

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET HOUSING PANEL – 20 SEPTEMBER 2018
REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR (HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

Update on Queensway House

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Works to comply with the requirements of the Fire Risk Assessment and Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service in respect of Queensway House, Hatfield, is in progress and developments have been made with residents whose properties have been difficult to access.
- 1.2 Whilst we wait for our consultants to design the additional unforeseen works, which were not detailed in the original FRA (new ventilation and fire suppression sprinkler system) we continue to manage resident and leaseholder's expectations regarding timescales and the challenges we face.
- 1.3 The post-Grenfell Hackitt Report and subsequent overhaul of areas of fire safety has meant progress with certain elements of the work has been slow however residents have been kept updated by letter of the areas of fire safety work that this relates to and how this affects them.
- 1.4 The following report provides an update on progress and outlines the actions undertaken.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 The Government's recent review of the requirements for fire doors has paused the door replacement programme. We have consulted with our fire safety consultants to ensure there are no immediate risks whilst we await the outcome of the Government's investigation into the fire door testing regime. The new doors meet the current, relevant British Standard certification (BS 476) and the risk to those living in Queensway House remains low.
- 3.2 Table 1, below, outlines the progress of on-going fire safety work and the FRA actions that either are in progress or complete.

Further details of this work is as follows:

- Five of the original doors remain at Queensway House and whilst we await the outcome of the fire doors investigation, we will continue to monitor their condition.
 - Only two properties are outstanding the bathroom window infill work. One property is programmed to start in September. The other is has been referred to our Housing Operations team to pursue a more formal means of access.
 - The bin chute hopper doors and bin store doors have been replaced. Further work has been carried out to the bin chute to ensure it is working effectively and to prevent rubbish build up in the communal spaces.
- 3.3 The length of time taking to design the unforeseen works that did not form part of the original FRA actions has raised a number of enquiries from residents. Letters have been sent to all residents advising them of the complexity of the project and that we are working with specialist designers and contractors to get the best possible solution for Queensway House.
- 3.4 Residents have been provided with additional support where requested and future communication with residents is outlined in Section 10 of this report. Five home visits have been requested and undertaken and advice and equipment has been provided to those residents.
- 3.5 Work is still progressing with the procurement of a contractor for the lift replacement. This work is being considered alongside other planned work at Queensway House to minimise the level of disruption to residents however the lift refurbishment was a planned project and is unconnected to the fire protection work.
- 3.6 A meeting was held with the Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (HF&RS) in August 2018 and an update on progress was discussed with them. The Fire Service have also been advised of the circumstances surrounding the installation of the remaining fire doors at Queensway House. Rob O'Connor, Station Commander – Fire Protection, and his team continue to receive updates on progress.

Table 1 - Programmed Fire Safety Works – Queensway House

Description of Work:	Status:
Infill bathroom windows to maintain compartmentation	In Progress
Replacement of flat entrance doors	In Progress
Installation of fire sprinkler in bin store	Complete
Replacement of doors to bin store	Complete
Replacement of hopper heads to bin chute	Complete
Fire damper fitted to base of bin chute	Complete
Installation of ventilation/extractors to bathrooms	Planning stage
Installation of fire suppression system/ sprinklers	Planning stage
Lift replacement	Planning stage

Implications

4 Legal Implication(s)

- 4.1 Whilst the Hackitt Final Report recommendations will have a significant impact on the fire safety of new buildings, there is currently no change in practice for the management of higher risk residential buildings (HRRB). It is expected that changes to legislation such as Building Control and Building Regulations will result from the report and we will be proactive in meeting the requirements.
- 4.2 Consideration is given to the legal obligations under the Building Regulations, whilst the programme to provide new ventilation in the bathrooms risks claims for Disrepair. Good practice in relation to the reduction and control of condensation has been included in our communications to leaseholders and residents.
- 4.3 Building Control have been made aware that the bathroom ventilation is not currently compliant with Building Regulations however it is generally accepted that the fire safety of the building overrides this requirement.
- 4.4 Due consideration that failure to comply with the Housing Act 2004 and the Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (England) Regulations 2015 inside the dwelling and for the common areas, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (2005) could result in prosecution resulting in fines or a prison sentence.
- 4.5 Although the adoption of a retrofit sprinkler system within residential premises does not fall under the legal requirements mentioned above, it is considered a good means of providing an improved level of safety.

