



# Committee Report

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**PURPOSE:** Final Decision Report

**KEY OR NON-KEY DECISION:** Key decision over £500k spend/save & impacts more than 2 wards

**COMMITTEE:** Homes and Housing Delivery Committee

**DATE:** 13 December 2024

**TITLE:** Waking Watch

**Ward(s):** Bedminster, Central, Clifton, Hartcliffe & Withywood, Lawrence Hill.

**Officer presenting the report:** Craig Cook / Ashley Lehous-Reuben

**Job title:** Head of Repairs & Maintenance / Planned Improvements Service Manager

**Committee Chair:** Cllr Barry Parsons

**Executive Director lead:** John Smith: Executive Director for Growth & Regeneration

**Proposal origin:** BCC Staff

## **Purpose of Report:**

1. To seek approval for funding to continue waking watch provision.
2. To seek approval to procure and award a new contract for waking watch provision at buildings with elevated risk whilst mitigating actions are undertaken.
3. To seek approval to delegate authority to the Executive Director of Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Chair of the Homes and Housing Delivery Committee to award the contract to the winning bidder following a compliant procurement process.

## **Evidence Base / Options to consider: Waking watch and the reason for requirement**

1. Following two major fire incidents in council high-rise blocks (one caused by lithium batteries exploding and the other by arson) meetings took place with Avon and Somerset Chief Fire Officer and Service with the Mayor, Chief Executive, Director and former Cabinet Member for Housing Delivery and Homes during 2022/23. Avon and Fire Service advised that in line with changing national guidance related to Expanded Polystyrene cladding (EPS), measures should be taken to mitigate the risk posed by such external systems. In addition, the council received three PAS9980 inspection reports that recommended precautionary measures of implementing waking watch on a number of other blocks where there may be a risk, where remedial works are carried out.
2. The council commissioned a waking watch service as a precautionary measure to protect the health and welfare of residents of high-rise blocks where EPS is present. The provision is an

essential temporary fire safety measure for high-risk BCC properties where EPS is installed. The provision provides early detection where signs of fire exist and support evacuation, providing critical coverage until other fire protection systems can be installed or the cladding removed.

#### **Benefits for providing this provision:**

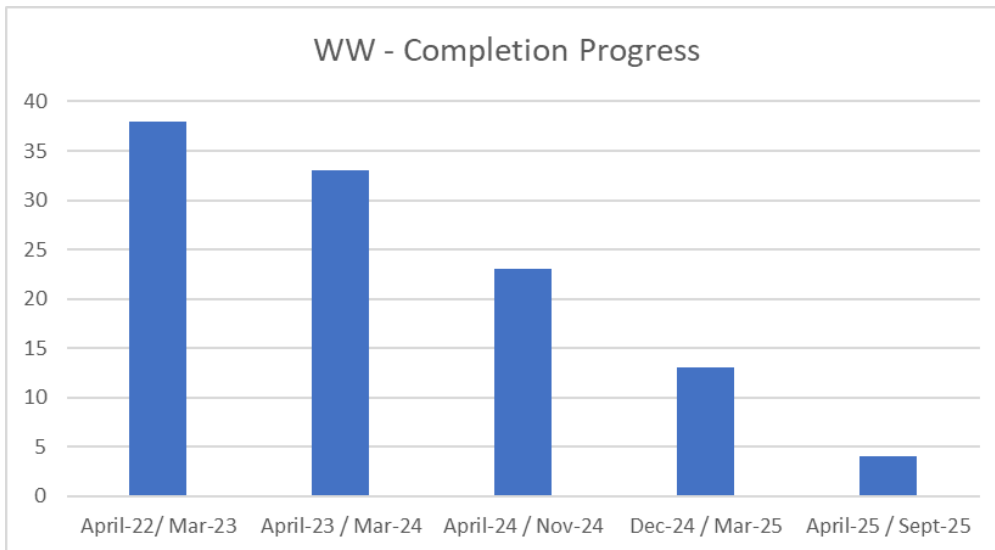
- Enhanced safety monitoring and immediate response capability.
- Compliance with Fire Safety Regulations and regular reporting.
- Reassurance for residents and support for vulnerable residents.
- Reduction in Insurance risks.

