

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL
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

Report by the Members of the
Governance & Scrutiny Committee

February 2010

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EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

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 Governance and Scrutiny Committee

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Governance and Scrutiny Committee, at its Annual Workshop held on 24 January 2008, 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, and the Committee on 14 March and 27 June 2008 approved the scoping paper for the review and the workplan, respectively. Subsequently, the Committee, on 13 March 2009, approved an updated scoping paper and, on 20 November 2009, approved a further amended workplan.
- 1.2** In agreeing to undertake this review, the Committee had regard to the perceived levels of complaints from tenants in relation to upgrading works carried out at Council houses under the Housing Capital Improvement Programme; and instances where contractor failure had given rise to inconvenience/ disruption to tenants which had resulted in complaints.

2. THE REVIEW

2.1 The Review Process

- 2.1.1** Following the decision to proceed with this review, the Committee received an awareness raising presentation by the Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management on 18 June 2008, which provided an overview of the nature and level of complaints received during the financial years 2006/07 and 2007/08, and suggested potential areas for action and improvement.
- 2.1.2** As a result of discussion arising from the presentation, a range of issues were identified which it was considered may have a bearing on the level of complaints, including issues relating to quality of work, contract monitoring, tenant liaison, the role of Housing Service officers, communication, price/ best value, contractual arrangements and complaint handling.
- 2.1.3** As agreed by the Governance and Scrutiny Committee at the Annual Workshop held on 29 January 2009, the review was subsequently rescheduled for the 2009/10 year, with amended scoping papers and review programmes having been approved by Committee as indicated in paragraph 1.1 above.
- 2.1.4** A further presentation was given to Members by the Project Delivery Manager, Asset Improvement Service, on 26 June 2009, again setting out the relevant

issues associated with this topic, and including an update on measures implemented over the preceding year to reduce the number of complaints arising. The presentation again included suggestions for future action to continue the improvements which had been achieved over the year.

2.2 Terms of Reference

2.2.1 The Terms of Reference for this review were:

- to evaluate the existing arrangements;
- to examine the reasons for the level of complaints regarding upgrades to Council housing stock;
- to address the reasons for delays which have occurred in completing housing stock modernisation/upgrades under the Housing Capital Improvement Programme where a problem had arisen during the course of the works.

2.3 Desired Outcomes

2.3.1 The desired outcomes for the review were:

- to dramatically reduce the level of complaints from tenants;
- to advance joint working between contractors/Council to avoid disruption to tenants;
- to achieve improvements in service delivery in line with best value and raise the Council's profile.

3. CURRENT EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL POSITION

3.1 The Council currently has in place extensive provisions and protocols in relation to those areas of activity which might be considered to have a bearing/impact on levels of complaints/reports from tenants in relation to works carried out under the Housing Capital Improvement Programme, viz:- contractual arrangements, monitoring, inspection of contract works, the provision of information and documentation to tenants, complaints/report handling and resolution, liaison between different Service areas and Construction (Design and Management) Regulations. The documentation associated with these aspects is extensive, and sample documents were made available to the Committee during the review and are listed in detail within Appendix I to this report as referred to in paragraph 4.1.1 below.

3.2 With regard to the current level and nature of complaints, the comparative position between 2008/09 and 2009/10 is set out within Appendix II.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Documents/Evidence

4.1.1 Following the awareness raising presentation on 26 June 2009, Members were issued with a range of documentation to provide relevant background information on current processes. A detailed list of the documents issued is

provided at Appendix I. Also circulated was a copy of the report by the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services to Cabinet on 22 April 2009 entitled "Progress Report - Cross-Cutting Best Value Service Review of Property Maintenance Services".

4.1.2 Following a site visit to houses in Auchinleck and the Customer Support Unit at Lugar on 21 October 2009 (ref para 5.1) copies of Active Respond Reports for the gas central heating and the kitchen/bathroom rewiring contracts were issued, which provided an indication of the nature of some of the complaints dealt with by the Unit relative to these works.

4.1.3 Furthermore, to inform consideration by Members at their final review meeting on 21 January 2010 (ref Section 4.2), the following items were issued, namely:-

- analysis of customer complaints (Appendix II);
- benchmarking information (to provide comparisons with other authorities) (Appendix III); and
- summary of responses to contractors' questionnaire (Appendix IV).

4.2 Consultation

4.2.1 Consultation, in the form of a questionnaire survey, was issued to the family group of authorities, and responses were received from three Councils. An analysis of the responses received is provided at Appendix III.

4.2.2 Consultation, in the form of a questionnaire survey, was issued to a range of contractors. A limited number of returns were received and a summary of the responses is provided at Appendix IV.

4.2.3 Two Focus Groups were held. The first, on 27 October 2009, was for the purpose of consulting with representatives of tenants and community organisations, and the second, on 1 December 2009, was for the purpose of consulting directly with tenants. Notes of the outcomes of the Focus Groups are provided at Appendix V.

5. SITE VISIT

5.1 A site visit took place on 21 October 2009 which allowed Members the opportunity to view the four properties at Nos 34, 38, 41 and 42 Cameron Drive, Auchinleck which were at various stages of having the kitchen, bathroom and rewiring upgrade contract carried out; and to visit the Customer Support Section at the Council offices, Lugar, which handles complaints and reports received from tenants relating to the carrying out of contract upgrading works. A note of the site visit is provided at Appendix VI.

6. WITNESSES

6.1 An invitation was extended to the Office of the Scottish Housing Regulator for an Officer to be involved in the review process in the role of external witness. However, this proved not to be possible.

- 6.2** Internal witnesses, being the Head of Housing Services (in respect of his own Service related interests and also representing the Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services) and the Asset Manager (representing the Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management) had the opportunity to input directly into the Committee's considerations at the final review meeting held on 21 January 2010.

7. CONSIDERATION OF EVIDENCE

- 7.1** Members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee, at the final review meeting held on 21 January 2010, had the opportunity to consider all of the evidence gathered and to formulate conclusions and recommendations in respect of the review which would then be presented to members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee at their next meeting. To assist in their considerations, Members were provided with a briefing note identifying the issues raised relative to the review during the preceding stages, to supplement the range of other documents/evidence, consultation responses etc as referred to above.
- 7.2** At the final review meeting on 21 January 2010, the Head of Housing Services also provided an overview of progress towards development of the Single Business Unit which will bring together the existing Housing and Building and Works Services.

8. CONCLUSIONS

Having considered the information and evidence presented and ingathered during the review process, and on the basis of this, the Committee reached conclusions in respect of relevant matters, as set out below.

8.1 Work Programme/Current Arrangements

- 8.1.1** Members acknowledged the significant scale of works carried out under the Housing Capital Improvement Programme each year, and that a large proportion of the work undertaken is of a type which, by nature, will result in significant disruption to tenants' homes, particularly in respect of the combined central heating/kitchen and bathroom refurbishment scheme and that any analysis of levels of complaints from tenants needs to be viewed within this context.

8.2 Current Levels Of Complaints

- 8.2.1** As confirmed by information presented during the review process, there has been a significant reduction in the level of complaints from tenants in respect of contract works between 2008/09 and 2009/10. Furthermore, broad analysis of the data available on complaints indicates that a significant proportion of reports received by the Customer Support Unit from tenants in relation to contract works relate to matters other than complaints arising from

dissatisfaction with contract works, eg requests for information, operating guidance, snagging etc.

- 8.2.2** The Committee also acknowledged the contribution which is made to addressing the level of complaints by ongoing development work directed towards remedying unanticipated design faults to ensure that such problems do not re-occur in future years, with a consequential impact upon the potential for complaints. Similarly, there was recognition of the rationalisation of the specification of fittings and equipment provided under upgrading contracts which also bring clear benefits in promoting the quality of installation and ease of future repairs/maintenance. A prime example is in respect of the specification of only one type of central heating boiler over the last few years and this approach is already yielding benefits.

8.3 Benchmarking

- 8.3.1** It was recognised that, on the basis of benchmarking returns, East Ayrshire Council compares favourably with other authorities in relation to contract upgrading works, in terms of the scale of works, methods and practices, and levels of complaints and processes for dealing with same.

8.4 Liaison Officer

- 8.4.1** It was considered that there would be considerable merit and value for tenants in having a single point of contact for any issues, of any nature whatsoever, which may arise in connection with the carrying out of contract works at their houses. Accordingly, consideration should be given to an officer from within the Housing Improvement Service being identified as the Liaison Officer for tenants in respect of a particular contract and this information be clearly provided to tenants at the earliest point of contact with them. This approach would sufficiently enable a single point of contact for tenants, without the need to create a dedicated "Tenant Liaison Officer" post. The role of the Liaison Officer would be to take on board any issues raised with them by tenants relating to the carrying out of contract upgrading works and take whatever action or make such enquiries as may be required to provide a conclusive response to the tenant on the issue at hand or, at least, to track progress in respect of the issue by another party, to ensure that a response is provided and the best conclusion reached.

