



Report of: Executive Member for Housing and Development

Meeting of:	Date	Ward(s)
Executive	26 November 2015	All

Delete as appropriate	Exempt	Non-exempt
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SUBJECT: SCAFFOLDING SCRUTINY REVIEW - EXECUTIVE MEMBER'S RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS

1 Synopsis

- 1.1 On 16 July 2015 the Executive received a report from the Housing Scrutiny Committee regarding the use of Scaffolding and Work Platforms used within the Council and by its contractors. The report provided recommendations to further improve the effective and efficient use of these systems to achieve improved value for money and minimise disruption to residents.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 To agree the Executive's response to the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee as set out in section 4 of this report.

3 Background

- 3.1 In December 2014 the Housing Scrutiny Committee commissioned a review of the current use of scaffolding and other work platforms by Housing Property Services, considering the costs, issues and pros and cons of different forms of provision.

The review ran from December 2014 until May 2015 and evidence was received from a variety of sources:

1. Presentations from Council Officers

Damian Dempsey, Group Leader – Quantity Surveyors;
Ryan Collymore, Group Leader – Contract Monitoring;

2. Site visits

Visits to several "live" scaffolding sites and discussions with the Council's capital works contractors, Breyer Group and Mears Projects;

3. Documentary evidence

Information relating to the in-house scaffolding service previously provided by the London Borough of Camden; indicative costs of establishing the Council's own scaffolding service;

4. Information from witnesses

Brian Potter, Chairman of Islington Leaseholders Association.

The outcome of the scrutiny review was 10 recommendations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency in the use of access platforms when implementing improvement schemes or general repairs and maintenance. This report will provide the Executive's response to each recommendation.

4 Response to the Recommendations

4.1 Recommendation 1 - *That the Executive seeks to minimise the use of scaffolding by Housing Property Services and encourage the use of alternative work platforms*

All recently-procured (August 2015) roofing contractors for the repairs service have the skills and ability to use the following equipment to access roof spaces:

Ladders
Mobile tower scaffold
Cherry pickers
Abseiling.

Since the TUPE transfer on 1 August 2014 the in-house repairs & maintenance team have received training in the use of ladders and the cherry picker purchased by the Council. Training has also been arranged for staff to use mobile tower scaffolding where a range of equipment is available for managers and staff to use instead of scaffolding where appropriate to do so.

Ladders – a range of ladders have been procured along with the relevant training taken place to use the TETRA ladder safe systems. This system secures the ladder to a wall ensuring staff can work safely whilst maintaining three points of contact at all times. Generally you would use other platforms where the work time would be more than half an hour.

To use mobile tower scaffolding staff have to complete a PASMA training course (Prefabricated Access Suppliers' & Manufacturers' Association). This has been arranged for all managers and trade staff for completion in October 2015.

To use a cherry picker staff have to complete the IPAF training course (*International Powered Access Federation*). The relevant staff have received this training for its efficient usage.

To abseil staff would have to complete the IRATA training course (International Rope Access Trade Association). Due to the risks involved in this type of work it is only carried out by qualified contractors; no member of the internal team will be expected to complete this training.

The Capital works team will make periodic use of the cherry picker when the access requirement allows for it to carry out pre-construction surveys, instead of using scaffolding, to ensure greater accuracy when drafting the Scope of Works required.

4.2 Recommendation 2 - *That the Executive encourage capital works contractors to use alternative work platforms by specifying in contracts that scaffolding should be minimised and used in a way which will cause the least disruption for residents*

The Capital works project team are required during the planning stage of all major works projects to demonstrate value for money in all aspects of its work and in particular in relation to access equipment to facilitate major works. In order to demonstrate value for money, it is necessary to ensure that all options for work at height access equipment have been fully explored prior to the

erection of full scaffolding.

All work at height must be carried out in accordance with the Work at Height Regulations 2005, and project specific arrangements must be detailed in the Construction Phase Plan. The Regulations set out a simple hierarchy for managing and selecting equipment for work at height. Duty holders must;

1. Avoid Work at Height where possible.
2. Use work equipment or other measures to prevent falls where working at height cannot be avoided.
3. Where the risk of a fall cannot be eliminated, use work equipment or other measures to minimise the distance and consequences of a fall.