5 Financial Implication(s)

- 5.1 Funding will be determined on receipt of the final tender, however, the cost of the installation of the sprinkler and ventilation systems has been estimated in Table 2, below, and will be part funded from the 18/19 Capital works budget. A separate report will be provided to Members outlining how we re-prioritise current and future Planned work to meet the need at Queensway House, which is currently estimated at £1,117,169.
- 5.2 It is assumed that this commitment of Capital expenditure for Queensway House will roll over to the 19/20 financial year and further analysis of the 19/20 Capital budget will take place to ensure we can achieve the required £769,359, using 18/19's and 19/20's existing Capital funds.
- 5.3 Additional resources have been added to the estimated project sum in light of risk identified in Section 6 and added to the table, below.

Table 2: Queensway House Project Costs

Description of Works	Cost	Payment Status
CCTV	£27,349	Paid
Ventilation Feasibility Report	£2,340	Paid
Ventilation Tender Docs	£5,200	Paid
Sprinkler Feasibility	£4,900	Paid
Sprinkler Design, drawings and specification	£48,480	Approved/ In Progress
Project Management	£25,400	Awaiting approval
CDM Advisor/ Principal Designer	£2,500	Awaiting approval
Site Supervision/ Clerk of Works	£30,000	Estimated
Ventilation	£207,500	Estimated
Sprinklers	£588,500	Estimated
Scaffolding	£100,000	Estimated
Redecorations	£75,000	Estimated
Total Works	£1,117,169	
Total Available Budget (C0352)	£347,810	
Total Difference	-£,769,359	

6 Risk Management Implications

- 6.1 Health and safety issues must be properly considered during a project's development so that there is no risk of harm to those who have to use the building. The role of Principal Designer (under the CDM Regulations 2015) has been included in the estimated cost of work to ensure the Council carry out all the functions of the role.
- 6.2 Project management could fall behind because key Council resources spend a high percentage of their time dealing with other projects. The role of Site Supervision/ Clerk of Works has been included in the estimated costs to ensure the Council follow a proposed programme.
- 6.3 Costs may exceed estimates at tender stage and during the project. The project will be procured to demonstrate value for money and an update will be provided to the Council's finance team and elected members.
- 6.4 A project management function has been included in the estimated costs to ensure the Council fulfil the roles Pre-Contract Negotiations, Contract Administration and Quantity Surveying, to ensure costs are managed before and during the project.

7 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

- 7.1 There are no security or terrorism implication for this scheme.

8 Procurement Implication(s)

- 8.1 The projects and work initiatives mentioned in the report are being procured in accordance the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

- 9.1 Implementation of best practices and technologies will be considered and updated at each phase of the project.

10 Communication Plan

- 10.1 A third drop in session will be held for residents on completion of the design of the sprinkler and ventilation system. Learning outcomes from the lift installation drop in session are taken into consideration and the location of the event will happen in the Queensway House lobby area to increase the number of attendees, which in the past has been low.
- 10.2 One to one consultations will continue to be offered and take place as and when requested and this has proved effective in the past for addressing individuals concerns. Four residents have requested this and dehumidifiers and assistance cleaning mould caused by condensation has been given.
- 10.3 We will continue to find alternative ways to engage with residents who are hard to contact. Two residents have been given support and offered interim solutions to prevent more formal methods of communication. The outcome of this has seen further progress of the completion of the fire safety actions required by the Fire Risk Assessment and Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 10.4 In addition to the previous letters sent to the residents, an additional letter was sent in August to further explain timescales and re-iterate the offer of Council assistance with managing condensation.
- 10.5 Cabinet Housing Panel verbal updates will also continue to present a summary of measures being taken in respect of fire safety works have been delivered to the Tenants Panel and the Property Services Repairs Focus Group.
- 10.6 There will be on-going monthly consultation with Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service (HF&RS). This close working partnership between HF&RS, Assets and Housing Operations is working well and assisted with the fire safety outcomes mentioned in item 10.3.

11 Link to Corporate Priorities

- 11.1 The subject of this report is linked to the Council's Corporate Priority:

12 Equality and Diversity

- 12.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was not completed because this report does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

13 Health and Wellbeing

13.1 No specific implications have been identified.

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Background papers to be listed (if applicable)

Hackitt report – Final

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/668747/Independent_Review_of_Building_Regulations_and_Fire_Safety.pdf