8.5 Communication

- 8.5.1** In the course of the review, Members noted the extensive processes which are currently in place for communication with, and the provision of information to, tenants, from initial intimation of inclusion of their home within the Capital Programme, through the various stages leading up to, and during the carrying out of works and completion and snagging. However, it was considered that there is scope to further improve communication with tenants, particularly with elderly and otherwise vulnerable people. Printed material should be reviewed to ensure that content is easily understood by all recipients, is explicit in terms of the nature and effects of the works to be carried out and clearly sets out the

level of support/assistance available from the Council and the contractor at the various stages of the works; and the timing of the issue of correspondence/documentation to tenants should be appropriate and provide sufficient notice where necessary. Important aspects of early communication with tenants are the provision of contact details for the Council and the contractor; the level and nature of support/assistance available from the Council and the contractor in the course of the contract works being carried out; the estimated time for works within the house and the further arrangements in the event that works overrun the schedule; and details of any warranty arrangements which may apply to the works to be carried out and contact details.

- 8.5.2** There should be greater emphasis on personal contact with tenants where this is necessary, again particularly with regard to elderly and vulnerable people and, it was envisaged that there was potential for links to be further developed between the Housing and Social Work services to promote provision of a suitable service.
- 8.5.3** Consideration should also be given to providing information directly to Tenants and Residents Associations on the forthcoming five-year Housing Capital Programme in order that the Associations can be in a position to disseminate relevant information to tenants where they are requested.
- 8.5.4** It was considered that there is significant merit and value to tenants being able to locally access relevant information on the contract upgrading works to be carried out to the house which they occupy within the larger improvement programme. This would assist the Council in its communication processes with tenants and it is essential that the information is made available for tenants at as local a level as possible and at a time which is convenient. Accordingly, consideration should be given to establishing a mobile exhibition/information unit for this purpose, on a trial basis, with evaluation and assessment of the trial to be undertaken to inform consideration of the potential for subsequent continuation of this initiative. The mobile unit would be staffed by relevant officers of the Council including the identified contract Liaison Officer.

8.6 Customer Satisfaction

- 8.6.1** Members acknowledged the processes in place, and the commitment of the relevant staff towards customer satisfaction and, in furtherance of this aim, recognised that there needs to be a continuing and developing focus within the relevant service delivery areas to promoting customer satisfaction as a service ethos and integral part of the working culture both within the Council and on the part of contractors.
- 8.6.2** In general terms, it was considered that increased levels of personal contact with/interaction between, relevant officers of the Council and tenants could make a considerable enhancement to the tenant's level of satisfaction, through increasing tenants' perceived recognition and appreciation by the Council of the problem they have.

8.7 Contractor Failure

- 8.7.1** There is a need to ensure that the Council's response to contractor failure during the carrying out of contract works is wholly effective in order to ensure that any disruption to tenants resulting therefrom is kept to a minimum. It was recognised that the standard contractual arrangements currently provide that contractors are legally required to rectify instances of contract failure in relation to, eg quality, specification, progress. However, in cases of severe and persistent failure or in the event of the complete failure of the contractor as a trading operation, in the course of the carrying out of a contract, it was considered that the best solution would be for the Council to be able to step in with immediate effect to secure the completion of any outstanding/remedial works at houses where upgrading works had begun but were not completed, thereby ensuring the least possible level of disruption and inconvenience to the tenants of the houses concerned. It was anticipated that such an approach would require the taking of photographic and any other appropriate evidence to confirm the state and stage of works at the point of failure. The Head of Housing Services, in consultation with the Head of Legal, Procurement and Regulatory Services and other officers as appropriate, should be asked to investigate progressing towards such arrangements. Beyond this, it would be expected that remaining works under an affected contract, to houses at which works had not commenced, would be rescheduled within the overall Housing Capital Programme.

8.8 Single Business Unit

- 8.8.1** The Committee endorsed the work currently in progress in moving towards the introduction of a Single Business Unit, incorporating the current Housing and Building and Works Services and recognised the potential benefits which the introduction of the Unit and revised organisational/management arrangements could bring to the delivery of the Housing Capital Improvement Programme in terms of improved performance and, as a consequence, lower levels of complaints.
- 8.8.2** With specific regard to the arrangements referred to above relating to contractor failure, and whilst recognising that the Single Business Unit will be operating at full working capacity, it would be expected that there would be flexibility and opportunity to pick up works at short notice where required, given the range of capital and maintenance work and the anticipated skills and trades mix which will exist within the Unit.

8.9 Tenants' Refusals/Withdrawal

- 8.9.1** At the Focus Group meeting held on 27 October 2009, tenants' representatives suggested that tenants should not be allowed to exclude their homes from programmed upgrading works or to alter their choice of fittings etc after having signed off for the works; and, further, that a financial penalty could be levied on tenants for withdrawing from an upgrade programme at a late stage, having previously agreed to be included, bearing in mind the cost

which would have been incurred by the Council in preparatory work, manufacture of fittings etc.

- 8.9.2** Whilst acknowledging the views expressed by tenants' representatives on this issue, it was recognised that there may be a range of personal, social or other reasons giving rise to tenants' refusals/withdrawals, and it was further considered that the potential for tenant's refusals or withdrawals would be minimised through proper and effective application of the due processes and management of the relationship between tenants and the Council and the contractor, particularly having regard to the aspects highlighted previously relative to improved communication, liaison, customer satisfaction, contractor failure and the introduction of the Single Business Unit. Ultimately, the Council has legal authority to gain entry to its housing stock for certain purposes, and tenants have a reciprocal legal obligation, and this should be highlighted to tenants at an early stage, together with the adverse consequences arising from a refusal or withdrawal, both for the Council in relation to contract administration and meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard, and current/future tenants of the property.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1** 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.

February 2010
SN/FM

APPENDIX I
List of Documents Issued

0 Pre Contract

- 0.1 Building Warrant Application
- 0.2 Application for Planning Permission

1 Standard Contract Documents

- 1.1 Standard Building Control Guide for use in Scotland
- 1.2 Tender Document (list of documents included below)
 - Form of Tender
 - Instruction to Tenderers on Completion of Form of Tender
 - Declaration of Non-Collusion
 - Summary
 - Abstract of Conditions
 - Fluctuations, Clause 4.21 Option A (Contribution, Levy and Tax Fluctuations)
 - List of Sub-Contractors
 - Membership of NICEIC or ECA of Scotland
 - Membership of Gas Safe
 - Membership of IHPE or HVCA Scotland
 - Contractor Attendance to Defects
 - Appendix 1 - Contractors Design Portion (CPD)
 - Security Statement
 - Contractors Insurance Questionnaire
 - Preliminaries
- 1.3 Invitation to Tender Letter
- 1.4 Tender Record Sheet Memo To Administration
- 1.5 Bill of Quantities
- 1.6 Site Direction
- 1.7 Contract Instruction
- 1.8 Payment Certificate
- 1.9 Final Account

2 Adjoining Owners

- 2.1 Standard Letter to Adjoining Owner
- 2.2 Procedures

3 Progress Reports

- 3.1 Copy of Progress Minutes (Private Contractor)
- 3.2 Copy of Progress Minutes (Building and Works)
- 3.3 Contractor Performance Sheet
- 3.4 Clerk of Works Report (Blank and Complete)
- 3.5 Housing Investment Programme Monitoring Spreadsheet

4 Tenant Information

- 4.1 Tenant Notification Letter from Housing (various contracts)
- 4.2 Guides for Tenants from Housing (various contracts)
- 4.3 Leaflets Distributed to Tenant from AIS (various contracts)
- 4.4 Customer Feedback Survey

5 Complaint/Repair Breakdown

- 5.1 Report of Repairs Reported
- 5.2 Weekly Report from Respond
- 5.3 Analysis of Complaints by Type (copy to follow)

6 Kitchen Survey Correspondence

- 6.1 Letter to Tenant Arranging Survey
- 6.2 Letter to Tenant Enclosing Layout Plan, Colour Selections and 3D Plan
- 6.3 Memo to Building and Works Enclosing Delivery Note
- 6.4 Letter to Tenant - Not Surveyed
- 6.5 Letter to Tenant - Kitchen Refusal

7 Social Work

- 7.1 Process for Ramps in Local Authority Property

8 Completion

- 8.1 Practical Completion
- 8.2 Partial Possession

9 Construction (Design and Management) Regulations

- 9.1 Memo to Project Safety Officer
- 9.2 Memo to Building and Works
- 9.3 Letter to HSE Enclosing F10 Form
- 9.4 CDM Forms (A-B)
- 9.5 Pre-Construction Health and Safety Information

APPENDIX II



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

COMPLAINTS ANALYSIS

During the visit made to the customer support unit currently at Asset Improvement Service, Lugar, members requested analysis of the most prevalent reasons for complaint recorded under the Respond complaint management software.

The results of analysis are set out graphically and are attached for each of the main work streams. It has been possible to incorporate comparison between last financial years completed programme (being the baseline for this review topic), and the results of the completions to date under the current financial years programme.

