

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 109

Subject: Urgent work for Incoming & Lateral Electrical Mains Replacement in Council Housing

Date of Decision: Thursday, 22 January 2026

Report of: Cabinet Member for Housing

Lead Officer: Corporate Director Homes & Adult Social Care

Contact Officer: Martin Reid. Director, Homes & Investment
Mikila Beck. Head of Housing Repairs & Maintenance.

Email: Mikila.beck@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: Whitehawk & Marina, Kemptown

Key Decision: Yes

Reason(s) Key: Expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the expenditure of the City Council's budget, namely above £1,000,000 and is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

Exempt from call-in

Note: Reasons for urgency

Due to the special circumstances outlined below, and in accordance with Regulation 10 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, compliance with the requirement to provide 28 days' notice has not been possible. The urgency of the matter has been agreed upon by the Corporate Director of Homes & Adult Social Care, and Chair of Overview and Scrutiny, and it is deemed necessary to consider this item without delay, due to the urgency to award a contract/s to ensure a specialist contractor can be procured to address the issues identified in this report at the earliest practical opportunity and risks mitigated.

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 Resident safety and the safety of those who visit and work on our council homes is our key priority. Since August 2025 the Council have been working in partnership with UK Power Networks (UKPN) to carry out proactive testing on the incoming and lateral electrical mains to our high-rise blocks where the Council is unable to isolate the block supply to enable testing, as it falls under the ownership of UKPN. This testing is in order that we can understand the state of the installations and plan a programme of

works. The proactive testing programme followed an earlier Strategic Overview Report on the condition of electrical intake services to high rise residential blocks. This visual inspection report has now been followed by a detailed condition survey of each site. It has not been possible to conduct the survey programme without the involvement of UKPN to isolate the electrical supply to the blocks to allow testing and inspection.

- 1.2 This proactive testing programme has identified significant safety risks that concern the infrastructure to the electrical power supply, rising and lateral mains, at six identified high rise residential blocks in the City, being Wiltshire House, Hereford Court, Warwick Mount. Viscaria (Bristol Estate), Cherry (Bristol Estate), and Allamanda (Bristol Estate). These risks warrant urgent works to be completed so that the risks are reduced.
- 1.3 Some installations are at imminent risk of failure, which could leave residents, including vulnerable households, without power. Due to related fire safety concerns, waking watches are in place in three of these blocks (Allamanda, Viscaria & Cherry). Two of these waking watches were put in place, at Viscaria and Allamanda, to mitigate some of the risk identified by the testing programme.
- 1.4 In view of the findings of the surveys, the Council, having responsibility for the building, must ensure repairs are made. The Housing Repairs & Maintenance service has an urgent need to procure specialist electrical contractor/s to support our in-house team to undertake an essential programme of electrical rewiring/replacement works to ensure residents continue to have a reliable and safe electrical supply. In order to ensure resident safety, we are also undertaking some limited additional fire safety works concurrently. Owing to the urgent nature of these works the service wishes to mobilise contractor/s as early in 2026 as possible. The contractor/s that we are currently in discussion with a view to engagement to progress this work have previously carried out this type of work (directly contracted or subcontracted) on behalf of the Housing service and indicate they can mobilise from January 2026. For the purpose of urgent works on the 6 high-risk blocks, mobilising a new contractor via a framework will take significantly longer than this. Working with known contractors will also address any concerns about quality or ability to deliver the works to design and on schedule.
- 1.5 This report seeks authority to award specialist contracts to contractor/s to undertake urgent upgrade and replacement works at these six high rise residential blocks given the essential need for works to be conducted. The contract lengths are estimated to require 3-month programmes, with an estimated combined value of £1.5m. A subsequent programme of works will be developed and procured for the remaining 31 high rise residential blocks in scope, and for future works to medium and low-rise blocks, on a risk prioritisation basis, through the usual procurement process.

- 1.6 Given the risk that the mains supply could fail, potentially causing a prolonged power outage, and to ensure residents continue to have a reliable and safe electrical supply, there is an urgency to proceed in relation to the six blocks outlined, and approval is sought to procure and award the contracts for these essential works on the basis as set out in this report.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Homes and Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Housing, to award contracts to carry out electrical work as described below with an estimated total contract value of £1.5m:-
- 2.1.1 To award a contract to GB Electrical essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, and evacuation & refuge systems at Wiltshire House with a total contract value as set out in Part 2 of this report;
- 2.1.2 To award a contract to GB Electrical essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, and evacuation & refuge systems at Hereford Court with a total contract value as set out in Part 2 of this report;
- 2.1.3 To award a contract to the best value for money returning contractor, essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, and evacuation & refuge systems at Warwick Mount;
- 2.1.4 To award a contract to the best value for money returning contractor, essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, communal power & emergency lighting, at Viscaria (Bristol Estate);
- 2.1.5 To award a contract to the best value for money returning contractor, essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, communal power & emergency lighting, at Cherry (Bristol Estate); and
- 2.1.6 To award a contract to the best value for money returning contractor, essential works to rising and lateral electrical mains, communal power & emergency lighting at Allamanda (Bristol Estate).

