

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Cabinet

## Agenda Item 13

**Subject:** Improving Fire Safety in Council Homes

**Date of meeting:** Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2026

**Report of:** Cabinet Member for Housing

**Lead Officer:** Name: Corporate Director for Homes & Adult Social Care

**Contact Officer:** Name: Martin Reid, Edward Yeo

**Email:** martin.reid@brighton-hove.gov.uk

**Ward(s) affected:** (All Wards);

**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)..

### For general release

#### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 The safety of those who live in, visit, and work on our council homes is our key priority. As part of our ongoing programme to improve the safety of our homes, we have successfully applied to the government for building safety grant funding. This funding will support any work required to the exterior façades of our buildings to ensure they meet enhanced fire safety standards under the Building Safety Act and Fire Safety (England) regulations. This national Homes England Cladding Safety Scheme (CSS) supports an assessment, through specialist surveys, of whether any improvement work is required to the exterior of our buildings. To date the Council has received pre-tender financial support of £4.7m from Homes England for 7 of our high-rise buildings, with a further building also now confirmed as eligible, to enable the next phase of remediation. This includes appointing a team, design the works and obtain quotes / tendering in order to submit a works package as soon as possible. The Council is currently anticipating funding being received for 9 of our high-rise buildings.
- 1.2 The report also seeks approval to establish a Brighton & Hove City Council Fire Safety Framework Contract to be tendered competitively for fire safety works already in our Housing Revenue Account Budget, to ensure best value for council tenants and leaseholders.
- 1.3 Improving the Fire Safety in Council Housing supports delivery of the Council Plan 2023 to 2027 outcomes Homes for Everyone and A fair and

inclusive city. The Plan aligns to core priorities in the Housing Strategy 2024-29, including to: Improve housing quality, safety and sustainability; Deliver the homes our city needs. It utilises Homes England funding to improve safety for residents in council homes and supports the council's aim to be a Great Landlord and supports our regulatory improvement journey.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Cabinet delegates authority to Corporate Director for Homes & Adult Social Care, in consultation with Lead Member for Housing, to utilise allocated Homes England Cladding Safety Schemes funding for improvements to fire safety in Brighton & Hove for all buildings with successful future bids.
- 2.2 Cabinet approves a HRA capital budget of £6,007,500 (funded entirely by Homes England CSS funding) to be allocated to the fire safety improvement works.
- 2.3 Cabinet approves the procurement and award of a team of consultants (as set out in 3.15 below) to carry out the design works and the preparation of the tender documentation for the procurement of construction contractors to undertake the works, as set out in 3.3 below.
- 2.4 Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director for Homes & Adult Social Care, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to enter into the contracts with the consultants for the 7 blocks that we have currently been allocated funding, the block where funding has been approved but not yet received and for any further blocks where Homes England Cladding Safety Scheme funding may be awarded in future.
- 2.5 That Cabinet delegate authority to the Corporate Director (Homes & Adult Social Care), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to procure and award a Brighton & Hove City Council Fire Safety Framework Contract with increased scope to the approval given to the Procurement Forward Plan in March 2026, with an increased value of £11.5m over a 4-year contract length.

## **3. Context and background information**

- 3.1 In line with our Council Plan and Housing Strategy priority of Improving Housing Quality, particularly to '*Invest in building and fire safety to meet new duties under the Building Safety Act*' our Housing Revenue Account (HRA) budget proposals include continued significant investment to keep our residents safe in their homes. The investment required is a result of the implementation of the more stringent Building Safety Act and Fire Safety (England) Regulations. This includes work required to ensure compliance across the council's stock and will impact on both HRA revenue and capital budgets over the medium term, reflecting our additional fire safety survey work on compartmentation, fire doors and external wall insulation and other works.