For each of these, a commentary on each of the most prevalent items on the analysis graphs is set out hereunder.

ANALYSIS

Graph 1: GAS CENTRAL HEATING

Boiler failure is the highest complaint. Underlying this was an identified design failure whereby an internal soft wall pipe leaked. Building & Works pursued that matter back to the preferred boiler supplier manufacturer under the Councils supply chain arrangements. Within this category complaints were registered which on inspection was due to insufficient credits on card payment meters.

Graph 2: KITCHEN REFURBISHMENT

This table amalgamates work done to heating installations under the kitchen replacement programme (indicated "heating", together with works to kitchen replacement, bathroom replacement and rewiring (indicated "kitchen").

The most prevalent complaint relates to electrical works (full and partial rewiring). Within this complaint, a large proportion related to nuisance tripping of RCCD protection at the new main boards due to faulty appliances. Where upgrades were carried out, changing faceplates and appliances, a number of complaints were generated due to the location of outlets and appearance against existing wall surfaces.

In addition there were a significant number of complaints relative to the effect upon existing decoration.

Graph 3: DOORS

Complaints were mainly related to doors needing to be adjusted after initial bedding in of hinges and ironmongery.

Graph 4: ROOFS

The roofing analysis did not indicate a pattern of anything other than a general level of remedial works being required.

Reasons for Complaints in Housing Improvement Programme 2008/09 and 2009/10 (to date)

1) Respond Report Gas Central Heating

	Gas Installations 2008	Gas Installations 2009 (to date)
Damage to decoration	4	0
Control failure (Heating)	19	0
Gas leak (Heating)	3	0
Pressure drop (Heating)	30	1
Radiator problem (Heating)	51	9
Boiler failure (Heating)	542	86
Time-clock failure (Heating)	19	16
Water leak (Heating)	85	29
Hot water failure (Heating)	2	0
Joinerwork Issue	30	3
Electrical problem	30	3
Plasterwork repairs	35	10
	850	157

2) Respond Report Kitchen Refurbishment

	Kitchen Refurb 2008	Kitchen Refurb 2009 (to date)
Bathroom Fitments	38	11
Control failure (Heating)	41	10
Gas leak (Heating)	0	2
Pressure drop (Heating)	35	3
Radiator problem (Heating)	46	7
System failure (Heating)	20	15
Water leak (Heating)	3	5
Hot Water failure (Heating)	20	0
Joinerwork (Kitchen)	64	26
Electrical problem (Kitchen)	43	35
Tiling (Kitchen)	41	21
Water leak (Kitchen)	99	27
Décor / Plasterwork (Kitchen)	57	19
Electrical problem	94	6
	601	187

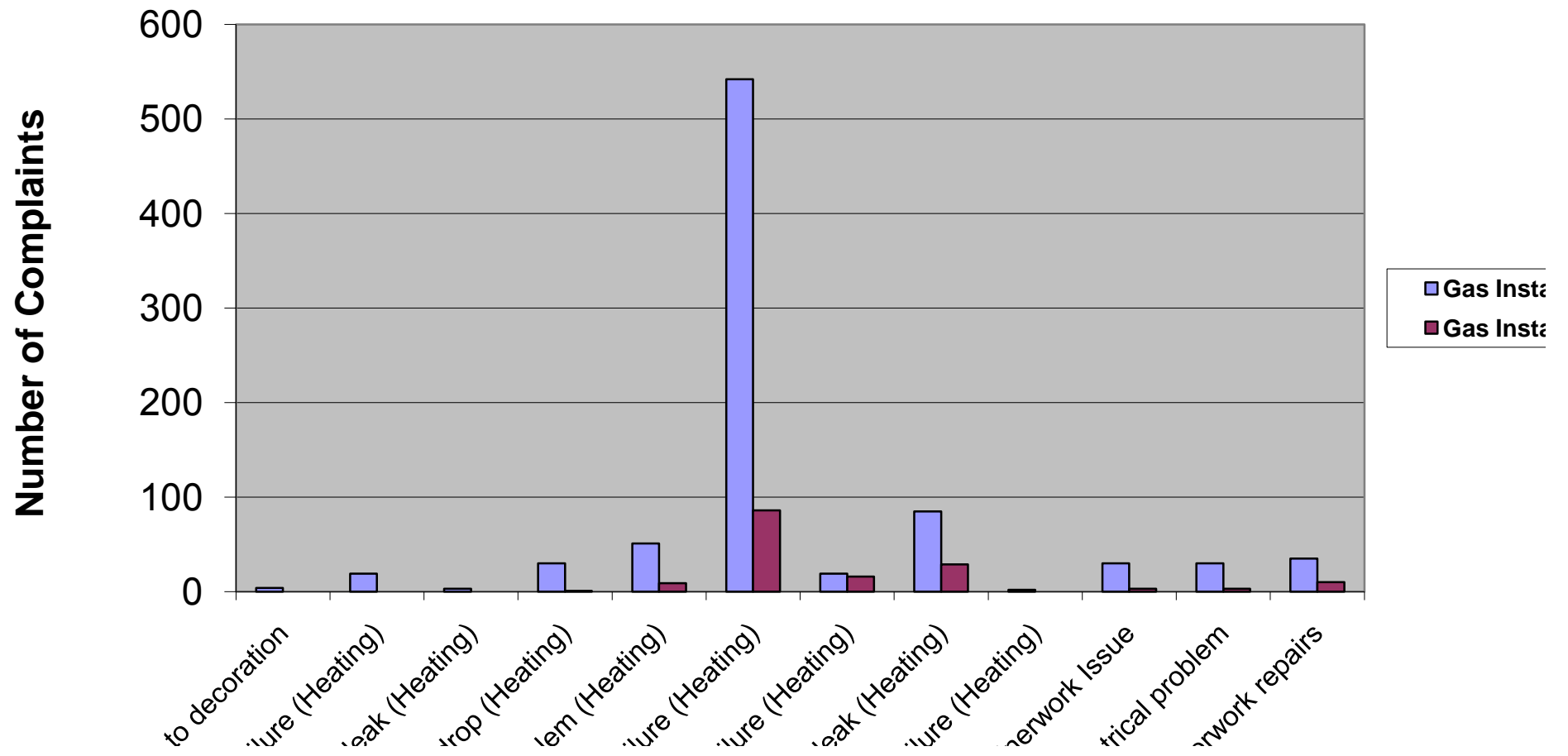
3) Respond Report Door Replacement

	Door Replacement 2008	Door Replacement 2009 (to date)
Door Fitment (Generally)	30	18
Plasterwork repairs	13	0
Security light	12	3
Faulty door lock	20	7
	75	28