The Regulations require duty holders to ensure:

- all work at height is subject to suitable and sufficient risk assessment.
- all work at height is properly planned and organised.
- takes account of weather conditions that could endanger health and safety.
- those involved in work at height are trained and competent.
- the location where the work at height is carried out is safe.
- equipment for work at height is appropriately inspected.
- risks from fragile surfaces are properly controlled.
- risks from falling objects are properly controlled.

The type/extent of equipment selected for work at height will depend on a number of factors including;

- Nature of work being carried out.
- Whether works are dependent on residents providing access.
- Need for transporting materials to an accessible location.
- Number of operatives working at height.
- Number of properties being worked on at one time.
- Duration of works.
- Security concerns.
- Height/Reach required.

4.3 Recommendation 3 - *That the Executive continue work to design out the need for scaffolding in Council housing*

The Capital works team is committed to designing out the need for scaffolding wherever possible by increasing the use of maintenance free materials and fixings. These include:

- Windows.
- Gutters.
- Fascia boards.
- Cladding.
- Self-finish renders.
- Designs which enable cleaning/jet-washing

Such materials and fittings reduce the need for painting and facilitate cleaning from inside. However, there will always be a need for some external repair works, i.e. concrete and brickwork repairs, the replacement of life expired components, etc.

If scaffolding is required we will undertake a cost benefit analysis and also consider the provision of permanent access facilities. These include:

- Movable access platforms (where multiple identical blocks).
- Chimney ladders.
- Cradle systems.
- Abseiling harness anchor.

– On-going repair/insurance costs of anchorage points.

4.4 Recommendation 4 - *That the Executive work to improve the scheduling of all works to minimise the time length of time scaffolding is erected for*

The Council has procured new contracts as of August 2015 with local suppliers to provide scaffolding and roofing services for general repairs and maintenance. Processes will be agreed with these suppliers to:-

1. Erect scaffolding where required within no longer than 5 working days of receiving the request.
2. Complete the hand over within 3 working days.
3. Dismantle the scaffolding no later than 5 working days after the completed works have been signed off.

Where external contractors are used for day to day repairs and maintenance providing their own scaffolding contractor to complete a repair, they are expected to follow the above working procedure.

The service is currently going through a procurement process for a single supplier of an IT repairs management system for implementation in October 2016. The specification of the new IT system has been designed to deliver a new improved automated scheduling system. Therefore removing the current manual process of allocating 60,000 job orders per year and associated delays in allocating resources to jobs.

The Capital works team carry out detailed surveys, in conjunction with our Term Partnering Contractors, of the blocks/estates to form the Scope of Works for the contracts. Both tenants and leaseholders, Estate Services and our Responsive Repairs teams are offered the opportunity of providing input at this stage.

4.5 Recommendation 5 - *That the Executive consider working in partnership with housing associations which are undertaking repair works to nearby properties to minimise disruption*

The Council will consult with housing associations and other property owners where day to day repairs have been identified at multi-agency properties to provide an effective and efficient service. It is important to note that any consultation should not delay effective repair.

4.6 Recommendation 6 - *That the Executive investigate formulating an estate-based asset management plan which assesses the access requirements of each property to guide future capital and repairs work and clarify the suitability of erecting scaffolding on each property.*

The Council records the usage of scaffolding and cherry pickers in specific registers. Each repair is risk assessed where the appropriate equipment is used to comply with health and safety. This usage of the equipment cannot be logged effectively on the current IT system, however the procurement of the new IT repairs and maintenance system will have the ability to interface with an asset management system.

4.7 Recommendation 7 - *That the Executive explore the reduction of the cost of scaffolding for capital works by specifying target prices in schedules of rates in future contracts*

Given the large value of the Capital Works Programme the OJEU* rules apply to the procurement process that the Council must and does follow. To ensure that the Council achieves the best Value For Money the Council makes use of The National Housing Federation Schedule of Rates Version 6. The contractors bidding will apply a plus or minus figure against the whole schedule when submitting their tender.

The reason the OJEU rules were introduced was to establish open, fair and transparent competitive procurement processes across the whole of the European Union and provide the same opportunity for all prospective tenderers without prejudicing or favouring one tenderer over another.

The Council is prevented from specifying target prices for any trade activity, as it will be seen by the European Union as being anti-competitive, it is therefore left up to the market to determine, i.e. individual contractors submit what they believe to be their best price.