- 3.2 The council does not have any type of cladding on any of our blocks that was on Grenfell Tower. We have bid to the CSS to fund remediation works where we have some high-rise blocks with elements of facade or curtain wall material that may be deemed to pose a high-risk of fire spread. This includes in some cases, spandrel and balcony infill panels and some panelling that may encompass some stairwells. CSS funding will mitigate the costs of related fire safety measures to the Housing Revenue Account and leaseholders.
- 3.3 The council has been successful in bidding for pre-tender funding under the CSS to take forward appointments of a specialist project team, formed from external specialist consultants. The team will undertake design of the works and put together the necessary documents for the tender for substantive works required to the façade of blocks where fire safety remediation work may be needed to the exterior of the building. The sole purpose of this funding is to support the early-stage mobilisation and pre-tender activities required to progress façade remediation works. It cannot be used for any other purpose.
- 3.4 In awarding the funding, Homes England are clear that it is imperative that we progress with the appointment of our project team as soon as possible, with the mandatory roles expected to be fully formed within a very tight timescale, within 1 month of the first grant payment being made.
- 3.5 In order to progress these requirements to set up of pre-tender project team as soon as possible in compliance with the terms of the Homes England funding, Cabinet approval is sought for the use of Homes England Cladding Safety Scheme (CSS) funding received for all buildings with successful bids. The council anticipate 9 buildings in Brighton & Hove will be allocated pre-tender financial support under the Homes England CSS. The council has received pre-tender financial support funding for 7 buildings to date and confirmation of funding approval for a further block. It is envisaged that there will be one specialist project team undertaking design and completing tendering to be ready to submit our Works Package for substantive works required to the façade for each of the blocks for which we receive CSS funding. In addition to Livingstone House, for which we have an Individual Cabinet Member Decision to commence spending the funds received, to date of CSS pre-tender funding of £667,500 per block has also now been received for a further 6 blocks as follows: Hazel, Hollyhock, Viscaria, Damson and Cherry blocks on the Bristol Estate. We have also received CSS funding for St James House. Notwithstanding future regeneration plans, pre-tender financial support funding for St James House aligns with our commitment to ensure Large Panel System blocks remain safe to occupy while we have residents living in these homes. Pre-tender financial support funding has also been approved for Normanhurst, a high-rise building on the Albion Hill estate. Homes England Grant Funding Agreements are received on a block-by-block basis as funding is agreed by Homes England and are signed off by the Corporate Director, Homes & Adult Social Care and Director, Homes & Investment.

- 3.6 It is important to note that: this funding is being rolled out nationally across local authorities. The market for expert consultants is expected to rapidly reach capacity, particularly for fire engineers, façade engineers and other specialist consultants. Early engagement and appointments of the professional team are therefore critical to securing capability and maintaining programme certainty.
- 3.7 Notwithstanding this CSS funding bid, the existing fire safety and mitigation measures the council has already put in place in our buildings, including where required waking watch and fire alarm systems, remain in place to ensure our residents continue to remain safe in their homes. East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, Regulator of Social Housing, and where appropriate Building Safety Regulator, have been informed and kept updated on this funding and related matters as part of our ongoing regulatory engagement.
- 3.8 As outlined in the Housing Revenue Account Budget & Capital Investment Programme 2026-27 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy report approved at Budget Council, where possible we are applying for Government and Homes England funding to mitigate the costs of works, including from the Waking Watch Replacement Fund and Cladding Safety Scheme.
- 3.9 The Homes England Cladding Safety Scheme (CSS) is the national government grant programme for funding the remediation of unsafe cladding and external wall systems on residential buildings in England. The CSS is part of the wider Building Remediation Portfolio whose objectives include ensuring that residents are safe from risks associated with fire safety. Funding is available towards eligible costs that would be borne by residential or commercial leaseholders whether they benefit from protections against having to pay service charges towards equivalent works. The CSS funding relates to all residents in the blocks.
- 3.10 The Council welcome the availability of this funding to support social landlords with the cost of remediation of work now required to the external wall systems in some of our blocks to meet new more stringent building safety standards. This is in line with the letter Cllr Williams, Cabinet Member for Housing, wrote to the then Secretary of State for Housing & Communities, dated 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024, requesting specific funding, policy changes and powers to increase housing supply and standards. This included a request for *'Separate funding for health & safety and regulatory programmes, as well as works resulting from new legislation and other issues to ensure compliance as standards in social housing'*.
- 3.11 The Council does not have any type of cladding that was on the Grenfell Tower within our housing stock. We have bid to the CSS to fund remediation works where we have some high-rise blocks with elements of façade or curtain wall material that may be deemed to pose a high risk of fire spread. Where we have such situations, the Council has also put additional fire mitigation measures in place as required, such as a waking watch or upgraded fire alarm system.