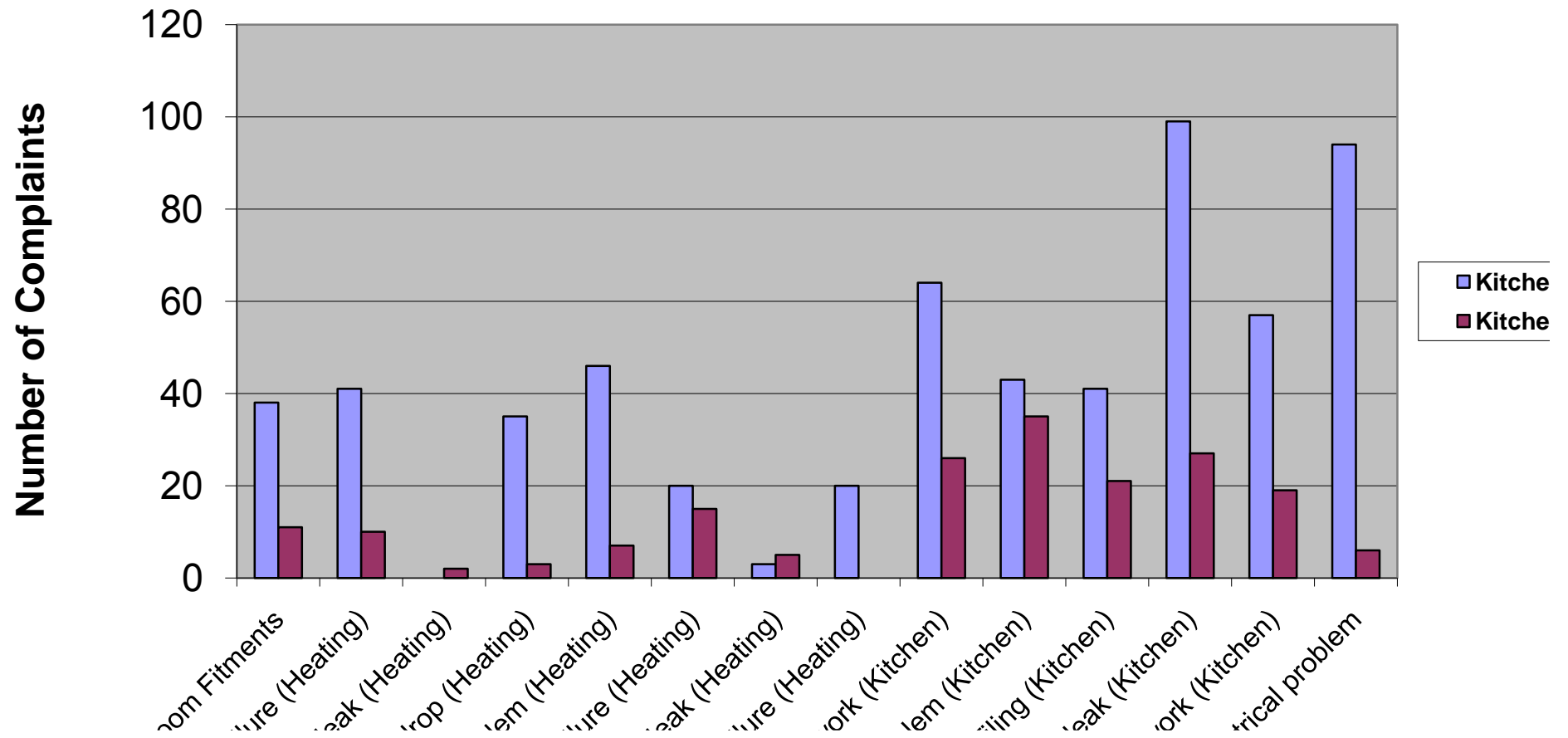
4) Respond Report Re-Roofing

	Re-Roofing 2008	Re-Roofing 2009 (to date)
Damage to decoration	3	2
Damage to TV/Satellite	9	4
Roofing Installation (Generally)	13	1
Guttering Problems	5	1
	30	8

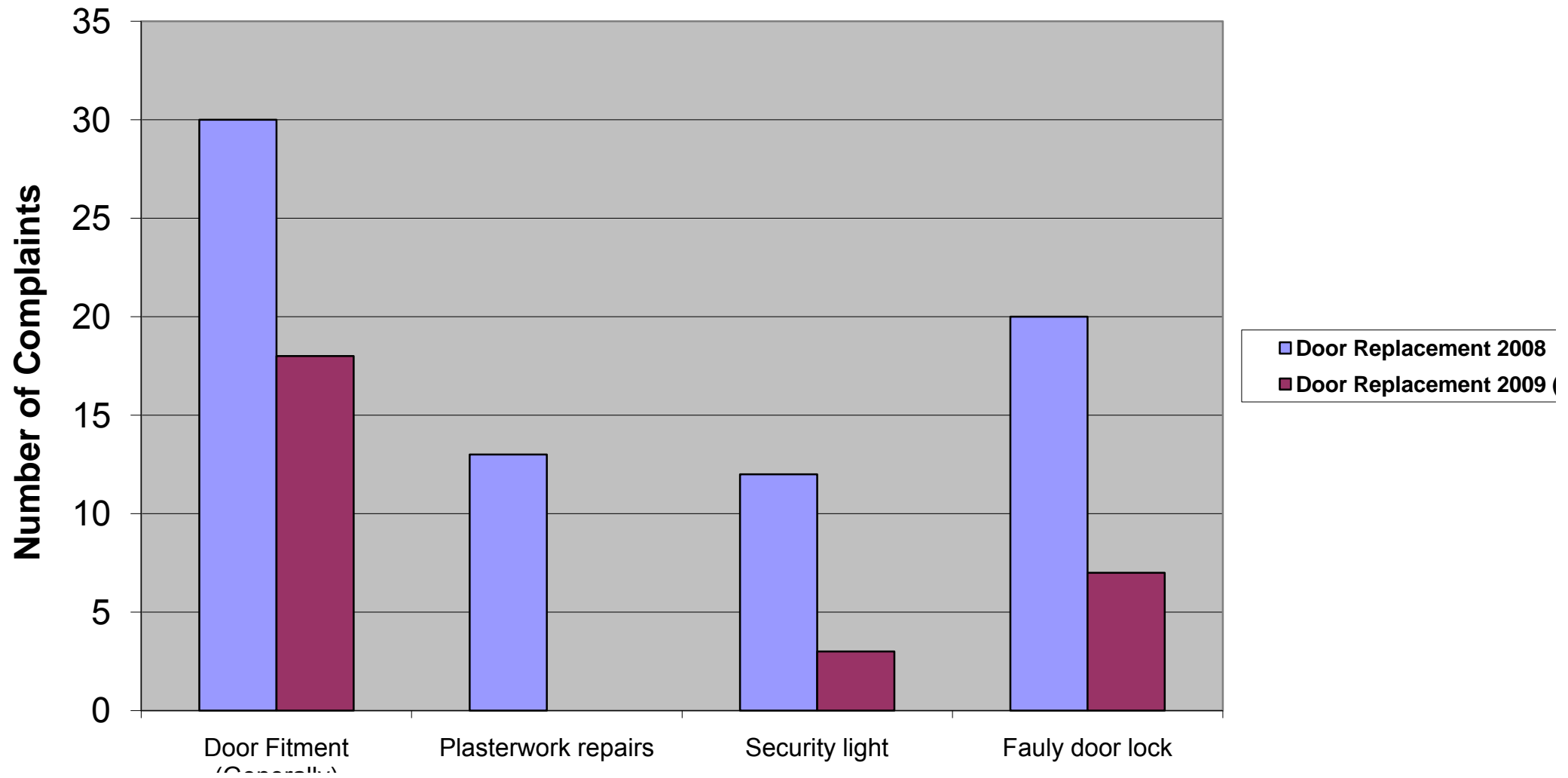
Gas Central Heating Installations



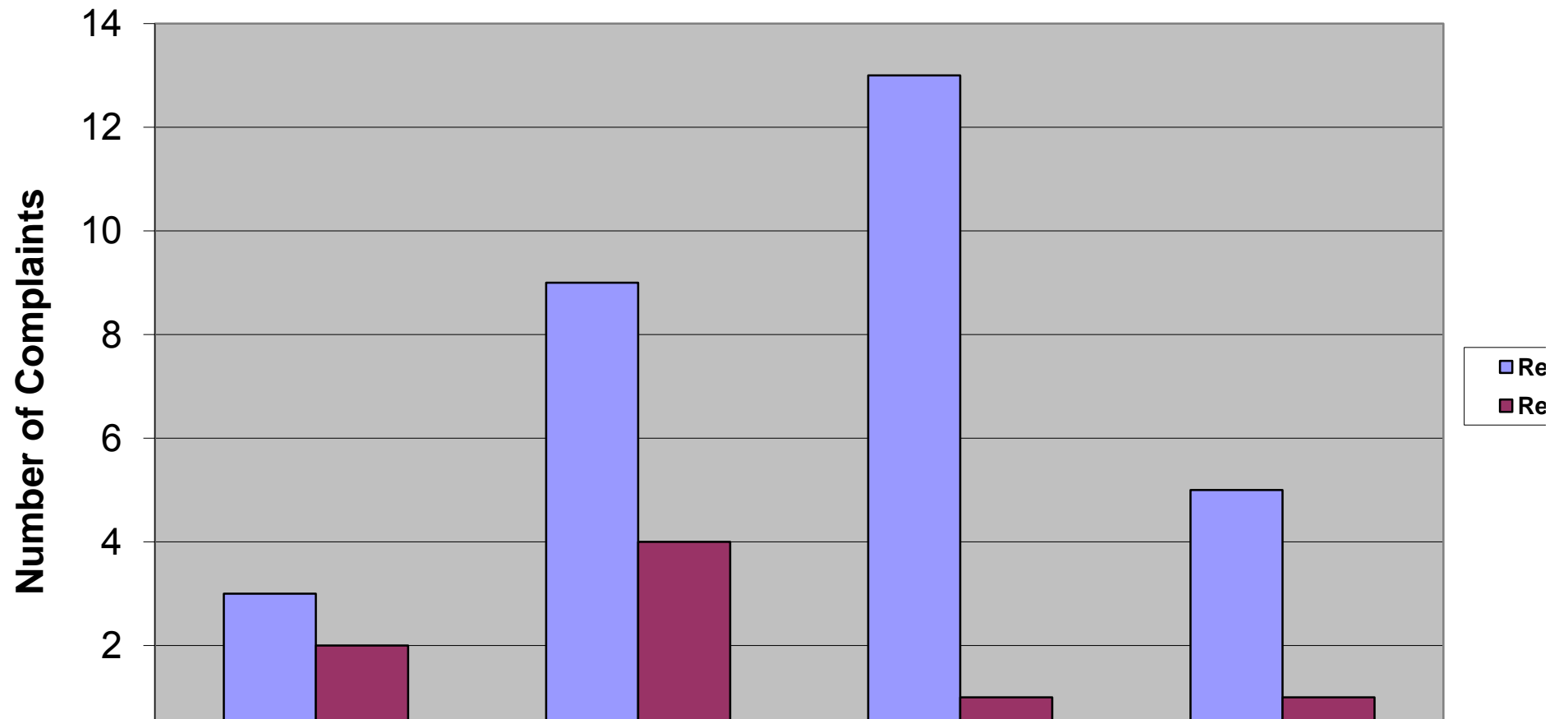
Kitchen Refurbishment



Door Replacement



Re-Roofing



APPENDIX III



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

BENCHMARKING QUESTIONNAIRE

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

To assist in the process of looking at the underlying cause of complaint in relation to improvement works carried out to the Councils Housing stock under Capital funded projects, a consultation exercise was carried out with peer groups, namely other Authorities who carry out broadly similar works, looking at the circumstances of how they go about the works, in terms of the scope and scale of projects, the circumstances under which the works are done, and the nature of complaints that they encounter.