3 Context and background information

- 3.1 The Council has been working in partnership with UK Power Networks (UKPN) to carry out proactive testing on the incoming electrical mains to our 37 high-rise blocks identified in the Strategic Overview Report.
- 3.2 This proactive testing programme has identified significant risks that concern the infrastructure to the electrical power supply, rising and lateral mains, at six high rise residential blocks: Wiltshire House, Hereford Court, Warwick Mount, Viscaria (Bristol Estate), Cherry (Bristol Estate), and Allamanda (Bristol Estate). Installations in these six blocks are at imminent risk of failure, which could potentially leave residents without power for a prolonged

period of time. Essential works are required to address the issues identified, the two major risks being:

1. The risk of power outages to isolated properties, groups of properties, or whole blocks. Power outage could also affect lifts, communal lighting, heating, door entry and safety systems.
2. Concerns relating to the electrical supply impacting wider fire safety considerations in the blocks.

3.3 The report proposes taking all necessary urgent steps to award to specialist contractor/s to undertake essential upgrade and replacement works to the rising and lateral mains electrical infrastructure to ensure residents of the 6 identified high-rise residential blocks continue to have a reliable and safe electrical supply.

3.4 Prior to contracting the necessary works following the surveys a number of steps have been necessary before contractors could be identified. The specific details for each block are set out below.

3.5 **Wiltshire House - Shutdown/Test date - 19.8.25**

Action undertaken since inspection: Assessments have been undertaken to inform locations of new risers, lighting plans, evacuation & refuge plans; completed design package for tender; meeting contractors already completing major works on this block, to discuss potential for them running the project as they are on site; Met with UKPN to plan relocation of mains; Quotes sought from 3 contractors; and GB Electrical demonstrated value for money in terms of price and quality of works.

A Building Safety Regulator application is required as detailed in paragraph 3.16.

3.6 **Hereford Court - Shutdown/Test date – 12/08/25**

Action undertaken since inspection: assessments have been undertaken to inform locations of new risers; lighting plans, evacuation & refuge plans; complete design package for tender; Met with UKPN to plan relocation of mains; Quotes sought from 3 contractors; and GB Electrical demonstrated value for money in terms of price and quality of works.

A Building Safety Regulator application is required as detailed in paragraph 3.16.

3.7 **Warwick Mount - Shutdown/Test date – 22/12/25**

Action undertaken since inspection: assessments have been undertaken to inform locations of new risers; lighting plans, evacuation & refuge plans; complete design package for tender; Met with UKPN to plan relocation of mains; Quotes have been sought from 4 contractors and are expected the week commencing 19th January.

A Building Safety Regulator application is required as detailed in paragraph 3.16.

3.8 Viscaria (Bristol Estate) - Shutdown/Test date – 19/08/25

Action undertaken since inspection: assessments have been undertaken to inform locations of new risers; lighting plans, evacuation & refuge plans; complete design package for tender; Met with UKPN to plan relocation of mains; Quotes have been sought from 4 contractors and are expected the week commencing 19th January.

A Building Safety Regulator or Building Control application is required as detailed in paragraph 3.16.

3.9 Cherry (Bristol Estate) - Shutdown/Test date – 18/08/25

Action undertaken since inspection: assessments have been undertaken to inform the locations of new risers; lighting plans, evacuation & refuge plans; complete design package for tender; Met with UKPN to plan relocation of mains; Quotes have been sought from 4 contractors and are expected the week commencing 19th January.

A Building Safety Regulator or Building Control application is required as detailed in paragraph 3.16.

3.10 Allamanda (Bristol Estate) - Shutdown/Test date – 18/08/25

Action undertaken since inspection: assessments have been undertaken to inform locations of new risers; lighting plans, evacuation & refuge plans; complete design package for tender; Met with UKPN to plan relocation of mains; Quotes have been sought from 4 contractors and are expected the week commencing 19th January.

A Building Safety Regulator or Building Control application is required as detailed in paragraph 3.16.

3.11 As part of our due diligence, the Housing service submitted Mandatory Occurrence Reports (MOR) for Allamanda, Cherry and Viscaria to the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) on 26th September 2025 in relation to risks to the rising and lateral electrical mains, identified through our proactive survey work with UKPN. We also notified East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service.

