ceiling level. T-in off into each property. The pipe will be installed where the ceiling meets the walls and will be boxed in.

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	<p>The sprinkler head will be side-mounted to the wall (not in the middle of the ceiling).</p> <p>Where possible the sprinkler heads will be mounted back-to-back (one room into another) eliminating the need to install pipes in every room.</p> <p>Each installation in individual flats will take approximately 1 day.</p> <p>Make good will be done immediately.</p>
Testing of installation.	The completed pipework will be air tested for leaks.
If one sprinkler head is activated, they are all activated.	That is not the case. Only the sprinklers closest to the fire will go off.
Water damage will be too severe.	A Typical sprinkler discharges 55 litres per minute. A firefighting hose discharges over 600 litres per minute. You can expect a sprinkler to discharge less than 5% of the water used by the fire service.
Sprinklers go off accidentally.	Records show that the chance of an accidental discharge from a sprinkler is in the region of 16 million to one.
Even at a low temperature (e.g. burned toast) sprinklers can go off.	The temperature required depends on the type of sprinkler head installed but is usually between 68 -74 degrees Celsius.
Ongoing maintenance.	Very low ongoing maintenance. 1 yearly service.
Longevity.	There are variations of lifespan, with the minimum of 20 years. Officers will be able to confirm once final decision on which type of components will be used.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 Financial implications are covered separately in the Part 2 report.

### **5.2 Legal and Risk Implications**

5.2.1 As with the procurement of all public contracts, there is a risk that procurement may be delayed due to 'challenges' made during the procurement process.

5.2.2 A watching brief is being kept on the implications of the Referendum result regarding the United Kingdom exiting from the European Union.

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- 5.2.3 Officers have also sought independent advice on the likely reaction of the UK construction industry to any possible future market conditions and how best to respond to any changes. It should be noted that this risk is beyond the ability of the Council to influence and will affect all of the Council's procurement affairs.
- 5.2.4 As demand increases for these type of installations there may be potential capacity issues for suitable contractors, along with inflated costs.
- 5.2.5 The retrofit of FSSS might have a positive impact on the Council's building insurance. The insurance premiums will have to be renegotiated.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None

## **APPENDICES**

None