

Decision by Portfolio Holder



Report reference: HAC-004-2022/23
Date of report: 26th August 2022

**Epping Forest
District Council**

Portfolio: Housing & Community Services - Councillor H Whitbread

Author: Deborah Fenton Democratic Services: J Leither
Director HRA Functions (01992 564221)

Subject: Continuation of Sheltered Housing Refurbishment Programme

Decision:

(1) Following the successful refurbishment of Frank Bretton House, approval be given to the continuation of the sheltered housing refurbishment programme working with FRC Group, through a framework agreement undertaking refurbishments at one/two sheltered schemes per year until complete.

ADVISORY NOTICE: <i>A Portfolio Holder may not take a decision on a matter on which he/she has declared a Pecuniary interest. A Portfolio Holder with a non-pecuniary interest must declare that interest when exercising delegated powers.</i>	
I have read and approve/ do not approve (delete as appropriate) the above decision:	
Comments/further action required: None	
Signed: Councillor H Whitbread	Date: 5 th October 2022
<i>Non-pecuniary interest declared by Portfolio Holder/ conflict of non-pecuniary interest declared by any other consulted Cabinet Member:</i> None	<i>Dispensation granted by Standards Committee: Yes/No or N/A</i>
Office use only: Call-in period begins: 13 th October 2022	Expiry of Call-in period: 20 th October 2022

**After completion, one copy of this pro forma should be returned to
Democratic Services IMMEDIATELY**

Reason for decision:

To approve the refurbishment of our sheltered housing schemes as recommended by ARK consultancy following their review of our sheltered housing this year, in which the report highlighted the need to define interior design standards for communal areas of our sheltered schemes in order to make them sustainable and desirable to an ageing population.

Options considered and rejected:

Officers considered whether to carry out a smaller scale upgrade, however this was rejected due to the long-term implications and properties in sheltered schemes being difficult to let.

Background Report:

1. Following the successful refurbishment of Frank Bretton House, sheltered housing scheme, approval is being sought to continue the refurbishment program at other sheltered schemes undertaking one or two refurbishments a year in order to define interior design standards for the communal areas that meet the aspirations and expectations of our growing older population, making best use of the Council's housing stock, making them feel modern, welcoming and improve desirability.

2. Epping Forest District Council invited ARK to undertake a review of its sheltered housing. The principal focus of this assignment was to review the performance and sustainability of the Council's sheltered housing schemes. As a result of the review ARK made several recommendations one of which was to modernise the communal areas of the Council's sheltered housing schemes to create modern and sustainable housing stock.

3. At the Cabinet meeting on 21st June 2021, Members approved a pilot refurbishment scheme at Frank Bretton House working with Buckingham Interiors who are part of FRC Group a registered social enterprise and charity. Residents were consulted on three different mood boards which contained samples of fabric, curtaining, carpet etc. They were also able to try various seating and give their views on their preferred choice of colour scheme. The colour scheme on the ground floor varies to the first floor making the building dementia friendly. Residents were kept up to date throughout the work. When the work was complete a post work survey was undertaken. Of the 33 properties at the scheme, 20 returned the post work survey. Of those 20, 15 flats were happy with the refurbishment which equates to 75%. This being a pilot we learned a lot from resident's feedback including the order in which the work should be undertaken, consulting residents on the artwork for their scheme and their views on flooring. These comments will help improve the customer experience if approval is given to continue the refurbishment program. This refurbishment has transformed the scheme and overall residents are happy with the modern and warm feel of the building.

4. Funding the refurbishment

The refurbishment of the schemes will be funded from the HRA and repayment from a new component added to residents rent accounts with the money being paid back over a ten-year period. These refurbishments qualify for housing benefit subsidy, therefore, those tenants on housing benefit have the cost covered by their benefit entitlement. Those residents not in receipt of housing benefit do have to pay the new charge which will vary from scheme to scheme.

5. Costings

The cost of future refurbishments will be determined by the footprint of the scheme for flooring, the number of windows to be dressed and both the number of rooms to be furnished and the level of furnishing/artwork etc. to be provided. Having surveyed the remaining schemes we anticipate the cost will be in the region of £135,000 per scheme, £810,000 in total. The cost for Frank Bretton House was £115,810.14 broken down to:

Furniture, Artwork, signs and accessories	£38,314.75
Carpet	£66,126.67
Window Coverings	£11,368.72

In terms of the service charge costs, it is likely to be in the region of £5 - £12 per week depending on the size of the scheme. The service charge for Frank Bretton was £7.77 per week.

The scope of works includes interior design, which includes paint colours, flooring finishes, window coverings, furniture, artwork etc. This is suited to communal spaces for older people's housing, is fresh and modern, is compliant with fire regulations and compliant with the specification of fit for purpose products e.g. non slip flooring surfaces, safety glazed artwork, furniture styles which aid mobility, antimicrobial fabrics, medium risk settings fire compliant fabrics and upholstery foams (i.e. higher level of fire retardancy than required in domestic settings), and aids safe use of spaces by people who may be experiencing visual impairment and early stages of dementia.

As with Frank Bretton House, the continuation of these refurbishments will be undertaken by FRC group and led by a Business Development Manager from Buckingham interior who will coordinate all elements of the work and be on hand to work with the EFDC team throughout the planning, implementation and review processes. Installation work is all carried out by specialist installers, coordinated by a dedicated Project Manager. There is also a full aftercare service which includes advice on care, cleaning, maintenance and registration of warranties.

As the total cost of these refurbishments is less than one million pound, in line with Clause 15.2 and Appendix 1 of the Council's Procurement Rules Portfolio Holder agreement is being sought.

Resource Implications:

It is proposed that 1 to 2 sheltered housing schemes are renovated each year. The cost to the Council would be the internal decorations of the sheltered schemes for which there is existing budget provision.

Legal and Governance Implications:

Buckingham Interiors who are part of FRC Group are on a number of frameworks and officers have consulted with the procurement team to ensure the policy requirements are met.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The furniture provided by Buckingham Interiors is manufactured in the UK. In addition, support would be given to help us put to good use, our old furniture, either by donating it to local good causes such as the re-use scheme or recycling it through FRC Groups recycling scheme.

Consultation Undertaken:

Residents at each scheme are consulted on colour scheme, furniture, flooring, fabric's, artwork

Background Papers:

C-001-2021-22 - Report to Cabinet 21st June 2021
Report to Stronger Communities, Select Committee, 12th July 2022

Impact Assessments:

No Impact Identified

Risk Management:

Should the project not go ahead there is a risk that properties within our sheltered schemes will become more difficult to let resulting in rent loss.

Key Decision Reference (N)

Equality Analysis:

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in decision-making. This means that the equality information provided to accompany this report is essential reading for all members involved in the consideration of this report. The equality information is provided as an appendix to the report.