

Procurement of Housing Service Contracts

Cabinet	18 November 2021
Report Author	Bob Porter, Director of Housing and Planning
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Jill Bayford, Cabinet Member for Housing
Status	For Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted
Key Decision	Yes
Reasons for Key	An Executive Decision where the Council is entering into contracts with values, over their duration of £750,000 or above.
Ward:	Thanet Wide

Executive Summary:

This report seeks authority for the council to enter into two new contracts for services in relation to its housing stock.

The services are:

- The cleaning of the communal areas of council owned blocks of flats.
- Tower block security patrols and waking watch services.

The values of both contracts are detailed in the report and exceed £750,000 each.

Recommendation(s):

Cabinet is asked to:

1. Authorise the letting of the term contract for the cleaning of the communal areas of council owned blocks of flats, as detailed in this report;
2. Authorise the letting of a term contract for the provision of security patrols and waking watch services within the council's tower blocks, as detailed in this report, and subject to the approval of the necessary budget by full council.

Corporate Implications

Financial and Value for Money

Approval for the additional budget required to fund the waking watch is sought within the budget monitoring report included elsewhere on this Cabinet agenda; where a recommendation to Council for approval of the supplementary budget request is sought.

There is sufficient funding within HRA balances to fund the necessary waking watch services, subject to the approval of full council. Should tendered costs exceed the budget request then further member approval will be sought if required.

With respect to the cleaning contract there is expected to be sufficient funding available within existing budgets. However, again should tendered costs exceed the budget request then further member approval will be sought if required.

Legal

The council, as a landlord of residential buildings, has a statutory responsibility to ensure that they are properly maintained.

Corporate

The council's Corporate Statement sets out its commitment to, 'Improve standards and safety in homes across all tenures.'

Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty

Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Protected characteristics: age, sex, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy & maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage & civil partnership.

This report relates to the following aim of the equality duty: -

- *To advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it*
- *To foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.*

The council's tenants and leaseholders include residents that have protected characteristics as set out in the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The provision of the services set out in this report will benefit all tenants and leaseholders, including those with protected characteristics.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

This report relates to the following corporate priorities: -

- Communities

1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The council owns approximately 3,400 tenanted and leasehold homes. All costs, investment and income for these homes is managed with the council's Housing Revenue Account, and budgets for revenue and capital works are reviewed annually.
- 1.2 Key decisions are required for any expenditure that:
 - is for works or services that exceed £250,000, or
 - is for a contract over a number of years with an expected value in excess of £750,000.
- 1.3 The letting of the contracts detailed in this report are therefore considered to be key decisions.

2.0 Cleaning of Communal Areas of Blocks of Flats

- 2.1 The council has an existing contract for the cleaning of the communal areas of blocks of flats. This includes all internal areas, bin stores and block entrances. This contract is now due for renewal. This provides an opportunity to review the specification of works with tenants and leaseholders, and representatives from the Tenants and Leaseholders Group will be invited to participate in the work to select a new service provider.
- 2.2 The budgeted cost for this service is £143,200 per annum and it is proposed to procure a new contract for a duration of 2 years, with two 1 year extension options. Over the total possible duration of the contract, the estimated value is therefore £572,800. The budget will be reviewed annually to ensure that any contractual obligations in respect of inflation, can be covered.
- 2.3 The procurement is proposed to be via a competitive mini tender, using a recognised procurement framework. The tender submissions will be evaluated in terms of both cost and quality and the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT) selected.

3.0 Tower Block Security and Waking Watch

- 3.1 Prior to the requirement of the waking watch at the tower blocks, the council provided a nightly security patrol in its six tower blocks. These blocks are:
 - Staner Court
 - Trove Court
 - Kennedy House
 - Brunswick Court
 - Harbour Towers
 - Invicta House
- 3.2 The patrols visit each block in turn twice per night and have proved extremely effective at identifying and responding to a range of issues, including rubbish and other items left in communal areas, noise and antisocial behaviour, block rubbish chutes and activations of fire alarm systems. The patrols record and report all issues through to the council's Housing Management officers so that any follow up actions needed can be arranged.
- 3.3 This proposed procurement includes the provision of this service. The estimated cost of this service is £108,000 per year.

- 3.4 Due to the findings in a recent report commissioned at the request of KFRS, five of these blocks have interim waking watch services in place. These services provide a 24/7 presence at each of the following blocks, with a primary focus on reducing the risks associated with fire and raising the alarm in the case of a fire:
- Staner Court
 - Trove Court
 - Kennedy House
 - Harbour Towers
 - Invicta House
- 3.5 These 5 blocks are all fitted with an external wall insulation system that need to be removed and replaced with new systems, and the report highlighted that the fire breaks in the system do not meet current standards. Funding for this work has already been approved as part of the council's HRA capital programme. In addition, bids have been submitted to central government to assist with this cost and remove the need to recharge leaseholders for the cost of this work.
- 3.6 Until this work is completed the Kent Fire and Rescue Service and the council's Fire Risk Assessments for the blocks have identified the need for the council to implement simultaneous evacuation strategies, replacing the previous stay put strategies, in the event of a fire. As part of these strategies, additional alarm sounders are being installed in each block to alert residents in the event of a fire.
- 3.7 The purpose of the waking watch service is to assist with managing fire risk within these buildings, ensure that the alarm is raised immediately in the event of a fire, and assist with an evacuation. We have already tested these procedures on site at one of our blocks, alongside officers from the Kent Fire and Rescue Service.
- 3.8 This waking watch service will continue to be required until the new alarm sounders are installed. Specialist fire alarm consultants have advised about the need for sounders and have assisted in system design.
- 3.8 Following the installation of new alarm sounders, the waking watch service will no longer be required. And once the external wall insulation systems have been replaced the buildings will be able to return to stay put strategies in the event of a fire. At this point, the new alarms will be reprogrammed so that they can be manually activated, floor by floor, by the Kent Fire and Rescue Service, if they decide that a managed evacuation is required.
- 3.9 The council is one of relatively few local authority landlords nationally that has a procedure for sharing information about disabled residents living in high rise general needs housing, who may need assistance during any evacuation, with the fire and rescue service. We have tested these procedures with colleagues from the Kent Fire and Rescue Service and will continue to do this at further joint visits to each block.
- 3.10 It is anticipated that the Waking Watch Service will be required for a period of approximately 12 months, dependent upon the timescales for the required alarm upgrades. The estimated cost of this element of the contract will be up to £812k. Subject to the approval of the necessary budget by full council, this service is included within the proposed tender. Once the Waking Watch Service is no longer

required, it is proposed that the service revert back to the previous nightly security patrols that have proved so successful.

3.11 Combining these two elements means that the total estimated cost of the services proposed to be included within this procurement is £1.244m over the 3 + 1 year duration of the contract.

3.5 The evaluation of tenders will include both quality and cost analysis so that the council can select the more economically advantageous submission. Tendering is proposed to be conducted using a mini-tender procedure using an approved procurement framework.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 Once approved, the council will be able to enter into contracts for the services set out above and agree start dates with the chosen contractors, subject to the approval of the necessary budget to cover the cost of the waking watch service.

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Annex List

None

Background Papers

None

Corporate Consultation

Finance: Chris Blundell (Director of Finance)

Legal: (Insert name and job title)