

#### **S40. COUNCIL HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME – CONTRACT MANAGEMENT**

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services and the Director of Development Services providing information on the programme of housing contracts including details on the number of projects delivered within the anticipated budget and programme timescales. Appended to the report was the Housing Investment Programme 2014-15 Project Report. Robert McMaster and Kenny Gillespie provided an overview of the report.

The committee discussed the high level of tenant satisfaction and commented on the Service's improved communications. A question was asked if there were any issues with utilities companies. Robert McMaster stated that utility companies tried to work with the Council and fit into its timescales but that utility companies provided services to every local authority. He stated that prices were fixed but that start dates were given as estimates. The Council held negotiations with their senior officers and there was a local liaison officer for Scottish Power but this was not the case with Scottish Gas or Scottish Water.

Members asked for clarification on the legal position where scaffolding was required to do works to a block of properties where there was a mix of owner/occupier and Council tenants. Kenny Gillespie stated that the Council would check the title deeds and that they usually entitled access for a communal repair. He noted that different powers applied in cases of emergency. The Service consulted with residents and gave notice six months in advance of works.

The committee asked about situations in which contractors did not leave properties in the condition they had been before work was undertaken. Robert McMaster stated that if the issues were in relation to work carried out by utility companies then the Council could not instruct them in the same way as other contractors to return and do further work but the Service did chase companies on this matter. The Council could hold back 2.5% of the fee for a year to ensure contracts were completed properly but utility companies were paid in full upfront.

Members asked if the Service was aware of occasions where owner/occupiers had found cheaper quotes for work. Robert McMaster stated that in cases where they were told of this it had been found that the quotes were not like for like. For instance the door entry systems installed by the Council were of a higher specification than those offered by the private sector in quotes the Service had seen. If a like for like quote was identified which was cheaper then the Council would use that, as long as the contractor met essential criteria such as Construction (Design and Management) and Health and Safety regulations. The committee asked that this information was widely distributed and suggested including it in the Falkirk News.

The committee asked how new housing costs in Falkirk compared to those in other local authorities. Robert McMaster stated that Falkirk compared well to other authorities and the private sector. He advised that he would provide further information including benchmarking to the committee after the meeting.

#### **Decision**

**The committee noted the report.**