3.12 The ability to conduct the necessary works is made more complex by the fact that no isolation is available within the buildings to allow BHCC to safely isolate the installation from the mains power supply to undertake the necessary repairs or maintenance, as this remains the property of UKPN. The Council have sought the cooperation of UKPN to achieve the works required and have entered into negotiations with UKPN about the financial responsibility for the works needed. Notwithstanding the ongoing nature of these negotiations and the ultimate division of financial responsibility given the risks identified, the Council wishes to act to ensure that the works are

commissioned and undertaken in relation to the six blocks identified without delay.

- 3.13 Specialist electrical contractor/s are needed to undertake the electrical rewiring/replacement works to ensure power can be sustained at the six blocks subject to this report. The service does not have the expertise or capacity to undertake the required works, at speed, to ensure risks are mitigated quickly. If the Council cannot proceed to the works on the timescales set out in this report there is a risk of power failure over an extended period which, along with other risks identified, has the potential to necessitate temporarily moving residents into alternative accommodation.
- 3.14 The urgency of the works is also a reflection of the vulnerabilities of residents in these particular blocks. Our housing data records show that within the six blocks of flats of 337 properties, 194 households have currently identified as having a vulnerability.
- 3.15 The Housing Repairs Service have identified 4 possible contractors, these are local SMEs who have completed successful contracts with us previously, they have demonstrated they have the skill, experience and reliability required to give confidence on a project of such a critical nature. They have access to specialist materials and capacity to undertake these works efficiently. One contractor has confirmed they could mobilise immediately to address the most urgent need.
- 3.16 For all 6 blocks, as indicated above, we are working with our Building Safety Team to notify the Building Safety Regulator and/or Building Control, as necessary, of works being carried out in line with current legislation. For high-rise blocks, notice must be submitted to the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) in the form of a Regulation 10(1)(a) application. Due to the urgency of this situation, this application is designated as a 'Notification of emergency repairs to existing HRB'. This will be submitted by Podium in their capacity as Principal Designer for Wiltshire House. The Regulation 10(1)(a) application provides a lawful route for urgent emergency repairs to start immediately, before obtaining building control approval, as long as the BSR is notified right away with the required information.

4 Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 Given the urgency of the situation, the need to provide a safe power supply and the specialist contractor support required alternative options are limited. The option as set out in Section 1 is the preferred option.
- 4.2 If this procurement activity did not proceed to market, the council would be risking the continuation of a reliable and safe electrical supply for residents in the six blocks where the essential works have been identified. The in-house resource does not have the expertise or capacity to carry out the upgrade work as required. In this scenario, should there be a power outage, the council would risk having to find alternative accommodation for up to 337 properties. Of that number, 194 households identify as having a vulnerability.

5 Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The Cabinet Member for Housing has been kept informed on the developments and is aware of the intended approach.
- 5.2 Due to the time sensitive nature of this essential procurement activity, it has not been possible to consult with tenants and leaseholders on the work. In order to recover costs from 65 leaseholders across the 6 blocks, the Council will apply for a dispensation to recover appropriate costs from leaseholders based on the urgent need to proceed with essential works without consultation.
- 5.3 On 15th January 2026, letters were hand-delivered to all residents of the 6 high priority blocks explaining that works would need to proceed to replace electrical and rising mains within the blocks. The letter explained that due to the age and condition of the installations, there was a risk of failure, resulting in power outage, and that this work would have to be undertaken as a priority. The letter gave contact details for the Electrical Testing & Compliance Team who will handle any enquiries in the first instance.
- 5.4 The council submitted Mandatory Occurrence Reports for Allamanda, Cherry and Viscaria to the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) on 26th September 2025 in relation to risks related to the rising and lateral electrical mains.
- 5.5 The relevant regulatory authorities, East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, Building Safety Regulator and Regulator of Social Housing have been notified of these issues as appropriate.
- 5.6 The council has written to the residents of the six blocks referred to in this report and advised them of the priority electrical works planned on their homes. This correspondence has also been shared with ward councillors. Both residents and ward councillors have been advised of contact details should they have any questions or concerns. Resident meetings will also be arranged where our electrical team will be available to answer resident questions.

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 The cost of these urgent works will need to be coded against the current HRA capital budget for electrical testing and compliance.
- 6.2 A detailed review across the entire HRA capital programme will be undertaken at TBM09 to identify potential underspends that can be reallocated to the electrical budget to fund these works and budget variations will be requested as part of the TBM09 reporting cycle. If there are insufficient underspends, then a budget variation will be requested for any shortfall.