The peer group consulted was the group of Authorities who regularly participate in contrast & compare exercises, and the Council reciprocates where other members of the comparison group generate enquiries.

The comparison group comprises: -

East Ayrshire Council
South Ayrshire Council
North Ayrshire Council
Clackmannanshire Council

????
????
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For this particular benchmarking exercise, completed questionnaires were returned from 3 of the 6 other members of the comparison group.

The questionnaire issued reflected upon three phases of the project, namely Method, Liaison, and Aftercare.

The responses have been summarised & collated, and are enclosed. The full narrative of the completed responses are available to members should they so wish.

The following notes summarise the responses received from each contributor, against each of the sections included in the questionnaire.

METHOD

1. Does your authority carry out the following renewal works to your housing stock?

Works carried out are broadly similar, albeit there are differences in scope and specification

2. Do the renewals projects concentrate on single elements, or do you seek to integrate parcels of work?

EAC group works to kitchens, bathrooms and rewiring. Other authorities carry out some form of grouping, and consolidate the separate elements into modernisation contracts, involving tenant decant, where considered appropriate.

3. What is the annual scale in terms of overall numbers of houses, and the maximum amount you would consider letting under one contract?

EAC programme is the largest, which in turn gears towards larger, lengthier phases.

4. What is the duration time for works within any single property? (Days)

EAC projects allow less time within individual properties than is accepted within some other Authorities.

5. What is the approximate average unit cost of works?

EAC unit costs represent better value for money than other Authorities.

LIAISON

1. Is the information given to tenants in advance by: Letter / Info pack / Public meeting?

All authorities communicate to tenants by letter and information pack / leaflet. Smaller Authorities plan public meetings to address several work streams simultaneously on an area wide approach. Several authorities communicate directly to tenants through dedicated housing liaison officers.

2. How accurately is the degree of physical disruption and upheaval likely to be encountered relayed to tenants?

Authorities who replied indicate that they seek to give a reasonable view to tenants on the disruption likely.

3. How do you make your customers/tenants aware of the timing, extent and level of disruption that they should expect from works that are being undertaken to improve and upgrade their home?

Clackmannanshire operate a web based developed delivery plan indicating what works are planned to each street over several years. All Authorities write to tenants in advance of major works.

4. Do you provide your customers/tenants with an advanced warning of proposed improvement works to their home and, if so, how far in advance do you notify them and how do you confirm actual dates of commencement in their home?

All Councils advise tenants as early as is practical.

5. Is the level of disruption resulting from the contracts currently as expected or lesser/greater than anticipated and, if giving rise to customer dissatisfaction, has your organisations adopted any measures/practices to address/minimise complaints received?

North Ayrshire Council indicates poor satisfaction levels for rewiring.

6. What requirements have you placed on your contractors in respect of protecting customer's property/decoration and what requirements have you placed on them in terms of cleaning up after the works?

All Councils apply similar control measures for noise, dust, and environmental controls. In common with East Ayrshire Council, some authorities apply control measures to ensure tenants are not without a form of heating, power, cooking facility, and sanitation overnight during the currency of works. East Ayrshire Council avoids ongoing works over weekends.

7. Given that all contract works, especially those works that involve major refurbishment, give rise to some level of damage to customers'/tenants' homes, how does your authority reimburse for damage and can you quantify the level of reimbursement provided for each contract type?

Limited feedback indicates that East Ayrshire offer reasonable levels of disturbance allowances.

8. Do you decant all tenants during the works?

Decanting is generally avoided.

9. Do you decant tenants with particular needs during the works?

All Councils consider decanting tenants with particular needs.

AFTERCARE

1a. What level of call backs for repair (average number per installation) do you experience and of these, what percentage is abortive: At time of installation?

Limited feedback indicates that East Ayrshire compares favourably.

1b. What level of call backs for repair (average number per installation) do you experience and of these, what percentage is abortive: During the first 12 months following date of installation?

Limited feedback indicates that East Ayrshire compares favourably.

2. Typically, what is the most common complaint?

Responses differ across they various Councils.

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



QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION 1: METHOD

1. Does your authority carry out the following renewal works to your housing stock?

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)	North Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Council	Clackmannanshire Council
• Replacement doors and	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Gas central heating	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Replacement kitchens	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Rewiring	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Replacement				
bathrooms	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Re-roofing	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Roughcast/rendering	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Other	-	-	-	-

2. Do the renewals projects concentrate on single elements, or do you seek to integrate parcels of work?

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)	North Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Council	Clackmannanshire Council
• Replacement doors and	YES	SINGLE	SINGLE	SINGLE
• Gas central heating	YES	SINGLE	SINGLE OR COMBINED	SINGLE
• Replacement kitchens	YES	SINGLE	SINGLE OR COMBINED	WITH BATHROOMS
• Rewiring	YES	SINGLE	SINGLE OR COMBINED	SINGLE
• Replacement				
bathrooms	YES	SINGLE	SINGLE OR COMBINED	SINGLE, & WITH KITCHENS
• Re-roofing	YES	SINGLE	SINGLE OR COMBINED	WITH ROUGHCAST
• Roughcast/rendering	YES	SINGLE	SINGLE OR COMBINED	WITH ROOFING
• Other	YES	-	-	-

Note: Some grouping of works to rewiring, central heating, kitchens, bathrooms & roofing is done.

Note: modernisation programmes which carry out full works packages are carried out.

3. What is the annual scale in terms of overall numbers of houses, and the maximum amount you would consider letting under one contract?

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)	North Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Council	Clackmannanshire Council
• Replacement doors and	655 (655 max)	100	300	250-400
• Gas central heating	952 (470 max)	1200	550	100-250
• Replacement kitchens	752 (319 max)	500	410	100-250
• Rewiring	Incl in kitchens	700	150	167
• Replacement bathrooms	Incl in kitchens	500	350	100-250
• Re-roofing	143 (143 max)	125	200	30
• Roughcast/rendering	6 (6 max)	125	200	30
• Other	-	-	-	-

4. What is the duration time for works within any single property? (Days)

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)	North Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Council	Clackmannanshire Council
• Replacement doors and	YES	2	1	5
• Gas central heating	YES	5	3	5
• Replacement kitchens	YES	2	3	10-15
• Rewiring	YES	5	5	5
• Replacement bathrooms	YES	2	2	7
• Re-roofing	YES	10	15	WEATHER & PROPERTY DEPENDANT
• Roughcast/rendering	YES	10	15	WEATHER & PROPERTY DEPENDANT
• Other	YES	-	-	-

5. What is the approximate average unit cost of works?

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)	North Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Council	Clackmannanshire Council
• Replacement doors and	£ 514	£ 800	£ 1,000	£ 750
• Gas central heating	£ 2,553	£ 4,500	£ 2,950	£ 4,200
• Replacement kitchens	£ 4,410	£ 2,500	£ 4,000	£ 3,600
• Rewiring	YES	£ 2,800	£ 2,700	£ 2,000
• Replacement bathrooms	YES	£ 2,200	£ 1,100	£ 3,500
• Re-roofing	£ 4,649	£ 8,000	£ 5,000	VARIES
• Roughcast/rendering	£ 30,638 (overcladding)	£ 3,000	£ 4,200	VARIES
• Other	-	-	-	-

SECTION 2: LIAISON

1. Is the information given to tenants in advance by: Letter / Info pack / Public meeting

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)			North Ayrshire Council			South Ayrshire Council			Clackmannanshire Council		
	Letter	Info Pack	Public meeting	Letter	Info Pack	Public meeting	Letter	Info Pack	Public meeting	Letter	Info Pack	Public meeting
• Replacement doors and	YES	YES		YES			YES			YES	YES	
• Gas central heating	YES	YES			YES	YES	YES			YES	YES	
• Replacement kitchens	YES	YES		YES	YES		YES	YES		YES	YES	YES
• Rewiring	YES	YES		YES			YES			YES	YES	
• Replacement												
bathrooms	YES	YES		YES	YES		YES			YES	YES	YES
• Re-roofing	YES	YES		YES			YES			YES	YES	YES
• Roughcast/rendering	YES	YES		YES			YES			YES	YES	YES
• Other	YES	YES		-			-			-	-	-

Note: Augmented by visit to each tenant explaining what is to be expected, with specific emphasis on degree of disruption

2. How accurately is the degree of physical disruption and upheaval likely to be encountered relayed to tenants?

North Ayrshire Council

Reasonably accurate - particularly rewiring

South Ayrshire Council

Try to be as realistic as possible in advising tenants as to the degree of upheaval that they should expect.
Pre advise by direct visit by contractor and SAC housing officer.