- 3.12 To date Brighton & Hove City Council has been successful in relation to our applications for pre-tender funding for 8 blocks across the city.
- 3.13 There was a Cabinet Member Decision that covered the cost of pre-tender works at Livingstone House published on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2026. This enabled the council to commence setting up the pre-tender specialist delivery team.
- 3.14 A key contractual Homes England obligation is for submission of monthly progress reports, with HE being clear on funding award that *'it is imperative that you now progress with the appointment of your project team; the mandatory roles are expected to be fully formed within 1 month'* HE are also clear that *'Our expectation is that most projects can appoint their team, undertaken design and complete tendering and be ready to submit your Works Package within 6 months (9 months if your buildings is subject to BSR, 18m+/7 storeys or more)'*.
- 3.15 The funding received will be used to put in place a specialist delivery team and progress façade remediation works at pace. The specialist team will include fire engineers, façade engineers and specialist consultants. Given that this is a national scheme we are anticipating high demand for these specialist services and authorisation will allow us to start agreements with these specialists. Our proposed specialist project team is proposed to include the appointment of the following consultancy roles:
- Project Director.
  - Project Managers x 2.
  - Lead Designer.
  - Fire Safety Engineer.
  - Quantity Surveyor.
  - Resident Engagement Lead.
  - Client Technical Advisor.

The blocks for which we have CSS funding approved are listed below, with their current Homes England status outlined. We are currently forecasting up to 9 blocks in total will be funded, but this could increase. We anticipate that this is going to be a substantial project where we are successful in achieving funding, with work funded as pre-tender for 6-12 months, with works to blocks following from month 12-24 should further funding be made available, should this be required, for works delivery:

Funding approved and received:

- Livingstone House – Funding approved Grant Funding Agreement Signed (£667,500 inc. VAT)
- Hazel (Bristol Estate) - Funding approved, Grant Funding Agreement Signed - (£667,500 inc. VAT)
- Hollyhock (Bristol Estate) – Funding Approved, Grant Funding Agreement Signed (£667,500 inc. VAT).
- Cherry (Bristol Estate) – Funding Approved, Grant Funding Agreement Signed (£667,500 inc. VAT).
- St James House (LPS block) – Funding Approved, Grant Funding Agreement Signed (£667,500 inc. VAT).

- Damson (Bristol Estate) – Funding Approved, Grant Funding Agreement Signed (£667,500 inc. VAT).
- Viscaria (Bristol Estate) – Funding Approved, Grant Funding Agreement Signed (£667,500 inc. VAT).

Funding approved

- Normanhurst – eligibility for funding confirmed and Grant Funding Agreement signed.

### **Brighton & Hove City Council Fire Safety Framework Contract**

- 3.16 In line with the council’s commitment to invest in the safety and quality of our homes, the Procurement Forward Plan approved by Cabinet in March 2026 included an initial approval of £3.5 for “Qualifying long-term Fire Safety Equipment Servicing, Repair and Replacement”.
- 3.17 Since then, staff in Housing have been working to further scope and develop the specification and requirements, This has included working to bring other areas of fire safety under a new proposed framework contract, to ensure both a seamless approach to the management of fire safety, better quality of work and best value for the Council.
- 3.18 To that end, approval is now sought to establish a framework contract with increased scope for an increased value of £11.5m over a 4-year contract length. This does not represent additional HRA Budget spend, rather a consolidation of separate spend areas into a single framework contract for the reasons mentioned above.
- 3.19 The Framework Contract will be tendered competitively in line with the Councils Contract Standing Orders to ensure best value for residents of council homes.

