

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:

4223

Author:

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Department:

Development and Growth

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Subject:

Leen Valley flats -fire safety works

Total Value:

£766,000 (Type: Capital)

Decision Being Taken:

- 1) To vire £279,000 within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programme, from the building safety work budget to the Leen Valley flats budget line to carry out an upgrade of the existing fire alarm system in the blocks of flats at Leen Valley estate.
- 2) Within the requirements of s 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, to enter into a consultation with the leaseholders in the block about the nature of the works and the financial contribution required from them towards the work.

Reasons for the Decision(s)

Leen Valley flats comprise of 41 blocks totaling 334 one and two bedroom flats located in the Bestwood area of the city. The blocks each have 3 storeys and are of a timber frame construction. Fire risk assessments carried out by Nottingham City Homes reveal that additional fire safety measures can further enhance fire safety for residents. The current fire detection and alarm system in the blocks meets all current legislative requirements. However, in line with the approach that the Council and NCH have taken to fire safety since the Grenfell tragedy, the current arrangements have been re- assessed.

The current policy in the event of fire in the blocks is one of simultaneous evacuation (as opposed to 'stay put'); however a 'stay put' policy is possible in a block of flats provided there are not issues of compartmentalisation, i.e. fire is able to travel between flats via linked service risers.

Savills were commissioned to give an opinion of current fire protection standards at the blocks. Their view was that because of some compartmentalisation issues relating to risers, the blocks did not lend themselves to a 'stay put' policy, and that evacuation remained the best approach. A policy of simultaneous evacuation at Leen Valley would be significantly better managed through a fire detection system which linked all of the flats and the communal areas, so that if there is a fire in one flat, the alarm is raised for all residents to evacuate.

A fully upgraded fire detection system which supports the above will require new equipment to be installed throughout the blocks, including within individual homes. It is estimated that this will cost £766,000. £487,000 of which is already accounted for in the capital programme. Other remedial works to bring flats up to required fire protection standards such as fire doors, have already been carried out using existing budgets. A contractor to complete the works will be approved following consultation with leaseholders and according to procurement requirements.

Tenants were consulted about the proposed works and 85% of those who responded were in favour of the works being carried out and would make them feel safer in their homes. There is a total of 47 leaseholders in the blocks concerned. Under the terms of the Council's leaseholder policy they will be required to make a contribution to the cost of the works. This works out at approximately £2,500 per leaseholder. In line with statutory requirements, leaseholders will be consulted on the works proposed, and the contribution required. They will also be given advice about the ways in which they can pay their contribution under the policy. The expected leaseholder contribution is £92,281.41.

Other Options Considered:

- Do nothing: rejected because although the current alarm systems are compliant with the relevant standards, they are not linked and therefore the simultaneous evacuation policy could be much enhanced through an upgraded system.
- Fit sprinklers to all properties and communal areas: rejected because it is not considered necessary. The work required would be much more disruptive to residents.

Background Papers:

Published Works:

Nottingham City Council 'Approach to Leaseholder Recharges for Major Works'

Affected Wards: Bestwood

Colleague / Councillor Interests:

Consultations: Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.

Crime and Disorder Implications: None

Equality: Please login to the system to view the EIA document: Leen Valley Fire Enhancement FINAL.docx

Decision Type: Portfolio Holder

Subject to Call In: Yes

Call In Expiry date: 03/06/2021

Advice Sought: Legal, Finance, Equality and Diversity

Legal Advice: This report seeks authority to allocate money to undertake additional fire protection safety works at Leen Valley Flats. It is understood the flats are a mix of social housing and long leasehold in private ownership. As regards the social housing the City Council must ensure it complies with the tenancy agreements in place, together with any applicable policies such as consultation with tenants. Where the properties are subject to a long leasehold the City Council as freeholder must comply with S.20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985. The Act and associated regulations place the City Council under an obligation to serve notices on and consult with tenants who will be required to contribute towards the cost of the works. The City Council must properly consider and have regard to any observations received from tenants including seeking estimates from contractors nominated by tenants. Advice provided by Andrew James (Team Leader Contracts and Commercial) on 30/04/2021.

Finance Advice:

As detailed within this decision the current Public Sector Housing Capital Programme includes a budget of £487k for these works and as detailed in the recommendations a virement is required from within the Capital Programme for the remaining £279k. Therefore, following the approval of this decision the values of the Capital Programme will not be amended.

This capital scheme is considered health & safety and therefore falls outside of the amended scheme of delegation.

As this project is not an addition to the Public Sector Housing Capital Programme and relates to health and safety works it does not require endorsing by the Capital Board.

Advice provided by Tom Straw (Senior Accountant - Capital Programmes) on 12/05/2021.

Equality and Diversity Advice:

EIA has been approved, there is no adverse impact on any of the protected groups. Advice provided by Nasreen Miah (Equality & employability consultant) on 29/04/2021.

Signatures

Linda Woodings as Portfolio Holder (PH Housing, Planning and Heritage)
SIGNED and Dated: 26/05/2021
Michael Wayne Bexton (Interim CD for Growth & City Development)
SIGNED and Dated: 25/05/2021