NORWICH
City Council

Committee Name: Council

Committee Date: 30/11/2021

Report Title: Health, Safety and Compliance in Council Homes

Portfolio:	Councillor Harris, Deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing
Report from:	Executive director of community services
Wards:	All Wards
Report OPEN PUBLIC ITEM	

Purpose

To seek approval for capital funding to support delivery of the Compliance Improvement Plan.

Recommendation:

1. Approve that the HRA capital programme is adjusted by £1m in 2021/22 and £1m in 2022/23 to support delivery of capital upgrade works relating to the Compliance Improvement Plan as set out in paragraph 48 of the 12th November cabinet report.

2. Members note that quarterly progress reports against the Compliance Improvement Plan will be presented to Cabinet.

Policy Framework

The Council has three corporate priorities, which are:

- People living well
- Great neighbourhoods, housing and environment
- Inclusive economy

This report addresses the following strategic actions in the Corporate Plan:

- People living well and great neighbourhoods, housing and environment.

The Council's Housing Strategy *'Fit for the Future' A Council Housing Strategy for Norwich* sets priorities for the Council's homes and estates for the period 2020 to 2026. It identifies four primary goals, these are:

- Meeting Housing need – delivering new homes.
- Maintaining and improving condition of existing housing
- Improving the use and management of our existing housing stock
- Improving our neighbourhoods

Report Context

1. On the 12th November 2021 Cabinet approved a number of recommendations in the report Health, Safety and Compliance in council homes**.**

2. A copy of the Cabinet report is attached **here**.

3. Following Cabinet recommendation to Council, this report seeks approval for an adjustment in the HRA capital programme 2021/22 to support delivery of the capital works required to return the Council to full compliance.

Report Detail

4. In October, following an internal high-level review of health, safety and compliance management and self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH), the RSH has found Norwich City Council (NCC) in breach of the Homes Standard and has published a Regulatory Notice.

5. The RSH has not felt it necessary to take any enforcement action against NCC. This is because the RSH has confidence in NCC's plans to improve services and return to full compliance. The RSH will work closely with NCC to monitor progress against a Compliance Improvement Plan.

6. A Compliance Improvement Plan (CIP) and new governance arrangements have been developed. The CIP is a 'live' document which will be continually updated in response to emerging information, completed actions, ongoing checks and inspections. The CIP is routinely monitored by the Health & Safety Compliance Board and will be reviewed against agreed milestones.

7. The final CIP will be agreed with the RSH. Projects and activities will be prioritised and scheduled for delivery. It is anticipated that the programme will take 12 months to deliver and a further 6 to 12 months to embed processes and procedures and return NCC to full compliance.

8. There are approximately 40 projects being developed. The CIP is being further developed to reflect work required in preparation for the Building Safety Act.

9. Temporary resources are required to provide the required skills and expertise to return NCC homes to full compliance within the timescales expected. Recruitment to key roles has been completed within existing HRA contingency budgets and delegations.

10. In addition to securing sufficient internal resources, it is necessary to increase contractor capacity. Discussions are underway with contractors to identify support for the compliance improvement programme. Appointment of appropriate contractors will be undertaken as swiftly as possible to meet the needs of the CIP whilst meeting all required procurement processes.

Implications

Financial and Resources

11. Any decision to reduce or increase resources or alternatively increase income must be made within the context of the council's stated priorities, as set out in its Corporate Plan 2019-22 and Budget.

12. Capital works relating to compliance are included in various project budgets within the HRA capital programme.

13. Budgeting assumptions for delivery of the CIP have been made to secure funding to commence work immediately. Further work to assess costs more accurately against the CIP, will be undertaken.

14. To commence delivery of the CIP and meet the timescales set out, dedicated capital funding is required as detailed in the following paragraphs.

15. It is estimated that a capital provision of £2million will be required to provide capacity for capital works arising from inspections, checks and risk assessments. It is proposed that this is funded from existing budgets that are forecast to underspend within the 2021/22 HRA Capital Programme. Although the value of the HRA capital programme will not change, the proposed virement does represent a change to the purpose for which the budget was originally approved, Cabinet was therefore asked to recommend to Council the approval of the following virement and re-profiling of capital budgets:

Area	Approved 21/22 Budget (£)	Proposed Virement (£)	Proposed 21/22 Budget (£)	Proposed 22/23 Budget (£)
HRA Major Compliance Upgrades	0	2,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
HRA Upgrades - Communal Boilers	5,064,000	(1,400,000)		
HRA Upgrades - Windows	2,900,000	(600,000)		
Total	**7,964,000**	**0**	**1,000,000**	**1,000,000**

16. Capital budget approval will be sought for any 2021/22 underspend to be carried forward through the usual capital carry-forward process for utilisation in 2022/22

Legal

The legal implications associated with this decision are as set out in the Cabinet report of 12 November, as referenced above.

Statutory Considerations

Consideration:	**Details of any implications and proposed measures to address:**
Equality and Diversity	No direct implications.
Health, Social and Economic Impact	The breach is the standards could cause serious detriment to tenants' health but in some cases this has already been rectified. The remaining breaches will be mitigated by the proposals set out in the report and the CIP.
Crime and Disorder	No direct implications.
Children and Adults Safeguarding	All persons involved in the remedial works must adhere to the councils Safeguarding Policy statement
Environmental Impact	The proposals set out in the report and the CIP will mitigate against any direct environmental impacts which could occur as a result of the breach of standards.

Other Options Considered

17. Not applicable

Reasons for the decision/recommendation

18. The Cabinet report of 12 November set out the plans in place to return the council's homes to full compliance with the housing standards. This report is required as only the Council has authority to make significant adjustments to the capital budget as set out in this report.

Background papers: None

Appendices: Cabinet Report Health Safety and Compliance in Council Homes

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