#### **Risks if provision not provided:**

- Increase fire risk and delayed response.
- Regulatory non-compliance.
- Escalated concerns amongst residents.
- Increased liability in the event of an incident.

#### **Bristol City Councils current position**

3. Bristol City Council (BCC) undertook an open competition to set up a Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) framework to place orders with successful suppliers to provide the waking watch service at relevant high-risk BCC residential blocks across Bristol. Due to the number of blocks at the time, the DPS framework separates Bristol into three areas: North, South and Central Bristol. In early 2023 the council undertook the first set of call offs from this DPS framework where the same contractor won all three contracts. This call off was extended to the end of September, to allow BCC to under a new procurement activity.
4. Initially, contract terms fell in line with the original budget provided with the Housing Investment Plan 24/25. In this 24/25 Housing Investment Plan, the waking watch provision was estimated to end in September 2024 following a number of actions delivered by the EPS removal, fire alarm and fire sprinkler programmes.
5. However, the waking watch service is still required because of four key contributing factors:
  - Delays in fire alarm installation programme as a result of contractor performance.
  - Reprofiling existing resource to the temporary decant of Barton House.
  - Delays in the sprinkler programme due to building safety regulator planning applications.
  - The need to divert resources to deliver additional fire-safety provisions at other blocks.
6. The below graph illustrates that the total number of blocks waking watch started at in 2022 was at 38 blocks. It is expected that waking watch will be removed from the remaining blocks by end of September 2025, as remediation works continue.



7. The below table illustrates the remaining blocks and anticipated stand down date of waking watch based on the current remediation programme:

No.	Blocks	Wards	Stand down
1	Brandon House	Clifton	Dec-24
2	Rawnsley House	Lawrence Hill	Dec-24
3	Twinnell House	Lawrence Hill	Dec-24
4	Beaufort House	Lawrence Hill	Feb-25
5	Hayleigh House	Hartcliffe & Withywood	Feb-25
6	Middleford House	Hartcliffe & Withywood	Feb-25
7	Millmead House	Hartcliffe & Withywood	Mar-25
8	Broughton House	Central	Mar-25
9	Yeamans House	Central	Mar-25
10	Southbow House	Bedminster	Sep-25
11	Whitemead House	Bedminster	Sep-25
12	Winterstoke House	Bedminster	Sep-25
13	St. Judes (Haviland, John Cozens, Langton, Charleton House)	Lawrence Hill	Sep-25

8. The current contracts have been extended to their maximum value under the terms of the contract. Due to the need to continue this safety critical fire safety provision, there is now an urgent need to reprocur the contracts whilst the remaining interim and mitigating remedial works to the remaining high-risk buildings is completed through the following financial year 25/26.

**Recommendation:**

9. The quickest route to procuring a new contract is to undertake a further call-off via DPS. This route of procurement will see the previous three areas (North, South, Central) amalgamated into one area as the provision will be for a significantly reduced number of blocks following the

continuation of fire alarm, sprinklers and cladding removal programmes.

### **Financial implications:**

10. An overspend for the waking watch has been reported since period 5, taking the total spend to £4.5m, from the initial budget provision of £2.1m in 2024/2025.
11. The £2m being requested within this proposal is to subsidise circa £650k of the remaining part of this financial year 24/25 and provide £1.35m to continue the waking watch provision into 25/26, until remedial actions have been completed.
12. A contributing factor to the additional costs was as a result of receiving the external wall fire risk assessments (FRAEW) which recommended in several blocks where sprinklers had been installed but required simultaneous evacuation strategy, due to the presence of EPS. Programmes were initially designed prior to FRAEWs being completed which assumed sprinklers themselves would be a mitigation to stand down waking watch. The programme of design was to maximise potential revenue savings by the fire alarm and sprinkler programme starting at opposite ends of scale of cladded blocks, looking to converge in the middle. The delivery team now need to complete additional sprinkler works in several blocks to create a fire alarm linked sprinkler system to stand down the waking watch resulting in additional fire alarm costs.

