

CHESHIRE FIRE AUTHORITY

MEETING OF: ESTATES AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE
DATE: 24TH JANUARY 2022
REPORT OF: DIRECTOR OF GOVERNANCE AND COMMISSIONING
AUTHOR: PETER HAYES

SUBJECT: SERVICE HOUSING PROJECT

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on the programme to refurbish the service houses.

Recommended: That Members;

- [1] Note the report, including the requirement for ongoing funding.

Background

2. A report about the project was brought to this Committee in August 2021. It provided information about: house sales; house refurbishments; and process review.

Information

3. The following list is not exhaustive, but provides a good overview of the work completed by August 2021
 - Lofts of all houses insulated (including loft ventilation)
 - Full refurbishment of 2 houses in Knutsford (including new boilers, kitchens and bathrooms as well as roofing work)
 - Full refurbishment of 2 houses in Congleton (including new boilers, kitchens and bathrooms as well as roofing work)
 - All flat and pitched roofs replaced on Northwich houses (including asbestos removal, soffits sealed, cladding on porches and replacement of steel posts)
 - Pitched roofs replaced on 9 houses in Knutsford (including asbestos removal)
 - Pitched roofs replaced on 2 houses in Stockton Heath
 - 14 boilers replaced
 - 12 new kitchens installed
 - 5 new bathrooms installed
 - A number of sprinklers systems removed and made safe

4. Phase 3 of the programme commenced in September 2022 and concluded in December 2022. This saw the completion of a further:

- 7 kitchens
- 6 bathrooms
- 2 pitched roofs
- 3 flat roofs
- 2 boilers

A number of garage doors and internal doors were also replaced during this period.

5. Phase 4 of the Programme is due to commence in April 2022 and the prospective work packages are currently being worked through.

6. It is estimated that over 40% of the necessary refurbishment works will have been completed by the end of this financial year. This obviously leaves a substantial amount of work outstanding.

Financial Implications

7. Spend on the refurbishment works to-date is in the region of £870k. This sum was essentially matched by the capital receipt secured by selling five of the houses that were deemed to be surplus (£862,500).

8. Provided that annual spending on the refurbishment works can continue at the rate of circa £350k it is anticipated that the programme to refurbish the service houses can be completed in four years. It may be possible to accelerate some of the work during one, or more of the financial years, but this depends on various factors which impact upon the VAT threshold calculation (this determines the maximum level of spend each year).

9. It is assumed that the Fire Authority will continue to fund the refurbishment works. The sum of £250k is included in the capital strategy for 2022-23 and is pencilled in for subsequent years. £100k from the existing repairs and maintenance budget is also expected to contribute to the programme each year.

10. The ongoing works will need to be funded by borrowing, which will put additional pressure on the revenue budget.

Legal Implications

11. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Equality and Diversity Implications

12. There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

Environmental Implications

13. Some of the work being carried out as part of the Programme will impact upon the environmental performance of the service houses, e.g. improved glazing, additional insulation and better heating.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: NONE