

ALL WARDS AFFECTED

Leicester
City Council

CABINET

2nd September 2002

REFURBISHMENT OF KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report seeks guidance on the policy that should be adopted for the prioritisation of the kitchen and bathroom refurbishment programme in Council dwellings.

2. SUMMARY

Outlined in this report are a number of options for the prioritisation of the refurbishment of kitchen and bathrooms in Council dwellings.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Kitchens

Cabinet is asked to consider and approve one of the options identified in paragraph 4.5 of the supporting information.

3.2 Bathrooms

Cabinet is asked to consider and approve one of the options identified in paragraph 4.6 of the supporting information.

General

Cabinet request a further report in 12 months' time reviewing the application of the policies adopted within this report.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

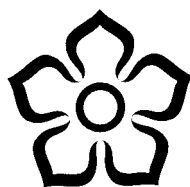
The approved 2002/03 Housing Capital Programme contains provision of £1.55 million for the refurbishment of kitchens and bathrooms in council dwellings. Appropriate provision will be included in the Capital Programmes for future years, subject to government funding being maintained at present levels and similar allocations being made from the Council's single capital pot.

5. AUTHOR OF REPORT

Ian Marlow Service Director (Housing Technical Services) EX 6804

DECISION STATUS

Key Decision	Yes
Reason	Significant effect on two or more wards
Appeared in Forward Plan	Yes
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
Citywide

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REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. REPORT

- 1.1 As part of Council's Strategy to implement the Government Policy of a Decent Home for all council tenants by 2010, a significant number of kitchens and bathrooms will require replacement.
- 1.2 Included within the current Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan are projected sums of £41.3 million for kitchens and £20.8 million for bathrooms over the next 10 years.
- 1.3 The criteria set out by the Department of Transport Local Government and Regions (DTLR) for the decency standard for kitchens and bathrooms is no older than 30 years for kitchens and 40 years for bathrooms.
- 1.4 Within the current housing stock this means there are around 16,000 kitchens and 13,750 bathrooms to refurbish. However, this overall figure may be distorted by past modernisation programmes and replacements due to day to day repairs.
- 1.5 At the start of the programme in the current financial year, Cabinet agreed that priority should be given to those properties that still had unplastered brick kitchens.
- 1.6 The programme for the refurbishment of these kitchens is currently underway and it is anticipated that it will be completed around November 2002.
- 1.7 Guidance is now sought from the Cabinet on how to implement the next stage of the programme.

2. **KITCHENS**

- 2.1 The proposal is, with the aid of computer aided design software, to allow tenants to design a kitchen of their choice within the limits of normal units for that kitchen, i.e., base units, worktops, cupboards, sink units, etc. However, there will be no allowance for built in hobs, cookers, hoods, etc, as these would significantly increase the costs.
- 2.2 In some properties it is proposed where existing kitchens are extremely small that the tenant be given the option to enlarge the kitchen area by carrying out some small structural alterations to achieve this at the time of fitting the kitchen, e.g., dining kitchen, etc.
- 2.3 The range of kitchen units and worktops to be used will be of a higher quality and design of those currently used. In the interest of long term maintenance costs and efficiency of repair, it is proposed to offer the choice of three types of units.
- 2.4 In addition to the kitchen units and worktops, additional power points are also to be included to meet the modern demands of kitchen usage. The tenants will also be given a choice of three floor designs and wall tiles, together with the colour of the paint to the walls.
- 2.5 It is proposed that whilst the work is being carried out to the kitchen, the window and door will be replaced with a double glazed upvc unit in advance of the replacement programme, if it is required. This will prevent the need to disturb the kitchen in the future.
- 2.6 It is also proposed that if the property has had any significant repairs carried out to the kitchen in the last five years, they would be excluded from the programme until five years had elapsed.
- 2.7 In addition as the work to the kitchen is considered an improvement there will be an increase in the weekly rent to reflect this improvement. This is currently £2.06 per week.

3. **BATHROOMS**

- 3.1 The proposal is to modernise existing bathrooms. The tenant will be able to design their own bathroom by using computer aided software. In some cases this may allow the wall between the toilet and bathroom being removed to make the bathroom larger. However, this would entirely be the choice of the existing tenant.
- 3.2 The new bathroom will include a bath, closed coupled wc, pedestal wash hand basin and a shower over the bath.
- 3.3 Again, as with the proposed kitchen policy, tenants will be offered a choice of three colours for the bathroom suite and three choices of design for the wall tiles, together with the colour of the paint to the walls.

3.4 It is proposed that at the time of the bathroom refurbishment a number of additional features are included where possible to enable the bathroom to be adapted in the future should it be required with the minimum of disruption and delay.

This would include :-

- The ability to change the bath to a shower tray with minimum disruption
- Install low sided baths in age designated accommodation
- Make level access shower provision in ground floor age designated accommodation where practical.

3.5 It is also proposed to replace the bathroom window with a upvc double glazed unit in advance of the programme if it is required, again preventing any need to disturb the bathroom in future.

3.6 If the property has had any significant repairs carried out to the bathroom in the last five years; they would be excluded from the programme until five years had elapsed.

3.7 In addition as the work to the bathroom is considered an improvement there will be an increase in the weekly rent to reflect this improvement. This is currently £2.06 per week.

