

Decision Pathway – Report



PURPOSE: For noting

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 05 December 2023

TITLE	Barton House – Emergency evacuation	
Ward(s)	Lawrence Hill	
Author: Paul Sylvester	Job title: Head of Housing Options	
Cabinet lead: Cllr Kye Dudd, Cabinet Member for Housing Services and Energy	Executive Director lead: John Smith, Interim Executive Director Growth and Regeneration	
Proposal origin: BCC Staff		
Decision maker: Cabinet Member Decision forum: Cabinet		
<p>Purpose of Report: To note an urgent key decision taken by the Chief Executive to authorise cumulative spend of up to £2.6M to support the emergency evacuation of Barton House and entering into a contract with Holiday Inn in respect of accommodation to be provided and any other contracts required to support and progress the emergency evacuation of Barton House</p>		
<p>Evidence Base</p> <p>1. Background</p> <p>Barton House is a tower block of 14 stories, built in 1958. The block had previously been identified as requiring fire safety remedial works to replace the external cladding and to add fire sprinklers. A waking watch has also been deployed in the block since May 2022.</p> <p>A peer review of an earlier structural survey, undertaken by Arup in November 2023, highlighted a risk of a fire, explosion or impact having the capability to cause progressive collapse within the building due to structural failure.</p> <p>This report, in a departure from the previous assessments taken, linked the risk of progressive structural collapse resulting from a fire within a single flat and it was considered the consequence of this risk was significant enough to justify the decision to emergency decant.</p> <p>As a result of this risk, the decision was taken on 14/11/2023 to undertake an emergency temporary decant. The emergency temporary decant required the urgent provision of emergency accommodation for the tenants, including the use of hotels and other private sector accommodation. In addition to temporary accommodation costs, the council put in place arrangements to provide regular meals and transportation for those impacted by the temporary decant, as well as additional security measures around the building.</p> <p>Further costs around home loss payments, void loss from the units affected, and any other compensation may also arise should a decision be required to decommission the building following receipt of further detailed analysis of the building structure.</p> <p>Self contained serviced apartments are being secured for tenants/family members with vulnerabilities and additional</p>		

needs which make staying in hotels very difficult.

2. Summary of key actions to date

The one city emergency response has been focussed on finding accommodation for the residents of Barton House and providing services and support to residents in this difficult time. A range of Council services and partner organisations have come together to deliver this co-ordinated response:

- Residents who could not stay with friends and family were provided accommodation in one of 3 hotels in Central Bristol, with most residents in the Holiday Inn
- From Tuesday 21st November, all residents had moved to the Holiday Inn, where:
 - Meals (full board) are provided, as well as packed lunches for children.
 - Residents can park for free at the hotel.
 - Laundry service is provided.
 - BCC staff are at the hotel during the day to support residents.
- Taxis are provided free of charge for essential journeys, e.g taking children to school.
- Further detailed surveys are being carried out at properties in Barton House

3. Summary of contract with hotel

Once the initial phase of the emergency evacuation had passed, we were able to assess the situation and the best option for the tenants who were displaced was assessed to be the provision of rooms with catering and other specialist support at a single city centre hotel. On this basis we undertook negotiations with the Holiday Inn with a view to securing appropriate emergency provision and this led to a contact being agreed.

The contract with the hotel will account for the majority of the spend during this emergency response. We have entered into a contract with the Holiday Inn and have block booked 96 rooms, with full board provided until 31st January 2024. The length of this contract is a precautionary measure to ensure a responsible approach is in place should the temporary decant of the building be extended beyond the short-term. There is the option of stepping down use of rooms.

The additional key Terms and Conditions are:

- BCC to pay for laundry and car parking.
- Security guards to be provided for residents' safety at BCC expense. Number of security guards to be agreed between Holiday Inn and BCC and reviewed on a fortnightly basis.
- Standard clauses around guest behaviour and the hotels right to remove guests who do not adhere to this.
- BCC responsible for damages and dilapidations, taking into account fair wear and tear.
- BCC to have adequate public liability insurance for its employees and contractors.

We are having daily point of contact meetings with the hotel to ensure there are clear lines of communication, to monitor issues and feedback from residents and ensure agreed actions are completed.