Clackmannanshire Council

Fully detailed in the series of work specific tenant information leaflets.
Where disruption is likely to be greater than anticipated, this is explained to the tenant prior to work commencing.

3. How do you make your customers/tenants aware of the timing, extent and level of disruption that they should expect from works that are being undertaken to improve and upgrade their home?

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)	North Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Council	Clackmannanshire Council
• Replacement doors and				
• Gas central heating	By letter	see question 1	see	see
• Replacement kitchens		this	note below	note below
• Rewiring		section		
• Replacement				
• Re-roofing				
• Roughcast/rendering				
• Other				

South Ayrshire Council

initial meeting with tenant to discuss works content, likely programme, disruption issues, and how they can prepare for the works.
Then correspond to re-confirm what is planned.
Contractors then visit to confirm within 1 week of start of works to house.

Clackmannanshire Council

Capital works communication plan informs programming and scope of works.

4. Do you provide your customers/tenants with an advanced warning of proposed improvement works to their home and, if so, how far in advance do you notify them and how do you confirm actual dates of commencement in their home?

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)	North Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Council	Clackmannanshire Council
• Replacement doors and	3 months minimum	3 months minimum	depending on circumstances	YES - 12 weeks
• Gas central heating	3 months minimum	3 months minimum	4 months minimum	YES - 12 weeks
• Replacement kitchens	3 months minimum	3 months minimum	4 months minimum	YES - 12 weeks
• Rewiring	3 months minimum	3 months minimum	4 months minimum	YES - 12 weeks
• Replacement				
bathrooms	3 months minimum	3 months minimum	4 months minimum	YES - 12 weeks
• Re-roofing	3 months minimum	3 months minimum	4 months minimum	YES - 12 weeks
• Roughcast/rendering	3 months minimum	3 months minimum	4 months minimum	YES - 12 weeks
• Other	-	-		-

Clackmannanshire Council

Capital works communication plan informs programming and scope of works.

5. Is the level of disruption resulting from the contracts currently as expected or lesser/greater than anticipated and, if giving rise to customer dissatisfaction, has your organisations adopted any measures/practices to address/minimise complaints received?

North Ayrshire Council

satisfaction levels are poorer for rewiring projects

South Ayrshire Council

Wherever possible arrangements made to ensure heating, lighting, hot & cold water, and sanitary facilities maintained overnight & at weekends.
Emergency contact and support continuous during works.

Clackmannanshire Council

Not described

6. What requirements have you placed on your contractors in respect of protecting customer's property/decoration and what requirements have you placed on them in terms of cleaning up after the works?

North Ayrshire Council

Measures include control of dust & noise, professional cleaners in excessively disruptive projects.

South Ayrshire Council

Contractors protect move or store carpets; decoration allowances provided, and Housing officers liaise with tenants to take excessive amounts of furniture or belongings into storage.

Clackmannanshire Council

Measures include control of dust & noise, parking & the environment, paced working incorporating quiet periods, and the resident liaison officer dealing directly with complaints and communication.

7. Given that all contract works, especially those works that involve major refurbishment, give rise to some level of damage to customers'/tenants' homes, how does your authority reimburse for damage and can you quantify the level of reimbursement provided for each contract type?

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)	North Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Council	Clackmannanshire Council
• Replacement doors and	0	0	0	NO
• Gas central heating	£50	£25/room	Allowance / room	NO
• Replacement kitchens	£100	0	Allowance / room	NO
• Rewiring	£125 +£25 per additional room	£25/room	Allowance / room	NO
• Partial Rewiring	£50			
• Replacement				
bathrooms	£50	0	Allowance / room	NO
• Re-roofing	0	0	0	NO
• Roughcast/rendering	0	0	0	NO
• Other	0	-	-	-

South Ayrshire Council

In exceptional circumstances, SAC may arrange for decoration of the property.

Clackmannanshire Council

Insurance claims due to negligence are dealt with by appointed contractor.

8. Do you decant all tenants during the works?

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)	North Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Council	Clackmannanshire Council
• Replacement doors and	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Gas central heating	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Replacement kitchens	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Rewiring	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Replacement				
bathrooms	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Re-roofing	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Roughcast/rendering	NO	NO	NO	NO
• Other	-	-	-	-

Note: where works are major, tenants are decanted.

9. Do you decant tenants with particular needs during the works?

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)	North Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Council	Clackmannanshire Council
• Replacement doors and	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Gas central heating	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Replacement kitchens	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Rewiring	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Replacement				
bathrooms	YES	YES	YES	YES
• Re-roofing	YES	YES	YES	NO
• Roughcast/rendering	YES	YES	YES	NO
• Other	YES	-	-	-

If yes, what arrangements apply?

AIS identify needs

A care package is put in place
with Social Services

A care package is put in place
with Social Services

SECTION 3: AFTERCARE

1a. What level of call backs for repair (average number per installation) do you experience and of these, what percentage is abortive: At time of installation

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)		North Ayrshire Council		South Ayrshire Council		Clackmannanshire Council	
	Number	Percentage abortive	Number	Percentage abortive	Number	Percentage abortive	Number	Percentage abortive
• Replacement doors and	0	n/a			-	-		
• Gas central heating	0.1	n/a	INFORMATION		0	0	INFORMATION	
• Replacement kitchens	0.1	n/a	NOT		2	0	NOT	
• Rewiring	Incl in kitchens	n/a	AVAILABLE		2	0	AVAILABLE	
• Replacement bathrooms	Incl in kitchens	n/a			2	60%		
• Re-roofing	0	n/a			-	-		
• Roughcast/rendering	0.1	n/a			-	-		
• Other	-				-	-		

1b. What level of call backs for repair (average number per installation) do you experience and of these, what percentage is abortive: During the first 12 months following date of installation

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)		North Ayrshire Council		South Ayrshire Council		Clackmannanshire Council	
	Number	Percentage abortive	Number	Percentage abortive	Number	Percentage abortive	Number	Percentage abortive
• Replacement doors and	0.1	n/a			0			
• Gas central heating	1.2	n/a	INFORMATION		5	50%	INFORMATION	
• Replacement kitchens	0.5	n/a	NOT		2	0	NOT	
• Rewiring	Incl in kitchens	n/a	AVAILABLE		2	0	AVAILABLE	
• Replacement bathrooms	Incl in kitchens	n/a			7	60%		
• Re-roofing	0.1	n/a			-	-		
• Roughcast/rendering	0.2	n/a			-	-		
• Other	-				-	-		

2. Typically, what is the most common complaint?

	East Ayrshire Council (baseline)	North Ayrshire Council	South Ayrshire Council	Clackmannanshire Council
• Replacement doors and	Door Installation	-	n/a	
• Gas central heating	Boiler Failure	-	Inoperative	INFORMATION
• Replacement kitchens	Water Leaks in Kitchen	-	Adjustments & finishings	NOT
• Rewiring				
	Electrical Faults	degree of disruption & insufficient disturbance allowance	None	AVAILABLE
• Replacement bathrooms	Incomplete Work	-	Bloked drains	
• Re-roofing	General Installation	-	n/a	
• Roughcast/rendering	n/a	-	n/a	
• Other	n/a	-		

APPENDIX IV



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

CONTRACTORS QUESTIONNAIRE

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

To assist in the process of looking at the underlying cause of complaint in relation to improvement works carried out to the Councils Housing stock under Capital funded projects, a consultation exercise was carried out with those contractors who have recently completed Capital works projects for the Council, asking their opinion of the various aspects of project control and planning operate, with the opportunity to comment on any improvements they consider would benefit the Councils procedure.

To date, 2 replies have been received. The responses have been summarised & collated, and are enclosed. The full narrative of the completed responses are available to members should they so wish. Members will also be provided with responses subsequent to this summary, since the final date for receipt of completed questionnaires is at a future date.

