



Report of: **Service Director - Housing Property Services**

| Meeting of: | Date | Ward(s) |
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| Housing Scrutiny Committee | 17th October 2016 | All |

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SUBJECT: Scaffolding and Work Platforms Scrutiny Review - 12 month update

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. Subsequently, on 25 November 2015, the Executive agreed its response to the recommendations set out in the scrutiny report to further improve the effective and efficient use of these systems to achieve improved value for money and minimise disruption to residents. This report updates the Housing Scrutiny Committee on progress with the recommendations agreed by the Executive.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the progress made as set out in paragraph 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.
- 3.2 The review ran from December 2014 until May 2015 and evidence was received from a variety of sources.

3.3 Presentations from Council Officers:

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

3.4 Site visits:

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

3.5 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;

3.6 Information from witnesses:

Brian Potter, Chairman of Islington Leaseholders Association.

3.7 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. The Executive agreed its response to the recommendations in the report from the Housing Scrutiny Committee on 26 November 2015. Progress made with each of the recommendations is set out in paragraph 4 below.

4. **Recommendations and Service Update**

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.

Service update – October 2016

The Council continues to make use of all forms of Mobile Elevating Working Platforms (MEWP), including cherry pickers. The use of MEWPs assists when carrying out pre-construction surveys, which are undertaken 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.

Service update – October 2016

The Council will continue throughout the planning stages 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 will be necessary to ensure that all options for work at height access equipment have been fully explored prior to the deployment of the preferred option.

4.3 **Recommendation 3**

That the Executive continue work to design out the need for scaffolding in Council housing.

Service update – October 2016

The Council is committed to designing out the need for scaffolding and other temporary working platforms wherever possible by maximising the use of maintenance-free materials and fixings on new build projects and cyclical improvement works.

The Council has multiple types of working platforms readily available for use. Training has been provided to all staff to ensure their skill sets and health and safety requirements are met. Recently the Council has been successful in procuring a contractor who performs abseiling work. A new process has been introduced whereby scaffolds of two stories or lower are now reviewed before they are authorised. This process is to encourage operatives to look at alternative safe options before requesting a scaffold.

4.4 Recommendation 4

That the Executive work to improve the scheduling of all works to minimise the length of time scaffolding is erected for.

Service update – October 2016

The Council continues to carry out detailed surveys, in conjunction with our Term Partnering contractors, on the blocks/estates to form the Scope of Works for each of the individual Task Orders. All stakeholders, including tenants, leaseholders and our Estate Services and 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.

Service update – October 2016

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.

Service update – October 2016

The Council records the usage of scaffolding and cherry pickers in specific registers. Each repair is risk assessed so that the appropriate equipment is used to comply with health and safety regulations. A new IT system for repairs is currently being developed that will enable the usage of access equipment to be logged electronically and allow an effective interface with our 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.

Service update – October 2016

The Council will ensure that all options are fully explored when re-procuring further contracts. The Council, like all other public sector organisations within the United Kingdom, are bound by the rules of OJEU, which require all contracts with a value greater than five million Euros to be advertised across

the EU. Given the outcome of the June referendum there is unlikely to be any change to these rules until after the UK formally departs from the EU. The Council will actively look at any new changes to the Procurement Rules placed upon public sector organisations by the UK government post-Brexit and will ensure that we use all means available to maximise the benefits to all stakeholders within the borough.

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.

Service update – October 2016

The Council continues to keep residents informed of proposed capital works at pre-commencement meetings, where work programmes and the length of time any temporary working platform will be erected to each block are discussed. Once the works have commenced the contractor also sends out monthly newsletters which provide information on the progress of works against the programme and inform residents when the temporary working platforms will be erected and dismantled.

On responsive repairs, the Council has adopted a new protocol whereby if scaffold is required a 'Scaffold Notification Letter' is hand-delivered to all affected properties. The letter provides appropriate details i.e. dates and contact details. A dedicated 'chase up' phone line has been introduced that allows tenants to obtain information more easily and efficiently.

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.

Service update – October 2016

The Council has increased monitoring of scaffolds in order to minimise the length of time scaffold is erected, as well as ensuring compliance with Health and Safety regulations. A new protocol has been introduced to ensure works are undertaken as soon as possible following the erection of scaffolds and that they are removed at the earliest opportunity. The Council has invested in 'Scaffold Inspection' training for all Team Leaders to ensure there are no delays around scaffold inspections.

The Council has purchased a large cherry picker and a range of other access equipment. The Council also has the ability to hire any required temporary working platforms. The Council incorporated a ladder access and edge protection inspection regime in its 2015/16 planned maintenance programme. This work will limit and in some cases eliminate the need for scaffold. We are again including this programme in 2016/17 as it delivered positive outcomes in terms of future costs and safety.

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.

Service update – October 2016

The Council is committed to increasing the skill-sets of our workforce, with direct works operatives being trained to operate on a multi-skilled basis through a three-four year training programme. A roofing module is included within the training course, covering roofing, associated roofing works and the erection of access equipment (other than scaffold erection). Our aim is to have a multi-skilled workforce that will enable us to carry out a higher percentage of first time fix repairs.

5. Implications

5.1 Financial Implications:

The thrust of the ten recommendations is around minimising the use of scaffolding and the length of time it is erected and where possible using alternative platforms/access equipment, whilst ensuring that health & safety protocols are adhered to.

It is not possible, at this stage, to quantify the financial impact of these recommendations. It is anticipated that some cost savings are likely to be realised but it should be noted that some alternatives to scaffolding could prove more expensive.

Any savings realised would be available for re-investment as part of the housing capital programme.

5.2 Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications at this stage. Legal advice will be provided as required in the re-procurement of contracts.

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. 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.

In addition, increasing the use of maintenance-free materials and fixings will reduce resource usage, whilst 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 The Committee is asked to note progress made with implementation of the recommendations.

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

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Date: 5 October 2016

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