In order to authorise entering into the contract and spend on the above an urgent key decision was needed and as this could not wait until the next Cabinet meeting, it was taken by the Chief Executive. Before taking the decision, and in compliance with the provisions of the Council's constitution the Chief Executive consulted with the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Finance Officer, the Mayor, the relevant Cabinet Member and the relevant scrutiny chair.

4. Financial analysis

The following financial analysis of actual costs to date and forecast costs covers the period 14/11/2023 to 31/01/2024:-

Accommodation	Families	Invoiced (£000's)	Forecast (£000's)	Total (£000's)
Holiday Inn	96			
Guest Rooms		26.4	594.2	620.5
Function Room		10.0	144.0	154.0
Subsistence		45.3	569.0	614.3
Security & Parking		17.1	920.4	937.5
Guest Laundry			45.6	45.6
Cleaning			10.3	10.3
Clayton Hotel	19			
Guest Rooms		17.7		17.7
Leonardo Hotel	19			
Guest Rooms		14.5		14.5
Serviced Accommodation	15		221.8	221.8
Disturbance Payments	14	6.1	39.3	45.4
Security At Barton House				
Additional Waking Watch			104.2	104.2
Temporary Fire Alarms			250.0	250.0
Building Surveys			165.6	165.6
Removal Costs		3.0	7.0	10.0
Taxis		1.1	15.4	16.5
Contingency			308.7	308.7
		141.1	3,395.4	3,536.5

Accommodation

In order to ensure that all families could be accommodated at the point of evacuation, rooms were block booked at three hotels. The Clayton Hotel and Leonardo Hotel are no longer being utilised as 96 rooms have now been secured at the Holiday Inn for a lower nightly room rate. During their period of stay at these hotels, guests were provided with meals at the Holiday Inn.

On the 20th of November, a contract was signed with the Holiday Inn which secure the 96 rooms until the 31st of January. Included within the contract is provision for breakfast, lunch (including packed lunch) and evening meals in the function room, as well as laundry services. There is also a clause stipulating that rooms, corridors and the function room will be deep cleaned once tenants have checked out of the hotel. These costs are to be met by BCC.

To keep residents safe and in response to some instances of anti-social behaviour, security has been arranged by the hotel, with one security guard for each of the three floors occupied, two within the function room, and one at the hotel entrance. There is the ability to review the level of security required on a regular basis and stand down some guards when deemed safe and appropriate to do so.

The financial assessment is based on the maximum contract period as follows:

96 rooms will be fully utilised until 14th January 2024, reducing to 64 rooms and then 32 rooms from 28th January with the contract ending two weeks later.

A number of households have elected to stay with friends or family rather than utilising the hotel provision. However, should these arrangements end, further capacity has been added through the provision of up to 15 service accommodation units. Circumstances will be assessed on an individual basis and appropriate accommodation provided on a case by case basis. The Executive Decision taken as detailed in this report provides capacity to accommodate all tenants living in Barton House at the time of the temporary decant.

Disturbance Payments

As mentioned above, 14 households have elected to stay with friends and family. As a result, these households are entitled to disturbance payments at the following rates: -

Household Composition Element	Nightly Rate
Head of Household	£35
Each Additional Adult	£12
Per Child Over 1 Year	£10
Per night for Kennel/Cattery	£10

To date, a total of £6k has been paid to 14 households for a period of 10 nights. Although additional capacity has been secured to move these households into hotel or serviced accommodation, and it is expected there will be some movement, it is not possible to determine exactly who will move and when. The Executive Decision taken as detailed in this report puts aside sufficient financing to continue these payments at the current level until 31st January 2024 if required.

Security At Barton House

Additional waking watch costs have been planned. Although the building is largely empty, the risk of fire remains, however with less people in the building, the opportunities of discovering a fire are greatly reduced, therefore the need to increase the waking watch. The enhanced patrols will be in place until such time as fire alarms are installed and operational.

Building Surveys

These are the costs associated with undertaking the required additional intrusive building surveys, as well as the appointment of a specialist concrete breaking out contractor, necessary to minimise damage to the fabric of the building, and concrete scanners and operatives. The anticipated value of these surveys is £145k, with a further £21k set aside for potential Legionella checks.

