

## **2009/10-Housing Capital Programme Explained**

### **1. New Build**

#### **a) New Build Houses**

The first phase of the Council's New Build Housing commenced in October 2008, with 248 homes being constructed over 4 sites. The first handovers of the properties took place in late August 2009 and it is anticipated that all of the phase one homes will be completed by summer 2010.

The second phase, to complete the balance of the programme, was tendered in March 2009 and it is planned to select a preferred development partner by October 2009. The project will involve approximately double to the number of homes built in phase one over several sites with completion expected in 2012.

#### **b) RSL Development Programme.**

This budget is to work in partnership with Communities Scotland and RSL development partners to build more affordable houses for rent as reflected in the West Lothian Local Housing Strategy. The Council's Strategic Housing Investment Plan (SHIP) is prepared annually and is produced in association with a number of development partners to report on progress connected with affordable housing as well as identifying new development opportunities. Annual Government investment in supporting the RSL Development programme in West Lothian has seen a steady increase in recent years with the average annual expenditure typically in the region of £10 million.

### **2 Scottish Housing Quality Standard Related Work**

#### **a) Internal Scottish Housing Quality Standard Work**

Work is ongoing to complete the below works to those houses where the Kitchen and Bathroom Programme took place before the SHQS was incorporated into the programme works. They are being done in the original Kitchen and Bathroom programme order.

This reversion to the start of the programme began in 2008, where the original year 1 was completed and original year 2 is underway and year 3 will be completed by 2010. The remainder of the houses were completed under the Kitchen and Bathroom programme in its years 4 and 5.

After this programme is finished all future work of this type will revert to maintenance.

The main elements of work included in this programme are listed below: work is only done where repair or upgrade is required.

#### Element

Removal of Lead in Water Supply	
Exterior Lighting to Doors	(fit to back and front doors)
Handrails	(fit to 2 or more stairs)
Electrical Distribution System	(safety check and repair)
Dampness	(penetrating or serious)

Front Doors	(repair, security, draughtproofing)
Back Doors	(repair, security, draughtproofing)
Common Windows	(repair/renewal)
Common Doors	(repair/renewal)
Electrical Consumer Units	(upgrade)
Windows	(repair, security)
Heating Upgrades	(health and safety, efficiency)

## **b) External Scottish Housing Quality Standard Work**

### **External SHQS**

The SHQS surveys are now complete and we have been reviewing the outcomes. Having detailed information on a house-by-house basis makes us aware of the need to address individual houses, where, in the past, we have worked on a street-by-street basis. We are however taking note of concentrations of houses in such conditions and where there are a significant proportion of a street that fall within the condition measure, then we would repair all the houses in the street requiring it. Set out below is a summary of the assessment methodology.

We have prioritised roofs for the simple reason that a failed roof inevitably leads to water penetration and rapid internal deterioration and tenant distress, where failed render does not. We are however aware of the deleterious effect of the failure of render on the aesthetic of the house, the street and the area.

We have taken the approach of initially prioritising roofs with a limited remaining life and which are also in poor repair condition. These will be replaced with new coverings.

We have then prioritised houses where there is both a level of disrepair to both the roof and the render, and required repairs will be carried out to both.

Because of the difficulty in getting access for external lighting under other programmes, we will carry out the fitting of these crucial SHQS measures wherever we can get access under any other programme, including External SHQS. Wherever there is a requirement for handrails, we will also do this.

We have then assessed render alone, where the surveys have indicated that repair will be needed in the next ten years, but the roofs require no work or minimal work, but physical inspection would be made at the time and any required repairs carried out.

The programme is therefore made of identified addresses requiring replacement of major elements, and major and significant repairs in the immediate location are also be carried out at the same time. We also acknowledge that it is probable that some houses not in the top priority groups will deteriorate extraordinarily fast, for various reasons, and we will ensure that these are also able to be included in the programme after inspection.

In 2009, therefore we are carrying out works to some of the highest concentrations of disrepair and to houses in the poorest condition. Some of the houses have been referred for additional assessment through a feasibility study that will look at the affordability and the effectiveness of repairs, and consider whether this would be the best use of limited resources. A list of the projects at the top of the order and those referred for feasibility are listed in the address files.

## **c) Electrical Checks, Upgrades and Rewires**

### **Electrical Safety**

Work to repair extensively deteriorated systems in Bents and Blackburn is practically complete.

Ongoing surveys by the council's electricians and their partners have identified some significant problems in the electrical installations in a number of our houses. The most important of these are earthing issues and asbestos in consumer units.