APPENDIX IVA

	Question	British Gas	CFM
1.	Are the tenants aware of the detail of tenant information packs prior to the works?	Yes - a letter is issued advising of the survey and installation date and BG Manager visits each property to explain the work	YES
2.	Do they understand and follow the requirements for dealing with their belongings and laminate flooring etc?	yes – this is also detailed in the Installation letter and advised at time of visit	Tenant's letter and "March In" clarify this.
3.	Do tenants appreciate in advance the level of disruption the works will cause?	They are made aware the this is a major upheaval however some do express surprise when they see the work in operation, especially if they decide to stay in the property all day and see the floors being taken up etc	As Item 2
4.	Where houses are subject of a march in survey are tenants clear in relation to the options offered to them, and the degree of disruption?	Yes all tenants are visited by the site manager to go through the Central Heating process and offer any options should they be requested, fires etc, we also go through the process so that they have clear picture of the work that will be carried out in their property	
5.	Does tenant choice affect the planning and progress of the project?	No – we plan the work around the tenant's choice.	
6.	When tendering for works, do you think the council's arrangements are sufficient or could be improved on, with regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Speed of installation b. Extent of programme c. Scope of works d. Health & safety e. Inclusion of urgent addresses f. Social work / OT requirements g. Customer care generally h. Complaints & repairs 	No we feel that the councils tendering procedures are efficient therefore allowing us to submit a quality document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Speed of installation YES b. Extent of programme YES c. Scope of works YES d. Health & safety YES e. Inclusion of urgent addresses NO f. Social work / OT requirements NO g. Customer care generally YES h. Complaints & repairs see item 9

	Question	British Gas	CFM
7.	From works you carry out to other Authorities, are there effective tenant liaison solutions or practices that the Council may wish to consider?	In our Dumfries contract we use a Tenant liaison Officer this allows is to gain access to hard to reach tenants and helps with the elderly to ensure their installation is as painless as possible for them	A greater involvement of local housing relevant to policies.
8.	What are the top 3 typical complaints that tenants raise with your operatives during the works?	Decorating Allowance, Position Of radiators (if it is impossible for the engineers to fit a rad in a certain position) and Lifting of the Laminate flooring	Access, Decoration and Programming, this varies from area to area.
9.	From your experience of call backs and repairs during the 12 months guarantee period, are there any specification or procedure changes you can propose that would improve the service or reduce the volume of calls.	It could be beneficial if the call centre were able to be some trouble-shooting when a tenant called, this could be achieved by British Gas arranging some manufacture training to allow the agents to see the systems which are installed in the properties and be able to talk the tenants through any minor problems	A council officer could call prior to report call to contractor (similar to housing inspector).

APPENDIX V

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: REVIEW TO EXPLORE THE BACKGROUND REASONS FOR COMPLAINTS ON CONTRACT UPGRADES TO THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING STOCK WITHIN THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

FOCUS GROUP

**TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER 2009 COMMENCING AT 1400 HRS WITHIN MEETING
ROOM 1, SHORTLEES COMMUNITY CENTRE, BLACKSYKE AVENUE,
KILMARNOCK**

PRESENT: Councillors Tom Cook, Alan Brown and Stuart Finlayson.

REPRESENTING LOCAL ORGANISATIONS: John McIvor, East Ayrshire North Communities Federation; Jim Dunsmuir and Agnes Hannah, East Ayrshire Elderly Forum; James Brown and Audrey Richard, Coalfield Communities Federation; Paul Dustor and Russell Murdoch, East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation; and John McCloskie, Disability Forum, accompanied by Jacqui McNeil, Local Area Co-ordinator, EAC.

ATTENDING: Julie McGarry, Administration Manager; Lynne Buchanan, Communication and Customer First Manager; Jim Clark, Housing Improvement Programme Manager; Graham Donaldson, Quantity Surveying and Property Manager; and Stuart Nelson, Administrative Officer.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

1. Following introductions, the Chair welcomed the representatives of the community organisations to the Focus Group; and explained the role of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee within the Council's decision making structure, the nature and purpose of the review currently being undertaken into contract complaints and the purpose of this Focus Group meeting within the context of the review.

DISCUSSION

2. During discussion, a range of pertinent issues were raised, namely:-
 - two of the community organisation representatives confirmed that they had recently had contract upgrades carried out to the houses which they occupy and, in this connection, advised of their satisfaction with all aspects of the work, including:-
 - prior notification of their inclusion in the relevant programme, start date, arrangement of access, and the provision of information by the Council and contractor regarding the nature and level of disruption involved, and timetabling of works;
 - the range of choice and quality of fittings and the flexibility afforded;
 - the quality of workmanship and the attitude and conduct of the tradesmen;
 - the arrangements made to ensure tenants' convenience and safety during the carrying out of works in their homes; and

- liaison with the contract supervisor who had been helpful in having any issues which had arisen during the carrying out of work, effectively and expeditiously dealt with;
- it is not the practice of the Council to decant tenants whilst contract upgrades are being carried out except in exceptional circumstances where elderly or disabled persons are involved; generally, while there may be disruption to tenants/occupants whilst works are being carried out, including on an overnight basis, arrangements are made to ensure that tenants can continue to occupy the house;
- there was recognition that written communications with tenants regarding the various arrangements associated with the contract upgrades may be difficult for some individuals to understand, eg people with learning disabilities, elderly and others, and this was something that may be worthy of further examination as part of the review process, with, perhaps, consideration being given to the introduction of a “traffic light” system for letters to tenants and the use of telephone contact.
- the criteria for prioritising houses for inclusion within the various upgrading programmes;
- the Tenants Federation representatives advised that whilst they had heard of isolated cases where tenants had experienced some difficulties with regard to contract upgrades, specifically one case where a tenant had suffered damage to carpets arising from leakage from a central heating radiator and problems in the Kirkstyle area relating to a central heating contract, they were not aware of significant or persistent problems being experienced by tenants within their areas. The Housing Improvement Programme Manager advised that the case where the tenant had suffered damage to carpets should not have occurred since the contractual arrangements to which the contractor must adhere make suitable provision for the avoidance of such incidents and matters such as this would be dealt with through the established claims process but, in any event, should be pursued with the appropriate Council staff as soon as possible. The Tenants Federation representatives confirmed that, from their knowledge, any complaints which had arisen regarding upgrading works had been dealt with quickly and effectively;
- in terms of the provision of information to tenants regarding inclusion within an upgrade programme, and the arrangements relative thereto, the Council maintains a five year rolling programme of proposed works, which is updated on an annual basis, and is available for tenants and the public generally to view within libraries and on the Council’s website. Additionally, those tenants who are included within an Improvement Programme for a particular year are notified at the start of that year of their inclusion and subsequently are given seven days advance notice of the start date for works at the houses which they occupy. The Group agreed to request the Housing Improvement Programme Manager to liaise with established Tenants and Residents Associations within East Ayrshire and provide them directly with the five year Capital Programme, in order that the Associations might be in a position to disseminate relevant information to tenants where required/requested;
- the Council have appropriate insurance in place to cover damage etc to tenants’ property arising from the carrying out of upgrading works and an appropriate compensation scheme is in place to deal with tenants’ claims;
- the community organisation representatives strongly expressed the view that (a) tenants should not be allowed to exclude their houses from an upgrade programme, particularly bearing in mind the disbenefit this would bring to the next

tenant of the house in question, although it was recognised that there is a partial remedy at the decant stage whereby houses require to be prepared to a specified standard in terms of condition and facilities before being re-let, and that attempts are made to include previously omitted houses within ongoing or future upgrade programmes where possible; (b) tenants should not be allowed to alter their choice of fittings etc after they have completed and signed off the options sheets, given the difficulties this can generate for administration and progressing the contract concerned; and (c) where a tenant decides at short notice to withdraw the house which they occupy from an upgrade programme (having previously agreed to its inclusion and the necessary preparations and purchase of fittings etc having been made by the Council) consideration could be given to some form of financial penalty being levied on the tenant concerned in respect of recovery of the cost of the aborted work.

CHAIR'S CLOSING REMARKS

3. The Chair thanked the representatives of the community organisations for attending the Focus Group which had provided useful discussion and information to inform the wider process for the review into the level of contract complaints.

The meeting terminated at 1458 hrs.

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: REVIEW TO EXPLORE THE BACKGROUND REASONS FOR COMPLAINTS ON CONTRACT UPGRADES TO THE COUNCIL'S HOUSING STOCK WITHIN THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME

TENANTS' FOCUS GROUP

**TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER 2009 COMMENCING AT 1400 HRS WITHIN THE
PILLARED HALL, GRAND HALL COMPLEX, KILMARNOCK**

PRESENT: Councillors Tom Cook, Alan Brown, Stuart Finlayson and Barney Menzies.

TENANTS: Mrs Wyper, 31c Waterside Street, Kilmarnock accompanied by Miss E McLean.

ATTENDING: Julie McGarry, Administration Manager; Lynne Buchanan, Communication and Customer First Manager; Jim Clark, Housing Improvement Programme Manager; Alan Paterson, Project Delivery Officer; and Stuart Nelson, Administrative Officer.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

The Chair welcomed Mrs Wyper and Miss McLean and thanked them for their attendance. He explained the role of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee within the Council's decision making structure, the nature and purpose of the review currently being undertaken into contract complaints, and that while it had been hoped that the meeting today would have afforded the opportunity to discuss the views of a number of tenants on the contract works, the Members were happy to hear from Mrs Wyper and Miss McLean with regard to their own experiences and views.

DISCUSSION

Mrs Wyper and Miss McLean provided, in some detail, information on the experience which Mrs Wyper had had in relation to the carrying out of upgrading works to the house which she occupies at Waterside Street, Kilmarnock. In particular, concern was expressed regarding a range of issues during the carrying out of works, ie

- Lack of informative correspondence/communication;
- Lack of responsibility by a range of officers of the Council;
- The excessive length of time which Mrs Wyper was decanted whilst works were being carried out (14-16 weeks);
- The alteration to the specification of works as agreed by Mrs Wyper;
- The need for her to obtain a doctor's letter to confirm her medical condition;
- Problems with the Saniflo toilet including access to the off switch and stopcock.