Removal Costs

Costs associated with the removal and storage of residents' possessions from those units that have been identified for further intrusive testing. Agreed costs are £1,000 per unit, with a total of three units having already been emptied, and a maximum of a further seven estimated.

Taxis

Limited data on taxi fares incurred is available at the time of writing, with only five days of data available. However, the analysis undertaken identifies that the journeys booked are regular and consistent, and sufficient to estimate the average number of journeys taken per day (17), and the average cost per journey (£14.80). This has then been extrapolated to the 31st January 2024,

Contingency

Set at 10% of all forecast costs.

Cabinet Member / Officer Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Note
 - a) the urgent key decision taken on 23 November 2023 as outlined in this report and attached at Appendix A
 - b) that reprioritisation of HRA budgets will be required to accommodate the spend.
 - c) That over the next month work will be undertaken to determine more accurately the spend required,

and the likely period of time over which it is required, once further surveys have been conducted on the building affected.

- d) Cabinet authority will be sought if required in accordance with the decision pathway process.
- e) The arrangements that are ongoing to support the Tenants who have been displaced and in particular Vulnerable households.

Corporate Strategy alignment: HC1 Housing Supply. Ensure the affordability, availability, diversity and sustainability of housing for all.

City Benefits: One city approach to ensure that residents are supported in an emergency

Consultation Details: N/A

Background Documents:

[Officer Executive Decision published 24 November 2023](#)

[Mayor's Executive Scheme of Delegation \(bristol.gov.uk\)](http://bristol.gov.uk)

Revenue Cost	£ 3,538,373	Source of Revenue Funding	HRA reserves, one off
Capital Cost		Source of Capital Funding	
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>

Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:

1. Finance Advice: As well as noting the urgent key decision, this report also seeks to further address the cost implications of the evacuation of Barton House.

The initial key decision amount of £2.6m was an estimate of the value of the Holiday Inn contract, and other identified but at the time unquantified costs. Upon undertaking further due diligence with service managers, the costs now estimated exceed the original decision amount by circa £0.9m.

It should be noted that at this point a number of assumptions have necessarily been made around levels of room occupation and security levels, the main drivers behind these costs. Actual spend will be monitored against these assumptions in the coming weeks, which will enable estimates to be further refined and firmed up. If during this time there are clear indications the £2.6m will be insufficient, then a further decision paper may be required for additional amounts.

No savings to fund this spending have been identified in relation to the evacuation of Barton House. These costs will therefore need to be met from HRA reserves.

Using reserves to fund these costs will have a negative impact on the HRA 30 year Business Plan and it's ability to deliver on ambitions. It will therefore be necessary to review all non-committed spend within the Business Plan, to ensure it is able to accommodate these costs and remain compliant, fully funded and affordable.

Finance Business Partner: Martin Johnson – Interim Finance Manager Housing and Landlord Services 24 November 2023

2. Legal Advice: The report notes an urgent key decision taken to support arrangements in relation to the emergency evacuation of Barton House. This decision was taken in accordance with the Council's constitutional requirements. The procurement process must be conducted in line with the 2015 Procurement Regulations and the Council's 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 24 November 2023

3. Implications on IT: I can see no implications on IT in regard to this activity.

IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson Lead Enterprise Architect 27 th November 2023		
4. HR Advice: Services across the Council are involved in the response to this emergency. Risks assessments are in place to ensure staff are working safely. HR and Health and Safety Teams are providing ongoing advice about working arrangements, health and wellbeing and measures that can be put in place to support staff		
HR Partner: Celia Williams, HR Business Partner 27 November 2023		
EDM Sign-off	John Smith, Interim Executive Director Growth and Regeneration	28 th November 2023
Cabinet Member sign-off	Cllr Kye Dudd, Cabinet Member for Housing Services and Energy	28 th November 2023
For Key Decisions - Mayor's Office sign-off	Mayor's Office	28 th November 2023

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal Officer Executive Decision	YES
Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	NO
Appendix C – Summary of any engagement with scrutiny	NO
Appendix D – Risk assessment	NO
Appendix E – Equalities screening / impact assessment of proposal	YES
Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal	NO
Appendix G – Financial Advice	NO
Appendix H – Legal Advice	NO
Appendix I – Exempt Information	NO
Appendix J – HR advice	NO
Appendix K – ICT	NO
Appendix L – Procurement	NO