#### **4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options**

- 4.1 The funding awarded by Homes England is by block and therefore cannot be used for any other property or scheme by Brighton & Hove Council. Therefore, the alternative option would be to not authorise use of the funding and this would be a missed opportunity to fund improvements to fire safety in the block.
- 4.2 A further alternative would be to fund the works from Council Housing Revenue Account for these essential works. This would come at a significant cost to Brighton & Hove City Council.
- 4.3 As set out in paragraph 3.8, where possible we are applying for Government & Homes England funding to mitigate the costs of works to the Housing Revenue Account budget which includes significant investment to keep our residents safe in their homes.

4.4 Consideration has been given to other available frameworks using large national contractors. However, given the safety critical nature of this work, creating our own framework will allow for the use of more local contractors and better enable the service to ensure the quality of work and deliver the bespoke service our residents require.

## 5. Community engagement and consultation

5.1 The council have many ways we currently engage and communicate with residents over fire safety in council homes, this includes:

- Dedicated engagement which continues at high-rise blocks as well as other blocks where issues and works may be identified, including the 10 Bristol Estate high rise blocks and our 8 high rise Large Panel System blocks. Residents are updated and kept informed through letters, notices, regular LPS newsletters, drop-ins and on-site tenancy visits. These activities support access for inspections and works, explain changes to evacuation strategies where relevant, and provide a route for individual concerns to be resolved quickly.
- The council continues to engage residents on fire safety and other health & safety progress through Quarterly Housing Area Panels which receive updates on safety and quality, performance, and planned next steps, with questions captured and fed back into service delivery. These sessions provide a standing forum for scrutiny and for tracking progress against the themes highlighted by the Regulator of Social Housing, including in relation to fire safety.
- The council uses the tenant newsletter Homing In to provide regular citywide updates, including on fire safety, compliance and planned programmes. This includes plain-English explanations of what residents can expect before, during and after inspections or works, and signposts to further support.
- Via the annual fire safety letter sent to residents of our 46 high rise residential blocks by the council.
- Via the High-Rise Building Safety – Resident Engagement Strategy, [Brighton & Hove City Council – High-rise building safety resident engagement strategy](#). This is BHCC’s formal resident engagement strategy for high-rise buildings, produced to meet duties under the Building Safety Act 2022. It explains: how the council will engage and communicate with residents in high-rise (higher-risk) blocks; what building and fire safety information residents are entitled to receive; how residents can raise concerns and make complaints; and how the strategy will be monitored and reviewed. It is available on the council website and has previously been distributed to all residents of council high-rise residential buildings.

5.2 As part of our reporting, Homes England will ask the council to submit evidence of the communication we have sent out to leaseholders and residents in the building. Homes England advise *that ‘It is essential that you ensure that leaseholders and residents are kept informed of progress’*. Homes England recommend that at this stage we provide information including the following:

- That we have signed the Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) for the CSS received PTS (if applicable) and will be progressing work to prepare works and costs.
  - Explanation as to works we expect the CSS to cover.
  - Identification of how costs for any ineligible works will be met.
  - Indicative timeframes for next steps (including submission for building control or BSR approval)
- 5.3 Homes England will review our communications *‘to ensure that these are helpful and informative and will be actively escalating cases where communication is not occurring or meeting the standards we expect to see’*. Homes England advise *‘At this point in the process, it is crucial that leaseholders understand the progress that has been made and the next steps’*.
- 5.4 Residents in buildings where we have been successful in applications for Homes England Cladding Safety Scheme funding will be advised and kept updated on progress.

