

CABINET

Date of Meeting	Tuesday, 25th September 2024
Report Subject	Housing and Communities, Building Safety - Welsh Government Capital Fire Safety Grant, High-rise Buildings
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report seeks member approval to initiate a mini competition via the North Wales Construction Partnership, phase 3 (NWCP3) procurement framework. This competition aims to appoint a Principal Contractor for essential upgrades and renewal of passive and active fire safety systems and components at the Councils three high-rise residential buildings: Richard Heights, Bolingbroke Heights, and Castle Heights in Flint.

The project, fully funded by a £3.4 million Welsh Government Capital Fire Safety Grant, is crucial for enhancing fire safety across the three 'category 1' high-rise buildings.

The Housing Assets Service have previously invested in these high-rise buildings, completing major refurbishment works (Windows, External Wall Insulation Render system, Roofing Works, Security Doors and Cameras) along with major fire safety improvement works (Sprinkler Systems, Smoke & Fire Detection, Compartmentation works etc.) ensuring the Council achieves the highest-level compliance. The North Wales Fire & Rescue Service (NWFRS) have recently completed a number of familiarisation visits and tests to ensure all processes and plans in place are robust and correct.

The NWFRS have also completed several audits over the years and are very satisfied with the works the Council have completed, considering the buildings to be safe and are reassured by the Councils plans to invest further in fire safety measures.

Your approval will enable the Housing and Asset Management team to commence with this vital building safety initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet approve the mini competition through the NWCP3 framework approach.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW
1.01	<p>The Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017 was a devastating event that resulted in the loss of seventy-two lives and highlighted significant deficiencies in fire safety regulations and building practices. The tragedy underscored the urgent need for improved fire safety measures in high-rise residential buildings.</p> <p>In response to the Grenfell tragedy, the UK and Welsh Governments developed and implemented legislative changes:</p> <p>The introduction of the Fire Safety Act: The Fire Safety Act 2021 is a legislative measure aimed at enhancing fire safety in buildings in England and Wales. Key aspects of the Act include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarification of Fire Risk Assessments• External Wall Systems• Flat Entrance Doors• Enforcement and Compliance <p>The introduction of the Welsh Building Safety Act: The Welsh Building Safety Act aims to enhance the safety of high-rise residential buildings in Wales through stricter regulatory measures and improved oversight. Key elements of the Act include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced Safety Standards• Regulatory Oversight• Resident Engagement• Building Safety Manager• Safety Case Reviews• Golden Thread of Information
1.02	<p>The Council's three residential high-rise buildings fall within scope of the new legislation as 'Category 1' buildings, and as such, must comply with all standards and requirements of the new fire and building safety legislation.</p>

	<p>The Housing and Assets Team have already made significant progress towards achieving this, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appointment of an interim Building Safety Manager. • Forming a Property Compliance and Building Safety Team. • Establishing a Building Safety Group with a cross section of staff from the Housing and Communities Directorate. • Regular engagement with the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service. • Formation of various task groups to advance building safety initiatives, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Implementing a robust Fire Risk Assessment regime and performance reporting. ○ Developing resident engagement and communication strategies specific to building safety. ○ Producing resident-friendly building safety information. ○ Managing communal areas with a sterile procedure approach. ○ Introducing a robust, residential block inspection regime. ○ Creating policies for mobility scooter use, storage, and charging. ○ Upgrading smoke alarm systems, flat entrance fire door checks, block security doors, intercoms, and fob access systems. <p>Grant funding will enable acceleration of enhancements in building safety for high-rise buildings, reducing fire risks even further.</p> <p>The grant will cover full costs for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renewed fire strategies for each building. • Smoke alarm upgrades within flats and communal areas. • Fire evacuation alert systems. • Lighting and emergency lighting upgrades. • Sprinkler system alterations and upgrades. • Designated refuge locations and call point systems. • Fire compartmentation surveys and fire-stopping works. • Renewal of all fire doors. • Refurbishment of internal staircases, flooring, handrails and lighting. • Installation of suspended grid ceilings and cable trays to all communal corridors.
1.03	<p>A specialist Consultant (Pennington’s Choices) was recently procured to fulfil an Employer’s Agent role, with overall responsibility for project management, tender documentation, and technical design.</p> <p>The next stage in the project is to procure a Principal Contractor to programme and complete the construction / delivery phase of the work. To achieve this, we propose to commission a mini competition through the North Wales Construction Partnership 3 (NWCP3) Framework.</p>

	The mini competition approach through this specific framework, provides best value to the Council due to the framework membership fees associated with its use, already being paid. The NWCP3 framework is a fully OJEU compliant route to market, providing efficiency savings with regards to resources and time associated with an open tender procurement process. The Grant award is time bound and is required to be fully claimed by 31 st March 2025.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	Officers from the Housing Asset Management team will be involved in the procurement process.
2.02	Officers will be facilitating and overseeing the project, with the appointed Consultant acting as Project Manager, funded through the grant allocation.

3.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
3.01	Both Elected members and high-rise residents will be fully consulted prior to the project commencing, and once a Principal Contractor has been appointed. Consultation with the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has taken place, and they are in support of the proposed works.

4.00	RISK MANAGEMENT
4.01	As the Council is required to comply with the requirements of the new legislation, the potential risks are non-compliance. The grant works will see a host of fire risk mitigation systems upgraded and newly installed within each high-rise building. Ultimately reducing risks and enhancing building safety.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	N/A

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	<p>Contact Officer – Jonathan Jones Job Title – Building Safety Manager Telephone - 07879602754 Email – Jonathan.jones@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

7.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
7.01	<p>Category 1 buildings – The definition of residential high-rise buildings that are 18 Meters tall or more in height, as set out within the Building Safety Act.</p> <p>NWCP3 - North Wales Construction Partnership, Phase 3, Lot 7H, Social Housing Refurbishment, plus ten units.</p> <p>This is the framework and associated lot which the mini competition will be run through. The Contractors who have been appointed to this lot will be given the opportunity to express their interest of bidding for and being considered for inclusion within the mini competition.</p> <p>OJEU (Open Journal of the European Union). This is the EU regulation which governs procurement and buying throughout the entire European Union.</p>