

# Waverley Borough Council

**Report to:** Landlord Services Advisory EWG

**Date:** 19 October 2023

**Ward(s) affected:** All wards affected

**Report of Director:** Community Wellbeing

**Author:** Drew Roberts, Compliance Officer (Fire Safety)

**Tel:** 01483 523 563

**Email:** drew.robert@waverley.gov.uk

**Executive Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Paul Rivers

**Email:** paul.rivers@waverley.gov.uk

**Report Status:** Open

## Housing Service: Senior Living Fire Alarm Upgrade Contract Award

### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Waverley Borough Council has statutory requirements to ensure it meets its fire safety obligations and maintain the safety of tenants and properties.
- 1.2 During recent fire risk assessments and fire alarm service visits, it was noted that five of the fire alarm systems maintained by the Council are nearing the end of their working life and plans should be made to upgrade.

- 1.3 Work is currently underway with our consultants Fraser Walker Associates, to design new systems and tender a contract to identify a suitable contractor to complete the upgrades.

## **2. Recommendation to Executive Co Portfolio Holder for Housing**

- 2.1 That the Executive Co Portfolio Holder for Housing consults with Executive Head of Housing to approve awarding of Senior Living Fire Alarm Upgrade Contract, following a competitive tender.

## **3. Reason(s) for Recommendation:**

- 3.1. Waverley Borough Council has statutory requirements to ensure it meets fire safety obligations.
- 3.2. Failure to upgrade systems before the existing become obsolete, puts the Council at risk of systems failing and replacement parts not being available. An urgent awarding of works following failure of a system would not provide best value for money.

## **4. Purpose of Report**

- 4.1. To approve awarding a Senior Living Fire Alarm Upgrade contract, following a competitive tender process.

## **5. Strategic Priorities**

- 5.1. The report supports the Council's Corporate commitment to promote *"Good quality housing for all income levels and age groups"* and aim to *"be the best council landlord in the South East and to be acknowledged so by our tenants."*

## **6. Background**

- 6.1 During fire risk assessments completed during 2021, it was noted by the fire risk assessor that the fire alarm system at the following

- senior living sites: Blunden Court; Bowring House; Dower House; Moat Lodge and Shepherds Court, were all reaching the end of their working life and consideration be given to upgrading these systems.
- 6.2 At the same time, recommendations were also received from our fire equipment maintenance contractor, Sureserve, to upgrade the fire alarm systems at the above sites.
  - 6.3 For completeness, a further review of the fire alarm systems at the remaining senior living sites was completed. Rolston House was fully upgraded as part of the refurbishment works completed in 2014 and met current standards, Riverside Court was upgraded as part of extensive fire safety works in 2020-21 and Falkner Court Sureserve advised no work was required but that upgrades should be planned alongside the other sites, although this system later failed and was upgraded as a matter of urgency.
  - 6.4 Following the above recommendations, our consultants, Fraser Walker Associates, were employed to complete surveys of each site and provide recommendations on whether full upgrades (replacement of fire alarm panel and all associated equipment) are necessary or if upgrading the aged fire panels would be sufficient. This review identified that as well as the aged fire panels, coverage from detectors and break glass manual call points was insufficient, therefore full upgrades would be the best approach.
  - 6.5 Fraser Walker Associates were subsequently employed to commence with the designing of new fire alarm systems at the five senior living sites and to complete a competitive tender process. This tender process will take place during September, with the aim of identifying a suitable contractor by early October.
  - 6.6 The anticipated value of this contract will be £393,000.

## **7. Consultations**

- 7.1. Our contractors Fraser Walker Associates and Sureserve Fire and Electrical were consulted on the need to upgrade systems.
- 7.2. Following successful award of contract, tenants and senior living officers will be contacted to notify them of the planned work and the reason work is needed.

## **8. Key Risks**

- 8.1 In the event a fire alarm system failed and Sureserve Fire and Electrical are unable to source spare parts to keep the system operational, there would be an urgent need to identify a contractor and award upgrade works without a competitive tender. This wouldn't offer best value for money.
- 8.2 In addition, in the event a fire alarm system fails, the Council would be forced to rely on battery powered smoke detectors which only sound if activated and will not raise the alarm, therefore relying on a building occupant to call the emergency services. This would put building occupants at increased risk as they may not become aware a fire had started and the emergency services may be delayed in being notified and attending in a timely manner.

## **9. Financial Implications**

Drafted by: Candice Keet, Senior Accountant

- 9.1 The cost of this contract (£393,000) will be spread across financial years. Part of the cost will be met from within the 2023/24 existing capital budgets. The remainder will be spent in 2024/25. This cost will be included in the capital programme which will be going to February 2024 Council for approval. The service will adhere to the Council's CPR's when procuring this contract which will support the HRA in ensuring value for money is being achieved.

## **10. Legal Implications**

Drafted by: Jayne La Grua, Deputy Borough Solicitor

- 10.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (the Order) places a statutory duty on the Council to take such general fire precautions as may reasonably be required in the circumstances of the case to ensure that premises the Council are in control of are safe. The Order

places specific duties on the Council to, amongst other matters, carry out suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments and, where necessary in order to safeguard the safety of any person on or in the immediate vicinity of the premises, ensure that the premises are equipped with fire-fighting equipment and with fire detectors and alarms.

- 10.2 It is an offence for any responsible person to fail to comply with the above requirements where that failure places any person lawfully on or in the immediate vicinity of the premises at risk of death or serious injury in case of fire.

## **11. Human Resource Implications**

- 11.1. There are no HR implications from this report.

## **12. Equality and Diversity Implications**

- 12.1. An equality impact assessment has been completed for this contract. As noted in Annexe 1, current fire alarm installations are not adequate for persons with reduced mobility or reduced sensory, particularly those with reduced hearing.
- 12.2. The new fire alarm systems are to be designed to reduce travel distances between manual call points and to ensure a combination of visual and auditory alarms are used.

## **13. Climate Change/ Sustainability Implications**

- 13.1. There are no direct negative Climate change/ sustainability implications in this report.

## **14. Summary of Options**

- 14.1. To approve awarding the contract to the successful bidder at the end tender period, allowing upgrade of fire alarm systems to go ahead.

14.2. To do nothing and be at risk of breaching our statutory and regulatory obligations as a landlord, putting tenants health and lives at risk.

## **15. Conclusion**

15.1 The proposed contract aims to ensure tenant safety within the five sites, as well as offering better value for money by upgrading older systems in a proactive manner.

## **16. Background Papers**

There are no background papers, as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972).

### **Annexes:**

Annexe 1 – Summary Report of Fraser Walker Associates Findings

**Please ensure the following service areas have signed off your report. Please complete this box, and do not delete.**

<b>Service</b>	<b>Sign off date</b>
Finance / S.151 Officer	CK 31/07/2023
Legal / Governance	JLG Sept 2023
HR	n/a
Equalities	n/a
Lead Councillor	Sept 2023
CMB	19 Sept 2023
Executive Briefing/Liaison	n/a
Committee Services	