

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET - 21 APRIL 2010

REPORT ON THE REVIEW TO EXPLORE THE BACKGROUND REASONS FOR THE LEVEL OF COMPLAINTS ON CONTRACT UPGRADES TO THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING STOCK WITHIN THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Report by the Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Support

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To present, for consideration, the recommendations of the members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee arising from their recent review to explore the background reasons for the level of complaints on contract upgrades to the Council's Housing Stock within the Capital Programme, together with the actions set out within the associated Improvement Action Plan.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** At the Governance and Scrutiny Committee Workshop held on 24 January 2008, the Committee agreed to undertake a review to explore the background reasons for the level of complaints on contract upgrades to the Council's housing stock within the Capital Programme.
- 2.2** The Committee began the review in June 2008 and in accordance with subsequent rescheduling, as agreed by Members at the Workshop held on 29 January 2009, proceeded through its various stages during the 2009/10 year.
- 2.3** The review process consisted of presentations by the Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management and the Project Delivery Manager within the Asset Improvement Service; site visits; information gathering including a range of documentation relative to current processes; benchmarking with other local authorities; consultation with contractors and also with representatives of tenants and community organisations in the form of a Focus Group; and hearing evidence from internal witnesses.
- 2.4** Having considered all of the information gathered, and after discussion by members of the Committee at informal meetings, conclusions and recommendations were formulated and these are contained in the review outcome report which was agreed at the meeting of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee held on 19 March 2010. The recommendations of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee arising from the review are presented to Cabinet for consideration (Appendix 1) together with the associated Improvement Action Plan (Appendix 2). (A copy of the complete review outcome report is available within the Members' Information Point and on the Members' Information Portal).

2.5 The Governance and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting held on 19 March 2010 also agreed to recommend to Cabinet that, in considering recommendation (v) within the outcome report, that cognisance be taken of the potential use by other Departments/Services of the mobile exhibition/information unit for the purpose of providing information on a range of relevant Council services/issues.

3. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS - None arising directly from this report.

4. FINANCIAL/RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The financial implications and risk management implications associated with the recommendations contained in, and the proposed actions arising from, the draft review report have not been quantified at this stage since these are matters which the Cabinet will require to address if the recommendations are accepted.

5. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The proposals contained within the report on the review promote improved levels of customer care and satisfaction and therefore support the overall aims of the Developing Community Regeneration theme of the Community Plan.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Cabinet is requested to:-

- (i) give due consideration to (a) the recommendations of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee arising from this review (Appendix 1) and the further recommendation relative to the potential use by other Departments/Services of the mobile exhibition/information unit; and (b) the associated Improvement Action Plan (Appendix 2); and
- (ii) notify the Governance and Scrutiny Committee of its proposals.

Alex McPhee
Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Support

12 April 2010
SN/FM

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS - Nil

Any person wishing further information on this report should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Service: Community Support on Tel No (01563) 576104 or Lynne Buchanan, Communication and Customer First Manager on Tel No (01563) 576520 or Julie McGarry, Administration Manager on Tel No (01563) 576147.

Implementation Officer: Stuart Nelson, Administrative Officer.

APPENDIX 1

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REVIEW TO EXPLORE THE BACKGROUND REASONS FOR THE LEVEL OF COMPLAINTS ON CONTRACT UPGRADES TO THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING STOCK WITHIN THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having considered all of the information and evidence gathered during this review, the recommendations of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee are as follows, namely:-

- (i) that for each individual contract to be carried out under the Housing Capital Improvement Programme, a contract Liaison Officer be identified from within the Housing Improvement Service, who would act as a single point of contact for tenants in relation to the carrying out of capital upgrade works within their homes, the role of the officer being to deal with any issues, of any nature whatsoever, raised by tenants either through action or by tracking processes in respect of the issue by another party, to ensure that the best conclusion is reached;
- (ii) that it be remitted to the Head of Housing Services to review the printed material which is issued to tenants in connection with the inclusion of their homes within the Housing Capital Improvement Programme, particularly those materials provided to the elderly and otherwise vulnerable people, to ensure that in a range of key areas, the content is explicit and easily understood by recipients;
- (iii) that it be remitted to the Head of Housing Services and the Head of Service: Community Care, to develop links between the Housing and Social Work Services to allow greater emphasis on personal contact, in communicating and liaising with tenants, where this is necessary and appropriate;
- (iv) that it be remitted to the Head of Housing Services to ensure that Tenants and Residents Associations are provided on an ongoing basis with updated and relevant and appropriate information on the proposed works included within future Housing Capital Improvement Programmes;
- (v) that it be remitted to the Head of Housing Services to consider the feasibility of establishing a mobile exhibition/information unit for the purpose of providing information on Housing Capital Improvement works to tenants at the local level, this to be on a trial basis with an appropriate evaluation thereafter to inform consideration of continuation of the initiative;
- (vi) that the Head of Housing Services and the Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management continue to pursue appropriate action within their relevant service areas to further promote customer satisfaction as

a service ethos and integral part of the working culture both within the Council and on the part of contractors;