4. **POLICY APPLICATION**

4.1 The current policy of the Department on planned maintenance work is to use a worst first policy. This approach targets the expenditure at the areas identified in greatest need of replacement by the use of the External Property Condition Survey or other data such as age, e.g., in the case of rewiring etc.

4.2 This approach has been very successful in ensuring the resources available are targeted at areas of greatest need. Also, by adopting this approach, particularly with the window replacement programme, the need for day to day repairs has decreased and, therefore, revenue expenditure is starting to fall.

4.3 However, whilst this policy is very effective for external elements of a property, it is not possible to apply this approach very easily to the refurbishment of kitchens and bathrooms for a number of reasons: -

- With external elements the deterioration is likely to be uniform over the immediate area or street, therefore the inclusion of that street in the programme should tackle the work first.
- Both kitchen and bathrooms are functional elements of a building and will deteriorate at different rates from property to property depending on their use and how they are looked after by the tenant(s) of the individual property.

- A kitchen or bathroom can be functional one day and need repairing the next (cracked bath or damaged kitchen cupboard) – unlike external elements which in the main will deteriorate at a uniform rate.
- It is very difficult and would be very expensive to obtain and then to keep up to date any meaningful information on the condition of kitchens and bathrooms, to enable a programme to be formed on this basis.

4.4 Having considered these issues, it is the officers' opinion that a different strategy and approach needs to be adopted when identifying the programme for the refurbishment of kitchens and bathrooms.

4.5 **Kitchens**

There are a number of options available for consideration: -

- 4.5.1 Give priority to all bungalows first. However, this refurbishment requires some substantial structural alteration and therefore, has significant costs. In addition, there is already £150,000 in the planned maintenance programme in 2002/2003 to address this issue when they become vacant. Also, if this policy is used, due to the nature of the works, then the tenant would need to be moved temporarily to another property whilst the work is carried out. This would not only significantly increase the cost of the work, but it may be seen, by many tenants as too stressful to endure and therefore have a high refusal rate.
- 4.5.2 Give priority to senior citizens, in general (bungalows, flats and houses) split across the six Maintenance Areas using the best information on age and condition available.
- 4.5.3 Develop a programme in each Maintenance Area linked to the time a householder has been a tenant of the City Council property, subject to no major work being carried out in the last five years, no proceedings for Seeking Possession (NOPPS) for rent arrears or A.S.B. legal action are in progress and the property being over 30 years old. In addition, priority being given to the oldest properties first that have not been subject to previous modernisation programmes. This would reward our most loyal tenants for their support in the past, encourage them to stay in properties, which in turn will help stabilise communities.
- 4.5.4 Identify an area to start a programme in each Maintenance Area, based on the best information available on age and condition.
- 4.5.5 Carry out the work to void properties. This may increase the time void due to the additional work required and also send the wrong messages to long standing tenants. However, it would make sense to carry out the work if a complete new kitchen is required when the property is void.

4.6 **Bathrooms**

There are a number of options available for consideration: -

- 4.6.1 Give priority to senior citizens, in general (bungalows, flats and houses) split evenly across the six Maintenance Areas using the best information on age and condition available.
- 4.6.2 Give priority to all tenants who have lived in the property for more than five years who have no proceedings for Seeking Possession (NOPPS) for rent arrears or A.S.B legal action are in progress. This may again cause a backlog and a waiting list. However, it would allow priority to long term tenants and therefore encourage them to stay in their properties which, in turn will help stabilise communities.
- 4.6.3 Identify an area from the best information available on age and condition and start a programme in each local Maintenance Areas.
- 4.6.4 Carry out the work to void properties. This may increase the time the property is void, due to the extra work required and also send the wrong message to long standing tenants. However, it would make sense to carry out the work if a complete new bathroom is required when the property is void.
- 4.6.5 Develop a programme in each maintenance Area linked to the time a householder has been a tenant of the City Council property, subject to no major work being carried out in the last five years. Also, there are no proceedings for Seeking Possession (NOPPS) for rent arrears or A.S.B. are in progress and the property being over 40 years old with priority being given to the oldest properties first that have not been subject to previous modernisation programmes. This would reward our most loyal tenants for their support in the past.
- 4.6.6 Give priority to bungalows first, applying the criteria set out in para 4.5.6 therefore benefiting older people first. This would also enable the programme to be developed with social services on the longer term needs of the tenant and future adaptation work that may be required.

5. **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The overall Quality of Life Aim for the Department is that “a decent home is within the reach of every citizen of Leicester. This report supports that aim by seeking to improve the condition of housing in a fair way and for Council property to be a more attractive option.

6. **FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph Within Supporting information	References
Equal Opportunities	no		
Policy	Yes	Para 4 ,priority order	
Sustainable & Environmental	no		
Crime and Disorder	no		
Human Rights Act	no		

Elderly/People on Low Income	Yes	Para 3.4,4.52,4.6.1,priority to elderly people
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6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct equal opportunities implications other than providing every citizen of Leicester with a decent home.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The approved 2002/03 Housing Capital Programme contains provision of £1.55 million for the refurbishment of kitchens and bathrooms in council dwellings. Appropriate provision will be included in the Capital Programmes for future years.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Capital Programme Report –
Planned Repairs and Maintenance Report – 5th March, 2001.

10. CONSULTATIONS

Consultations have taken place with the Tenants Associations and LFTA who have not expressed a preference.

11. REPORT AUTHOR

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