

Report of **Director of Environment and Housing**

Report to **Executive Board**

Date: **November 2014**

Subject: **Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

1. Leeds achieved the Decent Homes Standard in 2010 through the work done by the Leeds Arms-Length Management Organisations. The Standard achieved a measurable improvement in the condition of the majority of the Council's housing stock. However it only provided for a 'reasonable' level of modernisation and repair of components and failed to address fundamental issues with how people use their home and experience their environment. It also did not keep pace with emerging agendas such as the Code for Sustainable Homes and key council properties, such as tackling fuel poverty and improving community safety. This Report proposes a new Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard that will improve on the level achieved by the Decent Homes Standard.

Recommendations

2. Executive Board is asked to endorse the new Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard as detailed in the Report.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 To agree a new standard for refurbishment of Council Housing following completion of the Decent Homes Standard programme of improvement work.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Leeds achieved the national Decent Homes Standard for Council Housing in 2010 through the work done by the three Arms-Length Management Organisations (ALMOs). The Standard was conceived in 1997 and a 10 year achievement target was set for Councils in 2000 which had a number of objectives for a property:-

- It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing;

The property is free of category 1 hazards as defined within the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) introduced in 2006 in the amended Housing Act 2004.

- It is in a reasonable state of repair;

None of the key building components (such as walls, roof, windows and doors, plumbing and electrics) or two or more of other components are old and need replacing.

- It has reasonably modern facilities and services;

A property fails if it lacks three or more of the following:-

1. A kitchen which is less than 20 years old;
2. A kitchen with adequate space and layout;
3. A bathroom which is less than 30 years old;
4. An appropriately located bathroom and WC;
5. Adequate external noise insulation; and
6. Adequate size and layout of communal areas.

- It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

The primary heat source must be programmable and provide heat to two or more rooms of the home. Insulation should be a minimum of 50mm in the roof space **or** cavity wall insulation for gas heating and 200mm in the roof space **and** cavity wall insulation (where possible) for electric or solid fuel heating. The SAP rating has to be above 35, which is the HHSRS minimum.

3 Main issues

- 3.2 There can be no doubt that the Decent Homes Standard (DHS) programme achieved a massive improvement to the majority of Council owned housing stock. In Leeds, only 40% met the standard in 2003. However it had limitations and only required properties to be brought to a 'reasonable' level which in the guidance was defined as a minimum standard. In practice it therefore failed to tackle some of the fundamental issues within the Council's housing stock. A property can meet DHS even where it has a kitchen that is more than 20 years old, or a bathroom that is more than 30 years old, and has single glazed windows and programmable heating in only two rooms in the house. It also applied principally to individual dwellings and failed to tackle some of the issues and legislative requirements such as the Disability Discrimination Act which impact on properties with communal areas such as Multi-storey Flats and Sheltered Housing Schemes. This has unfortunately meant that many people remain in fuel poverty even though their homes meet the DHS.
- 3.3 The Standard also dated quickly as the climate change and carbon saving agenda developed over the last decade, leaving the existing housing stock falling far short of ambition for new homes contained within guidance such as The Code for Sustainable Homes published in 2012. A 'reasonable' level of thermal efficiency and SAP of more than 35 falls far short of the low carbon and ecological ambition for a modern home particularly with regards to standards of insulation and space heating. The Standard also fails to address issues such as fuel and water efficiency, effective waste management, pollution, health and well-being and carbon dioxide emissions that are all contained within the Code.
- 3.4 The Decent Homes Standard also focused exclusively on the property and its individual building components. It did not take account of any issues with the estate within which an individual property was located, such as the standard of the environment. It failed to address the 'location' factor that is a key consideration for people looking for a new home and properties were brought to a good condition on estates where their location meant they were less popular and demand was consequently lower.
- 3.5 A new Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard, to supersede the Decent Homes Standard, is now considered to be essential to inform future investment plans for the Council's housing stock. This report proposes the improvements that will be made to the Council's housing stock through a new Standard that has a broader remit than the old Decent Homes Standard. Where reasonable and practical the new Standard will address the short-comings in the Decent Homes Standard and pick up appropriate and achievable elements within the Code for Sustainable Housing. The new Standard will also look to address the following elements:-
- Housing conditions that are known to be detrimental to health particularly those related to fuel poverty. Cold, damp, condensation and black mould are known to contribute to health issues such as respiratory problems particularly in the very young and very old. The main causes are known to be inadequate insulation, ventilation and heating. The Standard will pick up on and address these issues in the Council's housing stock.

- Community Safety by developing and consolidating the contribution that current programmes to upgrade some building components (such as high security locks) have already made to crime reduction within the City. All components used will meet relevant British Standards (such as PAS 23 and 24:2012 for windows and doors) as a minimum. Secure by Design principles (the Police initiative for designing out crime) will be incorporated where possible into all improvement work done in future.
- Environmental standards and the general safety and standard of the estate environment within which properties are located. Issues such as off-street parking, monitored CCTV, green space improvement and improved waste management/collection will be included in the new Standard.

