

Committee	Date:
Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee	25/04/2016
Subject: City of London Almshouses Refurbishment Programme	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Decision
Report author: Paul Murtagh, Assistant Director, Barbican & Property Services	

Summary

The City of London Almshouses in Brixton are in need of extensive refurbishment. The cost of this work is estimated at £898,000. This report requests approval from members to make budget provision for the works and to commence with the necessary Gateway and procurement processes, with a view to the programme being carried out in a two year period.

The report relates only to the City of London Almshouses. The eight Gresham Almshouses on the same site will also be subject to a refurbishment programme, but the request for funding for these properties will be made to the Gresham Committee.

Recommendation

Members are asked to approve, in principal, a two-year refurbishment programme for the almshouses, at an estimated cost of £898,000 and to request that the Assistant Director, Barbican & Property commences the procurement and Gateway processes with a view to appointing a single contractor to deliver the programme.

Main Report

Background

1. The City of London manages 42 Almshouses in Ferndale Road, Brixton, on behalf of the City of London Almshouses Trust. The responsibilities of trustees are enacted by the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee, who receive reports on the Almshouses and make decisions relating to matters of finance and policy.
2. Officers have highlighted on a number of occasions that the Almshouses, like most of the City's social housing stock, are in need of extensive refurbishment.

Current Position

3. A stock condition survey of the Almshouses has now been carried out by an independent surveyor. Their report has identified that the following work is required:
 - Roof repairs
 - Windows replacement
 - Rewiring
 - External decoration
 - Internal redecoration
 - Brickwork Repairs
 - Gutter Repairs

4. The total cost of refurbishment for the City of London Almshouses is estimated at £898,000. The programme of work will include the eight Gresham Almshouses but they are not included in this report as they are the responsibility of the Gresham Committee.

Options

5. On other estates the refurbishment programme will take place over a five-year period. Different elements of the work are being procured as separate contracts (eg one contract for window replacement over all estates).
6. However, there are particular circumstances which mean that a different approach is more appropriate for the Almshouses. The estate is very small, parts of it are listed and the residents are older, and some are vulnerable. The funding arrangements are very different from other estates as it is outside the Housing Revenue Account and there are no leaseholders.
7. There are, then, two options for the refurbishment of the Almshouses.
8. Option One is to programme the work over a five-year period and include the Almshouses in the procurement arrangements for the other estates, with different contracts for the different elements of the work.
9. Option Two is to programme the work over a two-year period and procure one contractor to deliver the whole refurbishment programme for the Almshouses.

Proposals

10. Option One may offer some financial savings. However, because of the nature of the Almshouses (for example, it is likely that windows will need to be bespoke), these savings may be limited.
11. Option Two has the advantages that the work can be completed much more quickly and this will allow the disruption for residents to be minimised. It will also mean that the contractor can liaise directly with residents and the work can be scheduled with their needs in mind.
12. It is the view of officers that Option Two would be the most appropriate approach for the Almshouses and will be the best solution for residents.

Implications

13. The refurbishment programme will require money to be drawn from the City of London Almshouses Trust reserves to cover the cost. The Chamberlain has confirmed that the total currently held in CoLAT funds is £1,599,005.

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