



Report To: Housing Portfolio Holder
Lead Officer: Director of Housing

1 April 2014

Repair and Refurbishment of Council Houses of Non-traditional Construction

Purpose

1. To seek approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder for the adoption of a strategy to deal with the long term maintenance needs of homes owned by the Council built using non traditional methods.
2. This is a key decision because;
 - (a) *It incurs a significant amount of financial expenditure*
 - (b) *It affects communities in more than two wards*

and it was first published in the February 2014 Forward Plan.

Recommendations

3. It is recommended that the Portfolio approves the Non-Traditional Construction Strategy attached as Appendix 1.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. To repair the defective stock is a legal requirement in accordance with the Housing Act 1985. They do not require to be brought up to a mortgage standard but do seek a guaranteed life of a minimum of 25 years.
5. The properties are in very poor condition and failure to act will result in further deterioration and possible structural collapse. A recent survey of a vacant Airey suggests it is in extremely poor condition in comparison with other properties of the same construction in different regions.
6. The residents of the properties suffer from very high fuel bills and condensation issues related to poorly insulated homes. With rising fuel prices this will only increase.
7. The failure of some key components such as the roofs of Hauxley bungalows are increasing. This is resulting increased response repairs and, in some cases replacement, that does not achieve the economies of scale of a planned improvement programme.
8. The reform of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) has enabled resources to become available to repair and refurbish these properties.

Background

9. In 1999 the Council commissioned a survey of the Airey properties within their stock. Action was recommended however due to a lack of resources the work did not go forward. Much of the defective stock was transferred to Housing Providers who would be able to redevelop the site.
10. The stock remaining is dispersed and does not present an attractive redevelopment opportunity for the Council. Many are semi-detached with owner-occupiers attached who have already undertaken repair or refurbishment works.
11. In February 2014 the Council approved a budget to commence refurbishment works.
12. The focus of the work will be on the Airey homes that are defective and the Hauxley bungalows which are structurally failing.
13. Some of the construction types will not fall within the refurbishment programme as they are structurally sound but are very poorly insulated. These will be externally insulated through the Energy Conservation work such as External Wall Insulation. This programme is well underway.

Considerations

14. The refurbishment of these properties will incur significant expenditure of between £3m and £3.5m.
15. Some of the properties could be sold on the open market in line with the Council's Asset Management Strategy.

Options

16. To approve the attached strategy and approach.
17. To instruct further investigation into the option for disposal.

Implications

18. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

19. An HRA budget has been approved for 2014/15 that would allow this strategy to commence in this financial year. The strategy sets out expenditure of around £3.2m over a four year period.

Legal

20. There is a legal requirement to repair defective properties in accordance with the Housing Act 1985.

Staffing

21. A Projects Officer will be appointed to take overall day-to-day responsibility for the running of the contract. This is contained within the structure of Housing and Property Services

Risk Management

22. The contract for the work will be drawn from the Easter Procurement Limited framework that the Council is signed up to.

Equality and Diversity

23. None

Climate Change

24. Renewable energy sources will be installed where possible for electricity and heating requirements as part of the refurbishment approach

Consultation responses (including from the Youth Council)

25. None

Effect on Strategic Aims

Objective 2

26. Improve efficiency and value for money within a viable financial strategy.

Background Papers

Housing Revenue Account Asset Management Strategy
HRA Business Plan

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