Mrs Wyper explained that various matters relating to the carrying out of works were still subject to an outstanding complaint to the Council.

During a general discussion, Members asked questions of Mrs Wyper and Miss McLean in further clarification of matters, and, in conclusion, the Chair advised that he would pursue the various matters raised by Mrs Wyper and Miss McLean with the Council's Chief Executive or other appropriate senior officer and would communicate

with them further in this regard, and would arrange for members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee to be appropriately apprised and updated.

The Chair thanked Mrs Wyper and Miss McLean for their attendance and contribution and they then left the meeting.

In the course of further considerations, the Members noted issues for further consideration during the review process, namely:-

- The need for effective initial and ongoing communication with tenants on the nature of the works which will be carried out to the house which they occupy and the effect of same in order that, from the start, tenants' expectations/perceptions are clear;
- The possibility of public meetings being held for the purpose of disseminating information to tenants of houses which will be subject to contract upgrade works;
- * • relative to the range of different upgrading works carried out; (ii) specifically relating to the kitchen/bathroom/rewiring upgrade works carried out during 2006/07 year at Blair Crescent and Catherine Drive, Galston and also at various streets in Drongan; and (iii) from the tenants of the houses at 34, 38, 41 and 42 Cameron Drive, Auchinleck which featured within the current year's kitchen/bathroom/rewiring upgrading contract and were the subject of site visits by members of the Committee on 21 October 2009; and
- The arrangements in place to ensure that disruption to tenants is minimised in the event of a significant failure by a contractor whilst undertaking contract upgrading works.

The meeting terminated at 1450 hrs.

* **Footnote**

Members requested an analysis of survey results relative to a part of a programme carried out during 05/06 financial year. In terms of the records retention and redundancy of information, files have been destroyed in accordance with normal practice.

APPENDIX VI

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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

SITE VISIT - WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2009 AT 1330 HRS

ATTENDING: Councillors Tom Cook, Alan Brown and Stuart Finlayson.

ALSO ATTENDING: Lynne Buchanan, Communication and Customer First Manager; Alan Paterson, Project Delivery Manager; Magnus Dowie, Project Support Officer (Customer Support Section at Lugar offices only); Jim Farrell, Senior Contract Administrator - Architecture; Billy Thomson, Housing Improvement Programme Officer; Arthur Stirling, Property Officer (all East Ayrshire Council); George Kelly, Foreman, James Frew Ltd (site visit to Cameron Drive, Auchinleck only); and Lynn Young, Administrative Officer, East Ayrshire Council.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Willie Coffey, Helen Coffey, John Campbell, Jimmy Kelly, Barney Menzies, Eric Ross, Elaine Dinwoodie and Drew Filson.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME CONTRACT UPGRADE WORKS

Members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee, as part of 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, undertook a site visit to properties undergoing contract upgrades at Cameron Drive, Auchinleck; and to the Customer Support Section at the Council offices at Lugar on Wednesday 21 October 2009 at 1330 hrs.

CAMERON DRIVE, AUCHINLECK

The members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee viewed four properties: 41, 34, 38 and 42 Cameron Drive, Auchinleck, respectively. All four properties were at various stages of the kitchen, bathroom and rewire upgrade contract from works which commenced on 21 October 2009 to works which had been completed.

Members had the opportunity to ask questions at each of the four properties and the following points were noted:-

- With regard to kitchen upgrades, tenants are involved in the design of the kitchen and are offered a choice of cupboard doors, flooring, worktop and tiles. Kitchens are designed to accommodate each individual tenant's white goods, and each individual tenant's needs;
- A Disturbance Allowance of £100 per room is made to the tenant;
- The partial rewiring of a property includes the installation of an outside light and a smoke detector;

- Decoration of a property is for the tenant to undertake, however, tiling is offered in both the bathroom and the kitchen. Both are tiled three tiles high, into the cooker hood provided and behind kitchen appliances such as white goods; and
- If any structural damage, example wet rot or woodworm, or any plasterwork is required following commencement of the upgrades to the Council housing stock, or any major work, ie wet rot or plasterwork is required, this is passed to the Council's Building and Works Section to complete, however, if the work is minor or an isolated issue regarding a property, then the contractor will complete the work;
- The contractor is responsible for lifting flooring, eg carpets, vinyl floor coverings, however, tenants are advised to remove laminate flooring;
- The contractor will always endeavour to leave the tenant with at least a temporary water supply overnight, as well as a cooker. However, if a tenant's own appliance cannot be fitted, the tenant is supplied with a hot plate to tide them over. Similarly, with heating, if a boiler is not available, electric heaters will be provided to ensure that the tenant has overnight heating;
- New wiring involves the main socket behind appliances with a counter top switch for ease of access. Any new sockets installed are clearly labelled, eg cooker, fridge etc;
- A full electric test will be carried out on the whole property to determine the condition of all the wiring, even if only the bathroom and kitchen are being upgraded; and
- Partial wiring upgrades last approximately 10 years, after which a full rewire will be required. A tenant is advised of this at the test stage.

CUSTOMER SUPPORT SECTION, COUNCIL OFFICES, LUGAR

Councillor Finlayson joined the site visit at the Customer Support Section, Council Offices, Lugar.

Members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee met with employees from the Customer Support Section at the Council offices, Lugar following the viewing of the four properties in Auchinleck.

Magnus Dowie, Project Support Officer, provided an overview of the complaints received regarding the kitchen, bathroom and rewiring contracts, and whilst Members had the opportunity to ask questions of both Magnus Dowie and the Customer Support Section staff, the following points were noted:-

- Phase 1, 2 and 3 from the kitchen, bathroom and rewiring contract had resulted in the following:-

<u>Contractor</u>	<u>Phase</u>	<u>Installations until 16 October 2009</u>	<u>Total No of Faults/ Incomplete Work reports/ Faults with possible claims received to date</u>	<u>Total No of Faults/ Incomplete Work Reports/ Faults with possible claims received which are still active</u>
Building and Works	Phase 1	155	70	9
James Frew Ltd	Phase 2	79	13	4
James Frew Ltd	Phase 3	Contract commenced 19 October 2009	0	0

- An increase in the number of Building and Works complaints;
- Any referrals from Social Work for wet floors etc would be undertaken by East Ayrshire Council's Building and Works staff;
- East Ayrshire Council Asset Improvement Staff have a dedicated Clerk of Works for each installation and the Clerks of Works inspect all works completed where an external contractor is concerned. In addition, Asset Improvement staff undertake sample telephone calls to tenants to follow-up work by external contractors. With regard to contracts carried out by Building and Works, final inspections and quality assurance aspects are the responsibility of the Works Supervisors;
- There are two levels of complaints, four hours or seven days. The seven day complaint can create difficulties as the contractor is located at the property for a maximum of five days, following which they can move to another property or locale;
- When a fault or notice of incomplete work is received, it is logged as a complaint, and issued to Building and Works to investigate. This can be chased on a number of occasions before the fault is addressed by Building and Works staff. An example was provided to the Members, where a fault was logged on 20 June 2009 and by 16 October 2009 the work was still not complete. There is no penalty if a complaint is not addressed within seven working days, however, contractors are advised that if complaints are not addressed within the appropriate timescale, then their payment can be affected. It was further noted that future works for a contractor may be stopped due to the level of complaints. With regards to sub-contracting, a contractor is requested to provide a list of all employees, including those sub-contracted to the company;
- When Building and Works staff advise that a complaint has been completed, the Customer Support Section staff contact the tenant to ensure that they are happy and that the complaint has been addressed;
- Spare kitchen units, which are accumulated as work progresses, are stored in Kilmaurs, and are offered to Building and Works staff for repairs to properties or Council offices;

- Any tenant can access information on when their property is due to be refurbished at any Local Office, and new tenants are notified when they accept the lease of a property when any refurbishment work will commence;
- It is costly to relocate tenants when work is being carried out in properties, however, arrangements are made for the elderly or for those in need;
- When a structural fault is found within a property, the contractor would continue until the work is completed. Any appropriate Building Standards certificates are obtained, and any additional work is covered through the Schedule of Rates;
- Any adaptations for the elderly or those in need are passed directly to Building and Works staff;

Following a request from Councillor Cook, it was agreed that copies of all current complaints be sent to the members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee.

The members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee were then provided with a demonstration on the new online repairs system "Connaught". The Connaught system allows East Ayrshire Council staff to monitor how quickly repairs to East Ayrshire Council buildings and offices are being completed, with the customer signing off that the job is complete.

It was noted that it was intended to extend the online system in the future, with 600 people being able to access the online system and that appropriate training would be organised as required.

It was agreed to pass details of those who the members of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee would wish to have access to the Connaught online system to John Viviani, Asset Performance Manager, East Ayrshire Council.

The site visit terminated at 1600 hrs.