

REPORT TO: Housing Committee – 19 March 2001

REPORT ON: Concrete Floor Works
Watson Street/Wellgate Developments

REPORT BY: Director of Housing

REPORT NO.: 141-2001

1. **INTRODUCTION**

This report highlights problems that have been identified with concrete elements in both the Watson Street and Wellgate Developments. As these problems will require significant disruptive work to be carried out over the course of the next two financial years, a detailed strategy is required to ensure successful completion of works carried out. This strategy will include intensive resident consultation, extensive decant periods for residents, and adequate resourcing, both in terms of finance and staffing.

2. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Housing Committee agree:

- 2.1. That a programme of concrete floor reinforcement, window replacement, and heating installation/rewiring is carried out at the Watson Street/Wellgate Development.
- 2.2. An allowance of £2.447 million is made in the Housing Capital Estimates and an allowance of £237,000 in the General Services Capital Budget over Financial Years 2001/02 and 2002/03 to carry out these works and for allowances and costs associated with these works.
- 2.3. One additional Project Officer and one additional Housing Officer posts are agreed for the Improvements & Maintenance Unit for the duration of the project, approximately 19 months. These posts will be funded from the overall project costs.
- 2.4. All tenants and owners directly affected by the flooring works should be decanted for the period of works.
- 2.5. Where a floor divides two owners' houses they will also be included in the contract and be provided if they wish with decant accommodation at no cost to themselves.
- 2.6. Repairs Notices should be issued to all owner occupiers involved in the project in order to ensure that necessary works are carried out and to allow the City Council to undertake works in their homes if the notices default.
- 2.7. To note that owners' costs are offset by the provision of improvement grant assistance of 75% of the costs of the work and associated redecoration.
- 2.8. Decoration works should be carried out by the successful contractor as part of the overall contract

3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The total cost of the works is estimated at £2.447m over financial years 2001/2002 and 2002/2003. £907,000 is already allowed for in the present Capital Estimates as both window replacement and heating installation/rewire were due in the next four financial years. An allowance of £350,000 had also been made in Capital Financed from Current Revenue Concrete Budget for the same four year period, therefore the net amount to be sourced over the four year programme is £1.190 million. This sum will be met from the Planned Maintenance Budget. A sum of £237,000 will also be required from the General Services Capital Budget over 2001/02 and 2002/03 to fund improvement grants to owner occupiers.

4. **LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

None.

5. **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

None.

6. **BACKGROUND**

6.1. The Nature of the Problem

The situation at Wellgate and Watson Street was discovered during routine concrete floor surveys at these developments by the City Engineer. Previous to these surveys tenants had been complaining to the Central Area Housing Office about gaps between floors and skirtings and internal doors that were becoming difficult to close. The City Engineer's surveys confirmed that the concrete floors between ground and first floor properties are deflecting. Following an analysis of the results and the involvement of Dundee University in further testing and investigation the causes of the deflection have been narrowed down to a combination of the following:

i. Shrinkage/Creep movement (this is now thought to have ceased).

ii. Bond Slippage

A separation between the reinforcing rods and the concrete. The results of this are unpredictable as is the speed of deterioration.

iii. Poor Quality Concrete

Poor compaction of the concrete means that it is only up to half the recommended strength.

The result of these defects is the deflection in the floors which is several times in excess of the design parameters. The deflection is ongoing and further movement in some properties has been detected in the last six months.

6.2. Remedial Measures

The City Engineer has stated that in order to guarantee public safety remedial measures must be carried out within a two year timescale. It is therefore proposed that the work is carried out in years 2001/2002 & 2002/2003.

The work to be carried out consists of inserting columns within partition walls which will support a steel beam fixed to the underside of ground floor ceilings. By its very nature this work is extremely disruptive and living in the house while the work is being carried out is not recommended. As a result of this the resident of each house affected will require to be decanted for up to six weeks.

6.3. Extent of Failures

The total number of properties involved across the two developments is 248, a total of 124 floors that require remedial works. However, two floors have already been repaired this financial year as a pilot and it is planned to carry out remedial work to a further four floors this financial year where properties are empty, therefore, 118 floors will require work over the period of the programme.