*The European Union Procurement Directives establish the basis for public procurement rules throughout the European Union and apply to public supply, service and works contracts above prescribed financial thresholds. The purpose of the directives is to open up public procurement within the European Union and to ensure the free movement of supplies, services and works. The directives are enacted in the UK by The Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

Public projects must comply with the regulations if the value of contracts is above the prescribed financial thresholds. Aggregation rules apply to projects tendered in lots to prevent clients from avoiding the application of the regulations by simply dividing projects up into contracts that are each individually below the relevant financial threshold.

The regulations require public contracts above the financial threshold to be advertised in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). The regulations prescribe the timescales for advertising for expressions of interest and receipt of tenders which need to be built into the project programme at an early stage. If this is not done at the outset it can cause significant delays.

4.8 *Recommendation 8 - That the Executive note the negative perception that residents have of scaffolding and encourage regular communication with residents whose homes are undergoing repair and improvement works*

The difficulties associated with using scaffolding are noted. The Council carefully considered value for money for its residents when it procured new contracts as of August 2015 with local suppliers to provide scaffolding for the completion of day to day repairs and maintenance. The costs of erecting scaffold have been agreed as part of the contract using the NHF (National Housing federation) schedule of rates. No extra costs will be incurred due to the length of time a scaffold is erected at a property, except exceptionally where this is allowed for in the conditions of contract.

Where scaffolding is to be erected for the completion of day to day repairs, a letter goes to each resident that the scaffold will affect. The letter contains information about the repair, contact numbers for queries and that a scaffold is to be erected to enable completion of the repair. The following sentence has been added to the letter as of September 2015: - "please be aware that the costs of this scaffold are an agreed one off cost irrelevant of the time the scaffold is up at your home".

The Capital works team inform tenants and leaseholders of the proposed works at the pre-commencement meeting, the programme of works is discussed and the length of time any scaffolding will be erected to each block. Once the works have commenced the contractor also sends out monthly newsletters which provides information on the progress of works against the programme and informs the tenants and leaseholders when any scaffolding will be erected and struck.

4.9 *Recommendation 9 - That the Executive consider procuring a range of work platforms and technologies to facilitate responsive repair works without the use of scaffolding*

The Council has purchased a large cherry picker and the required level of staff have received the IPAF training to be able to use this. A range of ladders have been purchased and are available on work vehicles, along with the TETRA kits for staff to work safely. Mobile tower scaffolds will be purchased and available for use by staff on the completion of the PASMA training in October 2015.

The Council is currently looking at trialling the use of a trailer-mounted Nifty Lift platform for use where the cherry picker cannot access.

The Council have the ability to hire any required platform where this is a one-off requirement or the future usage would be limited.

4.10 *Recommendation 10 - That the Executive give further consideration to piloting a multi-skilled work platform team, capable of erecting scaffolding and other work platforms*

All managers and trade staff are to receive PASMA training in October 2015 that will give them the ability to erect and use a tower scaffold.

The latest procurement of contractors (August 2015) to deliver scaffolding services represents good value for money. Monitoring of the contractors is taking place to ensure they are meeting our service standards. The Executive would suggest that these recently-procured contracts continue to be monitored for their effectiveness and give further consideration to piloting its own multi-skilled platform team in the future if these contracts do not prove to be effective.

5 Implications

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no additional resources required to implement the recommendations of this report.

5.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications at this stage. Legal support and advice will be provided as required in respect of the implementation of the recommendations.

5.3 Resident Impact Assessment

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

Where the proposals in this report may have equalities implications and other implications for residents. Resident Impact Assessments (including assessment of equalities implications) will be undertaken as part of the process of developing and implementing policies and actions arising from this report.

5.4 Environmental Impact Assessment

The reduction in the use of scaffolding proposed in this report has some minor beneficial environmental impacts. Increasing the use of maintenance-free materials and fixings will reduce resource usage, particularly the use of self-finish renders, which will eliminate or reduce the need for future painting (i.e. the use of chemicals). The erection of scaffolding sometimes damages the ground on which it is erected and may also disturb biodiversity living in the walls or eaves of buildings (e.g. bats), so reducing its usage would reduce these potential impacts. There will also be a reduction in journeys made by scaffolding companies within the borough if scaffolding is used less, although this benefit will be negated in cases where the cherry picker or nifty lift has to be moved to the site instead.

A reduction in the use of scaffolding will also improve amenity for residents, who will experience less disturbance, loss of light etc.

6 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

6.1 This report details the Executive's response to the recommendations of the Housing Scrutiny Committee.

Final report clearance:



Signed by: Executive Member for Housing and Development

Date: 10/11/15

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