- (vii) that the Head of Housing Services, in consultation with the Head of Legal, Procurement and Regulatory Services and other officers as required, investigate and thereafter progress appropriately the potential for implementing arrangements whereby the Council, through the Single Business Unit, can take immediate action to secure completion of any outstanding/remedial works at houses where upgrading works have begun but are not completed, in the event of contractor failure, including appropriate verification arrangements; and
- (viii) that the adverse consequences arising from a tenant's refusal to have their home included within an upgrading programme or withdrawal from a programme be clearly highlighted to tenants at an early stage in the communication process.

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APPENDIX 2

REPORT ON THE REVIEW TO EXPLORE THE BACKGROUND REASONS FOR THE LEVEL OF COMPLAINTS ON CONTRACT UPGRADES TO THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING STOCK WITHIN THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN

Recommendations	Actions	Owner	Timescale
<p>Recommendation i For each individual contract to be carried out under the Housing Capital Improvement Programme, a Contract Liaison Officer be identified from within the Housing Improvement Service, who would act as a single point of contact for tenants in relation to the carrying out of capital upgrade works within their homes, the role of the officer being to deal with any issues, of any nature whatsoever, raised by the tenants either through action or by tracking processes in respect of the issue by another party, to ensure that the best conclusion is reached.</p>	Identify a Contract Liaison Officer for each Housing Capital Improvement Programme contract	Housing Asset Services Manager	April 2010
<p>Recommendation ii The Head of Housing Services to review the printed material which is issued to tenants in connection with the inclusion of their homes within the Housing Capital Improvement Programme, particularly those materials provided to the elderly and otherwise vulnerable people, to ensure that in a range of key areas, the content is explicit and easily understood by recipients.</p>	Review printed material issued to tenants in relation to the Housing Capital Improvement Programme	Head of Housing Services	May 2010
<p>Recommendation iii The Head of Housing Services and Head of Service: Community Care, to develop links between the Housing and Social Work Services to allow greater emphasis on personal contact, in communicating and liaising with tenants, where this is necessary and appropriate.</p>	Further develop links between Housing and Social Work Services in respect of tenant liaison	The Head of Housing Services Head of Service: Community Care,	April 2010
<p>Recommendation iv The Head of Housing Services to ensure that Tenants and Residents Associations are provided on an ongoing basis with updated and relevant and appropriate information on the proposed works included within future Housing Capital Improvement Programmes.</p>	Provide information on proposed future works to Tenants and Residents Associations	Head of Housing Services	April 2010
<p>Recommendation v The Head of Housing Services to consider the feasibility of establishing a mobile exhibition / information unit for the purpose of providing information of Housing Capital Improvement works to tenants at the local level, this to be on a trial basis with an appropriate evaluation thereafter to inform consideration of</p>	Conduct a feasibility study into developing a pilot mobile Housing Capital Improvement works information unit	Head of Housing Services	June 2010

continuation of the initiative.			
Recommendations	Actions	Owner	Timescale
<p>Recommendation vi</p> <p>The Head of Housing Services and the Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management continue to pursue appropriate action within their relevant service areas to further promote customer satisfaction as a service ethos and integral part of the working culture both within the Council and on the part of contractors.</p>	Put in place arrangements to further promote customer satisfaction within service	<p>Head of Housing Services</p> <p>Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management</p>	April 2010
<p>Recommendation vii</p> <p>The Head of Housing Services, in consultation with the Head of Legal, Procurement and Regulatory Services and other officers as required, investigate and thereafter progress appropriately the potential for implementing arrangements whereby the Council, through the Single Business Unit, can take immediate action to secure completion of any outstanding / remedial works at houses where upgrading works have begun but are not completed, in the event of contractor failure, including appropriate verification arrangements.</p>	Investigate the potential for the Housing Asset Service to complete outstanding and remedial works not completed due to contractor failure at houses currently being upgraded	<p>Head of Housing Services</p> <p>Head of Legal, Procurement and Regulatory Services</p>	June 2010
<p>Recommendation viii</p> <p>The adverse consequences arising from a tenant's refusal to have their home included within an upgrading programme or withdrawal from a programme be clearly highlighted to tenants at an early stage in the communication process.</p>	Put in place arrangements to better communicate to tenants at an early stage the effects of refusing or withdrawing from upgrading programmes	Head of Housing Services	May 2010