
REMOVAL OF STAINLESS STEEL FLUE LINERS

1. Reason for Report

- 1.1. To advise members on the outcomes of the investigation into the installation of the liners and delays in carrying out remedial works

2. Background

- 2.1. At their meeting of 9th April 2002 the Housing Services Committee homologated the action taken to remove/replace all remaining stainless steel liners in the Council's properties.
- 2.2. The Committee at their meeting of 1st October 2002 considered a report on a Review of Initiatives/Outstanding Items within which they were advised that progress on remedial works were almost complete and that the final costs were estimated at £41,700 with £ 2,800 being recoverable from the contractor.

3. Installation of Stainless Steel Flue Liners

- 3.1. Stainless steel liners were installed during central heating contracts where existing flues when tested failed and to avoid further disruption to tenants by breaking into flues to fit proprietary liners all the way up.
- 3.2. The liner originally specified was by Turner and Wilson, which according to the manufacturers literature, was fit for purpose, complied with British Standard Specification and came with a 10-year guarantee. On removal of these liners, where installed no corrosion was found to be present.
- 3.3. In order to comply with EU legislation, Council contracts allow contractors to use products by another manufacturer providing they are of equal quality, suitability and written permission from the contract administrator is obtained.
- 3.4. In heating contracts HP079 and HP080 installed in the west the contractor without receiving written permission, installed liners by another manufacturer, Docherty. In Docherty's literature, it indicates that they should not be used with fires where slumbering takes place and are therefore unsuitable for the type of room heaters the Council provides.
- 3.5. On a survey undertaken of this contractor's installations four liners had been installed the wrong way up and connections to the room heaters did not comply with either the flue liner or the room heater manufacturers instruction.

- 3.6. Since completion of the contracts, the contractor has had his estate sequestrated.

The Council has 5 contracts requiring finalisation and currently is holding £ 5950 in retention and other payments from this contractor. The Council may be able to negotiate with the Interim Trustee to set off these payments against reclaimable costs.

- 3.7. The Legal Services Manager advises that it may be the case that the Contractor was in breach of contract, but further investigation into this would be required.

As of 22nd October 2002, an Interim Trustee was appointed on the sequestrated estate of the Contractor. A possible course of action would be to raise proceedings against the sequestrated estate but even if court action were successful, there is no guarantee that the Council would recover costs.

4. Removal of Liners

- 4.1. The removal of the flue liners has been incorporated within the solid fuel servicing contract carried out by the Council's Commercial Services Group. In the west area, where most of the representations have been made and most liners installed, the work is subcontracted out.

- 4.2. Apart from the removal of the liners the process is the same for any other flue, which has failed under the solid fuel servicing testing regime. CSG has advised that the first tranche of sweeps is almost complete and therefore the bulk of the problems of flue failures will now have been addressed.

- 4.3. An appraisal of the process involved was carried out by representatives from Housing Services, Architectural Services and CSG and the following issues were identified for improvement

1. Lines of communication between subcontractors, CSG staff, Architectural Services and Housing Services.
2. Time taken for the decision to reline, instruct the subcontractor and carry out the work.
3. Plaster repairs take too long and require a second visit.
4. Information and advice to tenants.

- 4.4. The following improvements in the processes will be implemented in future where flue relining is required

1. All communications will be by email with all participants copied in to speed up the decision making process.
2. Where relining occurs a maximum period of 15 working days to be allowed from identification of flue failure to removal of temporary heating after completion of the work.
3. One coat plasters to be used wherever possible.

4. Information leaflets to be issued to tenant detailing the work involved, timescale and other relevant information immediately on identification of the failure. A further letter will be issued by CSG to arrange when remedial works are to be undertaken.
5. Tenants who have had stainless steel liners removed have been given enhanced decoration allowance of £ 150 per room to compensate for having to redecorate twice within a short period of time. It is proposed that where flues require to be relined by breaking into chimney breasts, an allowance of £ 45 per room is given in line with capital projects. A temporary heating allowance of £ 3/heater/week and £2/week for the immersion heater is suggested.

5. Consultations

- 5.1. The Director of Finance, Legal Services Manager and Head of Client Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

6. Recommendations

Members are invited to

- 6.1. NOTE that the current position regarding the installation of the stainless steel flue; and
- 6.2. NOTE the steps being taken to improve the time taken to carry out remedial works and keeping the tenant better informed and confirm the redecoration and temporary heating allowances indicated in 4.5 above.

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Background Papers

- Housing Services Committee 9 April 2002 – Removal of Flue Liners
- Housing Services Committee 1 October 2002 – Review of Initiatives/Outstanding
- Business