## **6. Financial implications**

- 6.1 CSS pre-tender funding of £4,672,500 for 7 blocks has been received to date (as at 16/06/26) and has been allocated against the HRA balance sheet. The funding will be drawn down from the balance sheet to cover the cost of setting up the specialist project team during 2026/27.
- 6.2 The total sum expected for pre-tender support, based on 9 blocks will be £6,007,500. This will need to be added to the HRA capital programme as part of the TBM02 report and a new capital cost centre will be created to allocate funding and allow monitoring of spend. The funding will need to be profiled accordingly, as the funding will far exceed costs when this project gets started. If there are any changes in the number of blocks awarded funding, then this will be reported as a variation as part of the TBM process.
- 6.3 The framework contract costs referred to in the report will be met from within the overall Fire Safety capital budget allocation, £7.994m budget approved for 2026/27 and provisionally £12.842m across the next 4 years.

Name of finance officer consulted: Mike Bentley Date consulted (18/06/26)

## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1 The procurement of a team of specialist consultants will need to be made in accordance with procurement legislation and the Council’s Contract Standing Orders. Procurement will advise on the appropriate route to market to secure appointment of these consultants based on the value and scope of their services.
- 7.2 Legal Services input will be required to support the tender for the works contracts for the work on the blocks as set out at 3.15 above. The tender for

the works will need to be made in accordance with procurement legislation and the Council's Contract Standing Orders

- 7.3 In respect of the setting up of a new Council fire safety framework (referred to in 2.5 above), this will need to be procured in accordance with procurement legislation and the Council's Contract Standing Orders. Support will be required from legal services with this new procurement.

Name of lawyer consulted: Eleanor Richards Date consulted (19/06/2026)

## **8. Risk implications**

- 8.1 In order to qualify for funding within this scheme, the property will need to have been assessed as having enough combustible material in its structure to pose a risk to residents. Whilst there is no immediate risk, other mitigations are in place. The work completed will improve fire safety for those residents, and it is important to minimise the associated risks.

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 Not applicable.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 Not applicable.

## **11. Health and Wellbeing Implications:**

- 11.1 Implementing this scheme will demonstrate council commitment to improving fire safety for residents in Council properties around the city and will give reassurance that they are safe in their homes.

## **Other Implications**

### **12. Procurement implications**

- 12.1 Procurement of a team of specialist consultants will need to be made in accordance with procurement legislation and the Council's Contract Standing Orders. Procurement will advise on the appropriate route to market to secure these consultants based on the value and scope of their services.
- 12.2 We support this approach, provided that our Procurement Service either leads or informs the procurement aspects of this project. This will help ensure consistency, oversight, and compliance with BHCC Contract Standing Orders (CSOs) and relevant national legislation.
- 12.3 The procurement implications concerning the Brighton & Hove City Council Fire Safety Framework Contract are set out in paragraphs 3.16 to 3.19.

## **14. Conclusion**

- 14.1 This report seeks approval to use funding from successful bids to the Homes England Cladding Safety Scheme (CSS) to complete the design and tender preparation needed to progress any external wall remediation works at sites in Brighton & Hove. Approval will enable the Council to meet Homes England timescales, maintain programme certainty, while ensuring procurement and governance requirements are followed. Throughout the pre-tender phase the Council will continue to keep residents and leaseholders informed and will maintain existing fire safety mitigation measures as required, reinforcing our commitment to resident safety and compliance with the Building Safety Act and Fire Safety (England) regulations.
- 14.2 The proposed Fire Safety Framework Contract will consolidate separate areas of expenditure activity across fire safety, including equipment servicing, repair and replacement, into a single competitively tendered arrangement, improving consistency, quality and value for money while supporting the council's commitment to safe, well-maintained council homes. The increased contract value reflects a broader scope of existing planned HRA spend rather than additional budget requirement.