In the recent past we have been successful in engaging ScottishPower to carry out remedial capital improvements on their installations allowed us to focus on internal issues in the houses where problems are apparent. Recently however, ScottishPower have become intransigent and service quality has seriously declined. Building Services are taking this up at a senior level in ScottishPower, and may require to contact the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), as this has serious implications.

Due to an issue raised by the HSE on the risk to workmen continually working on consumer units which contain asbestos as a fire proofing material, we have revised the programme of investment.

The 2009 budget is expended in supporting the following works:

- Replacement of consumer units containing asbestos
- Fitting of External lights to meet SHQS
- 'Periodic Testing' of the electrical safety of the homes.

The consumer units are replaced with RCD protection which is a significant increase in the protection level provided to tenants and also mean that a fault in a system, even a major fault should not leave tenants without power to the whole house, maintaining essential access to lighting and power in some parts of the house. It is also expected that they should also serve to reduce the need for overnight repair, as tenants will have access to power and therefore at least mobile heating and also to lighting, which will allow inspections to wait until working hours.

External lights are fitted at both front and back doors of individual and common doors.

Small repairs arising from the 'Periodic Testing' surveys of the electrical installation will be reported back into the responsive repairs service. Any urgent issues are addressed at the time. Substantial issues requiring to be done over the short to medium term will be carried out under this budget over that period.

Our programme of full and partial rewires will continue once the consumer units have been replaced, expected to be this year. The programme remains that within ten years we will move onto rewiring houses due to corroded conduit, which act as the permanent earth route to around 170 homes in South Park Armadale and Philip Avenue in Boghall.

We will have electrical surveys of the homes in Alderbank, Briarbank and Burnbank and others of the same age and type, which are also exhibiting an excretion of copper phthalate from the wiring. These will be the next phase of rewires.

## **d) Programmed Drainage**

## **Programme Drainage**

This budget has been increased for 2009 over past years. This has been done to recognise the current level of customer reports of drainage related issues.

It is intended to ensure that all houses are completely free of dampness from whatever external source and this budget will support those direct works. Housing will continue to liaise with External Environment to identify priorities and are looking to produce a long term investment plan over the next few months and have commissioned the flood prevention office to survey all areas of concern and work with housing strategy to prioritise investment.

At present the priorities assessed for action in this year are the Loch Scheme in Whitburn where detailed investigations will need to be carried out to assess a solution to endemic flooding problem; the upgrading of a scheme in Bowyett, Torphicen and studies and remedial work in Mayfield; Armadale; Polbeth; Parkhead in West Calder; and in areas of Fauldhouse.

Housing Strategy and Highways (Flood Management) will produce a new five year programme, to liaise with General Fund flood protection budgets and to reflect the increases in the Housing Capital budget, which will be prepared for Council consideration.

### **3. External Upgrading**

#### **d) Garage Upgrades**

2009 sees the start of a two-year programme, based on increased garage rental income, to upgrade the garages and garage areas, as previously agreed by Council in February 2008. This includes refurbishment and demolition of existing garages. Detailed programmes on the 1<sup>st</sup> phase have been released with follow up programmes being issued throughout the two-year programme.

#### **e) Environmental Improvements**

This budget supports local environmental programmes and such proposals includes external painting, fencing, gutter cleaning, and improvements to bin stores and door entry systems and general environmental works. This work supports all other work in improving the local areas around capital works and in areas of poor visual impact. The programme is delivered in detailed consultation with tenants and elected members.

## **Homelessness**

Currently West Lothian Council own premises for Open door/Women's Aid and have recently entered into a five year lease on premises at Quentin Court for Castle Rock/Edinvar Housing Association. Quentin Court Hostel is used by our housing need service to accommodate homeless applicants on a temporary basis.

West Lothian Council is currently considering an approach to purchase Quentin Court Hostel and carry out various project works to both the Open Door/Women's Aid and Quentin Court premises to meet the Disability Discrimination Act and Regulation seven of the unsuitable accommodation order relating to sharing of facilities. Newlands House hostel which Housing and Building Services manage on behalf of Children and Families Service will also require consideration in respect of this order.

Blackburn Homeless Unit has development potential to increase it's accommodation units and also incorporate an Assessment Centre and Night Shelter facility, by extending the properties and pending a linkage between both properties. This will maximise current site development and assist towards homelessness 2010 target.

## **2. Energy Efficiency**

### **a) Energy Efficiency**

The previous arrangements for carrying out energy efficiency upgrades has been reviewed and this budget is now to be managed by Building Service in supporting the external upgrading contracts.