### **Officer Recommendations:**

That the Committee for Homes and Housing Delivery:

1. Approve the expenditure as set out in this report to continue providing waking watch services to the required high-risk blocks until the remediation works have been completed, via existing programmes of work in line with the proposals set out above in the report.
2. Authorise the Executive Director of Growth and Regeneration in consultation with the Chair of the Homes and Housing Delivery Committee to take all steps required to extend existing contracts and procure and award a new Waking Watch contract, in-line with the procurement routes and maximum budget envelopes outlined in this report.

### **Corporate Strategy alignment:**

1. HC1 – Housing Supply. Ensures the landlord function meets its statutory obligations on fire safety whilst following guidance from Fire Risk Assessments in line with Building Safety Act 2022.

### **City Benefits:**

1. This proposal ensures that the residents' safety is paramount within BCCs existing high-risk buildings with the provision of waking watch until the recommended remedial works are completed.
2. Equalities impact assessment to be completed and summary added.

3. Sustainability assessment to be completed and summary added.
4. Currently under the existing three watching watch contracts, there is a commitment to deliver £2.2m of social value (50% of the contract value). The next contract which this proposal seeks approval for, will deliver a similar percentage of the contract value, covering commitments towards community support employment, work experience, local supply chains etc.

**Consultation Details:**

1. This proposal has been discussed and followed the governance route to committee via:
  - a. Executive Director meeting
  - b. Homes & Housing PCCB
2. This proposal has been consulted with internal BCC departments, which the report addresses feedback including:
  - a. Corporate Finance
  - b. Legal services
  - c. Procurement

**Background Documents:**

[\(Public Pack\)Housing Revenue Account \(HRA\) Budget Proposals 2024/25 Agenda Supplement for Cabinet, 23/01/2024 16:00 \(bristol.gov.uk\) pg.26](#)

National Fire Chiefs Council Guidance:  
[SEG - 4th Edition - FINAL 17082022.pdf \(nfcc.org.uk\) pg.6](#)

<b>Revenue Cost</b>	£2,000,000	<b>Source of Revenue Funding</b>	Services, Security – Planned
<b>Capital Cost</b>	N/A	<b>Source of Capital Funding</b>	N/A
<b>One off cost</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Ongoing cost</b> <input type="checkbox"/>		<b>Saving Proposal</b> <input type="checkbox"/> <b>If yes - existing or new saving?</b> N/A <b>OR Income generation proposal</b> <input type="checkbox"/>	

**Professional comments section:**

**1. Finance Advice:** The additional costs required come at a time of significant financial pressure within the HRA. However, given the nature of this spend, it is not something that can be avoided. In order for the HRA to meet its financial covenants, spend will need to be re-prioritised in other areas.

The overspend in relation to Waking Watch is one of the key drivers of the significant overall overspend within the HRA, which has reduced the Interest Cover Ratio to a point whereby no borrowings can be raised to fund capital investment for 2024/25.

**Finance Business Partner:** Martin Johnson – Interim Finance Manager Housing and Landlord Services 25 November 2024

**2. Legal Advice:** The procurement process must be conducted in line with the 2015 Procurement Regulations/Procurement Act 2023 and the Councils own procurement rules. Legal services will advise and assist officers with regard to the conduct of the procurement process and the resulting contractual arrangements.

**Legal Team Leader:** Husinara Jones, Team Manager/Solicitor 11 November 2024

**3. Implications on IT:** I can see no implications on IT regarding this activity.

**IT Team Leader:** Alex Simpson – Lead Enterprise Architect 22 November 2024

**4. HR Advice:** There are no HR implications evident.

**HR Partner:** Celia Williams, HR Business Partner 22 November 2024

## APPENDICES

<b>Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Appendix C – Environmental Impact Assessment</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Appendix D – Decision Risk Assessment</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Appendix E – Exempt Information</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix F – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix G – Options appraisal matrix</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Appendix H – Business case / financial analysis</b>	<b>NO</b>