3.6 Whilst some retro-fit building components are now industry standard with proven benefits, such as replacement UPVC double glazing and cavity wall insulation, there are other emerging components the benefits of which are less well tested, such as upgrade to triple glazing. In order to better understand whether newer components should be incorporated into the Standard joint research is being undertaken with both Leeds University and Leeds Beckett University to test components in actual application to occupied and void properties. The results of this research will be used to inform future updates to the Standard.

3.7 It is proposed that the Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard comprises the following elements, some of which will be retained from the Decent Homes Standard:-

- **Housing Health and Safety Rating System**

The Council has a statutory duty to keep its properties free from Category 1 hazards and the existence of such hazards is, and will remain, a trigger for action. The vast majority of the Council's housing stock is already free from hazards and defects and so maintaining this can be achieved at relatively low cost or within normal works programmes. Excess cold is one of the main Category 1 hazards in the private sector and remains a problem in some solid walled and system built council homes.

- **Building Components are in a good state of repair**

The structural parts of the dwelling will be free from defects and in a good state of repair. This includes the external walls, roof structure and covering, chimneys, heating, plumbing and electrics. These components will be repaired as appropriate and if any fail or are identified as being in an old and poor condition (both conditions to apply) then they will be replaced. Windows and doors also fall within the definition of building components and they are dealt with separately below. This currently falls within the essential investment element of the existing capital programme and is identified through the ongoing stock condition surveys which update information within the Council's Asset Management Database. The projected costs are identified within the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and the Investment Need Plan for the next 30 years.

Maintenance of these elements of the housing stock is estimated to require over £260m of investment over the next 30 years, with almost £6m in the proposed programme for 2015/16.

- **UPVC Double Glazed Windows**

The benefits of double glazing are now widely acknowledged from both thermal efficiency and noise insulation perspectives. The Energy Saving Trust estimates that up to 18% of heat can be lost through single glazed windows in a poorly insulated house which contributes to issues with condensation and damp particularly in properties with partial or no central heating. Any remaining single glazed windows will therefore be upgraded to 'A' rated windows with Argon gas filled low-emissivity glazing that meet PAS 24:2012 glazing and PAS 23 security standards. Glass will be laminated in appropriate locations, particularly after forced entry as an additional security measure. The benefits of triple glazing will be analysed as part of the University research.

- **Composite Doors**

As mentioned earlier Secure by Design principles will be incorporated into the investment programme and all replacement external doors will be composite doors that are Secure by Design and meet PAS 23 security standards with a diamond standard lock. The programme of replacing Eurolock cylinders with diamond standard cylinders on UPVC doors will continue until Eurolock cylinders are eradicated. This will continue Housing Leeds support for the domestic Burglary Reduction Programme. Doors on individual flats which are in blocks with communal entrances will meet Building Regulations and Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order requirements to ensure the Council continues to meet the concordat it has with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue.

The draft capital programme for 2015/16 is expected to include around £2m of planned replacement windows and doors. The HRA Business Plan estimates that around £150m of investment is needed on windows and doors over the next 30 years.

- **Central Heating**

Many Council properties still only have partial gas central heating or electric heating in the form of storage radiators or warm air or under-floor systems. Even with double glazed windows partial heating systems can result in condensation and damp/mould problems which impact on the health of residents and their family. Partial gas central heating will be upgraded to full central heating either when a boiler needs replacing or, if the boiler is already large enough, as part of a programme following the next annual service. All gas boilers will be upgraded to SEDBUK A Rated appliances as a minimum when they fall due for replacement. Gas central heating will be offered to tenants in all electric properties if there is a gas supply. If no gas is present (such as in most multi-storey flats) then alternatives such as District Heating will be considered.

The HRA Business Plan estimates an investment requirement of £220m over the next 30 years with around £12m of that to be included in the 2015/16 programme.

- **Thermal Efficiency**

All properties will have their thermal efficiency improved such that they become as close to the current Council house average of Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) 72. By comparison, the Government have proposed a target “to ensure that as many fuel poor homes as is reasonably practicable achieve a minimum energy efficiency standard of B and C by 2030” (SAP Ratings 69 – 91). We will ensure that cost effective opportunities are prioritised whilst also targeting major investments to properties on worst first basis. All low-rise properties with a cavity wall (or hollow panel) will have the cavity filled. Loft insulation will be a minimum for 300mm irrespective of heating type. Multi-storey flat roofs will be re-clad and insulated and any cavity walls will be filled with insulation. Large panel system multi-storey and medium rise blocks will be clad with external wall insulation (EWI). Solid wall properties (such as back-to-back terrace) will be considered for EWI where possible or alternatively internal wall insulation where that doesn’t impact adversely on space standards. These will be the key methods for tackling fuel poverty.