It is also expected that this allocation will be able to take advantage of the new CERT (Carbon Emissions Reduction Target) grant system, which can enhance the Council's own investment. As with the previous grants scheme (The Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC)) the allocation is used to pump prime initiatives from the Scottish Government such as the New Warm Deal. It is however noted that delays in implementing the CERT scheme from OFGEM and the Government mean that we cannot be sure of when, or indeed if, the scheme will be in place this year. There is also a partnership arrangement with Scottish and Southern Energy, which attracts additional grant funding. Local energy efficiency schemes will continue to be carried out, prioritising households in fuel poverty, in consultation with the local offices and the Advice Shop. The contract of these works is being re-tendered and will be managed by Building Services.

### **b) Central Heating**

The replacement of gas heating and boilers is based on assessment by the Council's gas heating Manager and engineers. Currently the majority of planned replacements are due to the inability to maintain boilers due to the unavailability of parts, through obsolescence

A number of houses are still being identified that have defective flues and these are obviously a health and safety issue is addressed when found.

In common with previous years, significant expenditure is made on systems that fail in use and are uneconomic to repair or are identified as at risk or unserviceable at the time of the annual service. The list of addresses in the planned element of the programme is listed in the appendix.

### **c) Latent Installations**

This allocation has been maintained within the capital budget to allow installation of heating and doors and windows where a previous tenant had refused access to allow the works to be carried out at the time of a previous contract.

## **3. Miscellaneous**

### **a) Deans South & Contingencies**

This allocation is for ongoing maintenance of the site and empty houses, and contribution to the acquisition of a small number of houses where owners have agreed to sell to Castle Rock/Edinvar Housing Association. As yet there is no agreement on a long-term plan for Deans South and this may require additional budget provision.

### **b) Aids and Adaptations**

Aids and adaptations are assessed by Occupational Therapists in Social Work and are carried out on an individual requirement basis. There is therefore no predetermined programme of works. Funding for this work is allocated from the Housing Capital budget.

In 2002, the impact of the Kitchen and Bathroom programme created a noticeable increase in the number of aids and adaptations requiring to be provided. Additionally the Home Safety schemes also have the effect of people staying longer in their homes and this also has an impact. This ongoing enhanced allocation has been continued to allow for these increases.

### **c) Asbestos Removal**

Guidance from the Health and Safety Executive gives clear direction on the need to address asbestos in the housing stock in its function as a workplace for our workmen.

We are ahead of the LA curve on compliance, and are confident that our management paradigm is the best approach.

We now have an intranet database, which contains all the survey results of the presence of asbestos, and its condition in each location and this is managed by Property Management to ensure that all current standards and procedures are met.

The primary purpose is to allow for works to be carried out wherever the material would be likely to be disturbed in the course of other works, and while this was previously mainly the kitchen and bathroom programme, but, moving forward, the budget is likely to be expended mainly in support of the roofing replacements where asbestos is often found in high level soffits and barges.

Currently the budget is also supporting the removal of electrical consumer units in houses which contain asbestos, which was a potential risk to workmen opening the case.

The budget also allows for asbestos works and reinstatements identified by other routes.

#### **d) Legionella Upgrades**

Further guidance from the Health and Safety Executive has given direction on the assessment of the risk of the Legionella Bacillus being present in stored water in premises that share water tanks.

This budget allows for the maintenance of a risk assessment regime of legionella in the housing stock and in work arising. This work is managed by Property Services. Surveys focus on areas of shared storage and supply and sheltered housing initially, and will identify any house types where work may be required and then design and implement any necessary improvements. This budget also allows for upgrade and prevention works.

#### **e) Sheltered Housing**

This is for planned development and upgrading work in sheltered housing complexes

#### **f) Feasibility Surveys**

This allocation supports detailed engineering reports on structure, hydrology or geology.

#### **g) Play Areas**

External Environment determines priorities for upgrading or renewal in consultation with local communities.

#### **h) Home Safety Service**

This was formally the Community Alarm Scheme, but now involves an upgraded package of smart technology. Experience to date has shown that there are benefits for the older population in using Smart Technology. When working with vulnerable client groups these technologies have been shown to assist in provide a safer and more secure long-term home environment.

#### **i) Home Security for Pensioners**

The scheme began in spring 2000. Applicants select a package of measures appropriate to their needs from a menu. Options include additional locks, external lighting, door viewer, door chain, window locks and door intercom system. Each home is surveyed to identify possible problems after which it is programmed for installation. To date approximately 5,500 homes have had free security measures installed under this scheme and approximately half these are council houses.