- 6.3 Due to the urgent nature of the works, the costs will be met by BHCC in the first instance, but there is a strong possibility that a proportion of the costs should and can be funded from UKPN and this is being actively explored, as set out in the main body of the report.
- 6.4 The proposed HRA capital budget for 2026/27 and provisional allocations for the subsequent 3 years are in the process of being reviewed and updated in support of the HRA Budget papers for Cabinet in February 2026 and will need to include a reasonable assessment for a programme of upgrade works, based on prioritisation.

Name of finance officer consulted: Michael Bentley

Date consulted: 15/01/26

7 Legal implications

- 7.1 The Council ultimately has responsibility for complying with all safety regulations in relation to the buildings listed. As such, it is essential that the Council makes arrangements to conduct the works identified at-pace, for the reasons given.
- 7.2 The Council are in discussion with UKPN regarding the legal liability for the costs of the works. The commissioning of the works by the Council arises through the need to ensure residents have a safe power supply and to address the associated risks of the findings of the surveys, but it is not indicative that the Council is ultimately responsible for the cost of the works which will be the subject of further negotiation.
- 7.3 In so far as the works to be commissioned ultimately fall to the financial responsibility of the Council, there will be a costs to leaseholders. Under section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 the Council must consult leaseholders about work which will cost any one leaseholder more than £250. However, given these are urgent works the Council will be seeking dispensation that it is reasonable to dispense with the requirements' for consultation on the basis that the works are required very urgently on the grounds of safety.
- 7.4 The values for these contract awards are below the relevant thresholds for works set pursuant to the Procurement Act 2023. In procuring the contracts which are the subject of this report, compliance with the Council's Contract Standing Orders is required. The Procurement implications set out in this report confirm that the contracts are being procured in accordance with the Contract Standing Orders.

Name of lawyer consulted: Natasha Watson and Siobhan Fry

Date consulted: 16.1.26

8 Risk implications

- 8.1 This works programme is essential to repair and sustain the mains power supply to the six blocks identified. The risks associated with not completing the works are set out in the body of the report.

9 Equalities implications

- 9.1 The council's standard anti-racism clause will be included in the future formal contract, with this being monitored and evidenced via monthly contract meetings.
- 9.2 Power outages at these blocks would disproportionately affect disabled or vulnerable residents, with vital services and systems such as lifts, powered medical equipment, access to care-call systems. Failure to address the risk of electrical outages could, because of a neutral decision (not replacing the supply), disproportionately impact disabled people.

10 Sustainability implications

- 10.1 N/A

11 Health and Wellbeing Implications:

- 11.1 A reliable functioning power supply is critical to provide our residents with safe and healthy homes. Power will provide warmth through heating, lighting and provide the means to cook and wash. Power will also be required to ensure key medical equipment can function such as air purifiers, oxygen/breathing apparatus. Functioning passenger lifts are essential for many tenants, and many safety and security systems are reliant on a power supply.

12 Procurement implications

- 12.1 Given the associated safety risks connected to this service, immediate action is required. We propose the award of contracts to multiple suppliers across different contracts, as outlined in this report, to mitigate the current risks. Since the overall value falls below the PA23 works threshold, permission has been granted to the Service by the Head of Procurement, to obtain three quotes per contract from suitably qualified suppliers. The selection criteria include demonstrable specialised knowledge and competence, established relationships with challenging stakeholders, and the ability to mobilise swiftly. This approach is in accordance with BHCC Contract Standing Orders.
- 12.2 A comprehensive procurement strategy for the remaining programme of works in this area is already included in our 2026/27 Procurement Forward Plan, ensuring the participation of suitable bidders.

Other procurement options considered:

A call-off from a framework

- This option was deemed unsuitable due to its inadequate flexibility in addressing the specialised and urgent requirements of the electrical infrastructure work. Existing frameworks were suggested but did not appear to suit the project-type and none of the listed contractors were local contractors who would give confidence in such a vital and time-sensitive project.
- Risks have been identified with contractor expertise on this framework. Of the contractors known to the service on the framework, this scale of commercial electrical works is not their usual business, and it is assumed that this work would be further subcontracted. Engaging with a new supplier also raised questions about contractors' ability to mobilise quickly enough to complete the emergency work.

13. Crime & disorder implications:

13.1 N/A

14. Conclusion

- 14.1 It is critical for our residents that the housing service secures the required expertise and resource to start the upgrade works as soon as possible. The realisation of the risks identified in this report would adversely impact a high number of residents, including vulnerable households, and require a significant resource to mitigate, including the potential need to temporarily move residents, including sourcing and funding alternative suitable accommodation, within a reasonable distance of the city.