6.4. Heating/Rewiring – Window Replacement

Given the nature of disruption that will be facing tenants involved in this programme and the fact that they will be required to decant from their house during the works, it is recommended that the heating installation, rewiring and window replacement are carried out as part of the same programme. This will ensure both value for money and minimised disruption to tenants through not having to undergo separate capital programmes in these areas. Tenants in town houses will also benefit from the heating/rewiring and window replacement work.

7. **DECANTING**

It is proposed that a number of furnished houses/flats are set up in the two developments to allow tenants and owners to decant whilst staying in the area. In this way it is envisaged that the number of tenants being decanted to hotels or respite care can be kept to a minimum.

It should be noted that any significant number of tenants decanting to hotels or respite care will significantly increase the budget required.

8. **OWNER OCCUPIERS**

8.1. There are a total of 92 owner occupiers involved in this project, 36 of these are in blocks where the Council has no direct interest, i.e., both ground floor flats and 1st floor flats and maisonettes are sold. It is proposed to treat all owners in the same way irrespective of where their flat is located in these developments.

8.2. **Repairs Notices**

All owners will be issued with a Repairs Notice prior to the project commencing. The notice will state that remedial work to the floors must be carried out within 28 days, failure

to carry this out will entitle the Council to carry out the work on behalf of the owner as the Repairs Notice will be in default. Owners will be advised of the intention of the Council to use Repairs Notices prior to their issue and the reason for their use.

8.3. **Grant Availability**

Following the issue of Repairs Notices it is proposed that all owners irrespective of financial circumstances will be eligible for grant assistance of 75% of the costs of the structural work and associated redecoration.

8.4. **Decant Costs**

The Council can arrange and provide decant flats in the area free of rental charges for the duration of works in their home. Removals and storage of furniture and carpets, redirection of mail and redirection of phone services will be arranged by Housing staff. However, the cost of this will be deducted from the payment of 75% grant for each owner. Alternatively, owners can make their own decant arrangements.

9. **PROGRAMME OF WORKS**

It is proposed that works on site start in early summer 2001 and continue through until the end of 2002, a period of approximately 19 months on site. This allows for between 10 and 20 tenants being decanted at any one time for periods of up to six weeks at a time.

10. **TENANT/OWNER CONSULTATION**

It is proposed that tenant/owner consultation is carried out as follows.

Phase 1

- i. Meeting with the local tenants' groups to brief them in detail on the project, scope of works, requirement for decants, and to agree methods of communication with the wider community.
- ii. Dundee Federation of Tenants' Associations will be briefed.

This phase has already been carried out and the following methods of consultation agreed.

Phase 2

A series of surgeries for tenants and owners held in showhouses that have had the works carried out in advance. These surgeries will be held in the afternoons and evenings over a period of two weeks. Owners and tenants will be invited to separate surgeries. Showhouses will be located in both developments.

Phase 3

Individual house visits will be carried out to all tenants and owners to ascertain individual requirements for decanting etc., and to answer any queries on the project.

Phase 4

Individual house visits prior to the decant period, in order that all necessary arrangements are in place for the move and to assist tenants with any practical problem that arise.

Phase 5

All tenants visited on return from the decant period to ensure that they are happy with the finished product and to advise on heating operation etc..

Throughout the project period regular updates and newsletters will be sent to all tenants/owners on progress with the works.

11. **STAFFING RESOURCES**

It is recommended that due to the complexity of the work, the amount of decanting to be carried out, and the high level of customer care demanded as part of such contracts that an additional post at both Project Officer and Housing Officer will be required in the Improvements & Maintenance Unit. This should be funded from an allowance in the project sum. The posts would be required for the duration of the project from initial consultation to practical completion.

12. **CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, Director of Support Services, Director of Finance, Director of Personnel and Management Services, Director of Planning & Transportation, Dundee Federation of Tenants Associations, and the Wellgate Residents Group have all been consulted on the contents of this report.

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DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

Signed: _____

Date: _____