The HRA Business Plan identifies an investment need of around £180m over the next 30 years on thermal efficiency work. Next years proposed programme includes £2.5m for this work.

- **Fire Safety**

The Council has a concordat with West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (WYFRS) covering compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. At the end of this financial year work required to comply with the Order and meet the initial concordat has been completed and this level will be maintained through annual Fire Risk Assessments of blocks. A new, higher level concordat has been agreed and the Standard will include work required to deliver that new concordat. Earlier this year a retro-fit fire sprinkler system was installed in a multi-storey block which is a sheltered housing scheme following dialogue with WYFRS. This has proven successful and so the system will now be installed in the remaining four multi-storey sheltered blocks (one done annually) and then consideration given to installing at other blocks occupied by older residents.

Investment this year on Fire Safety work will be around £4m (including £0.5m on Sprinklers) with a similar amount proposed for next year’s programme. Over 30 years the investment requirement is only estimated at £15m as the programme is front loaded.

- **Renewable Energy**

In tandem with energy efficiency, the use of renewable energy will form part of the Standard. Solar PV Panels will be fitted to appropriate properties with sufficient roof space and the right aspect. Inefficient electric heating will be upgraded or replaced with options such as District Heating (Heat from Waste or Bio-mass) being installed where appropriate.

Next year's draft investment programme proposes £3m for installation of Solar PV on suitable properties and an as yet unquantified contribution to development of the Heat from Waste system.

- **Disability Discrimination Act Compliance**

All properties with communal areas or that are public access should already comply with the requirements in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (and subsequent amendments) in so far as access is concerned. Properties will be maintained at this level and where major alterations are being done then consideration will be given to incorporating as many of the Lifetime Homes Standard design criteria as possible.

- **Environmental Improvement**

The new Standard will focus on improving the sense of 'place' – the condition of the estates within which properties are located. Improvements to the environment will address community safety alongside all other work to assist better waste management. Upgrading green space on estates and better car parking provision will also be factored into the Standard.

The proposed investment programme for 15/16 includes over £3m for environmental improvements (some through Housing Advisory Panels) and CCTV installation.

- **Shared Bathing Bedsits**

There are still a number of single room or bedsit properties where residents have to share bathing facilities. This is no longer considered to be appropriate. All properties with shared bathing facilities will therefore be converted (where possible) to create self-contained accommodation that has separate living and sleeping accommodation and its own bathing facilities that are appropriately located and laid out within the dwelling.

- **Communal facilities, fixtures and fittings**

Many properties share communal facilities such as door entries, communal rooms, walk-ways and lifts. These are mainly located in complexes such as multi-storey flats and sheltered housing schemes. The existing replacement programme which focuses on failure rates will be supplemented to improve the quality of communal areas and facilities based on considerations of future stock use and resident profile. Lifts that stop on alternate floors will be replaced with smart lifts that stop on every floor and can be programmed to restrict access within the blocks. CCTV roll-out to all multi-storey blocks will be completed.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- The proposed Refurbishment Standard has been discussed at Housing Advisory Board and will be subject to further discussion through appropriate representative groups such as the Older Persons Housing Forum. It is not suggested that the Standard is a 'finished product' as it will need to keep abreast of emerging tenant aspirations, building technologies and component development. As such it will be informed by future consultation and the research being undertaken by the two Leeds Universities.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- An equality impact screening document is attached as Appendix A.

4.3 Council policies and City Priorities

- The Standard will contribute to the Best City priorities in that they will:
 - support more people to live independently in their home;
 - improve the environment through reduced carbon emissions;
 - reduce crime levels and their impact across Leeds;
 - improve housing conditions and energy efficiency.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- Delivery of the Refurbishment Standard will be funded through the Council House Improvement Programme. VFM is achieved through effective procurement of Contractors to deliver the works.

Next year's Housing Revenue Account Investment Programme proposes that £33m is allocated to works that will start to deliver the Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard. The 30 year Investment Programme within the HRA Business Plan will be refreshed to reflect delivery of the new Standard and be presented to the Executive Board for approval in March 2015.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- There are no legal implications to these proposals. The Report is subject to call-in.

4.6 Risk Management

- Without a new Standard there is a risk that the Council's existing housing stock falls further behind the standards being achieved in private sector developments and new Council House building.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 The Decent Homes Standard (DHS) sought to bring all Council Houses up to what was considered to be a reasonable standard but it has not kept pace with the Carbon Saving agenda, ambitions to tackle fuel poverty and new aspirations for

housing within the Code for Sustainable Homes. The new Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard will address the short-comings in the DHS and make Council Homes fit for modern day lifestyles.

6 Recommendations

- 6.1 Executive Board are asked to endorse the new Leeds Homes Refurbishment Standard as outlined within this Report.

7 Background documents¹

- 7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.