Definition of Planned Maintenance Repair and Responsive Repair

The following is the definition taken from the guidance notes to the BPSA (Business Plan Statistical Appendix) 2006 issued by the DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) as part of their monitoring and budgetary process.

**Responsive works:**

Minor repair or routine maintenance undertaken in response to a request from a tenant

(i) tenant requests that are ‘batched’ to allow them to be undertaken as programmed works e.g. fencing repairs.

(ii) void works that are responsive to the authority.

**Planned works:**

Planned minor repair or routine maintenance e.g. cyclical maintenance, planned replacement of sub components.

As the DCLG now requires local authorities to aim for a 60:40 planned : responsive split it is crucial that staff understand and use the correct terminology when dealing with repairs and when physically verifying them.

As stated above in simple terms a responsive repair is ‘an item of minor or routine maintenance undertaken in response to a request from a tenant’. Whereas a planned repair is ‘cyclical maintenance such as painting or planned replacement of sub components’. Over the years these straightforward definitions have become blurred and many repair activities have been incorrectly categorised. In the past this has not been critical as the emphasis was on getting the repair done whatever its category. In these days of stock condition profiling, asset management and budgeting over 30 years a more planned approach to maintenance and repair is required.

It is therefore essential that the definition and recording of repairs is very clear in the minds of all staff. To this end a series of ‘Practice Notes’ has been produced for use by all Repairs Centre staff so that correct identification of a repair type is more certain. A strict interpretation of the definition above will help in moving the repair statistics in the right
direction. For example any repair identified by a member of staff will be designated a planned repair. This may be an estate officer reporting a repair after an estate visit or a surveyor noticing and ordering other repair requirements when making a pre inspection on a responsive repair reported by a tenant.

It is not only in the area of repair definition but in budget definition that some rethinking is needed. Currently capital monies are spent on boiler replacements and heating up grades. Whilst the existing boilers/systems/controls are replaced with those which perform better and are more energy efficient and produce an improvement and are justifiable therefore in ‘capital’ terms it is only the fact that they are currently the best available that this improvement is achieved and therefore could surely be just as justifiably identified as a planned repair. Such an approach with the necessary virement of budgets is surely what is needed in the short term as a further assistance to bettering our planned responsive performance.

EXPENDITURE

More planned programmes of work are being created. Interrogation of historical repair information on First Housing/iWorld gives a cross section of spend. Areas of high expenditure are targeted. To better inform this process when carrying out pre and post inspections surveyors have been reminded that they should tour the estates they are visiting and gather additional repair information. Programmes can be planned on the basis of an estate by estate approach and/or types of work.

Planned programmes of work will be much more easily achieved when the new Partnering Contracts are in place. These are long-term commitments on both sides. Our stock condition information, local knowledge and historical repair information will initially determine those areas where action is required but as our contractor partners knowledge of the stock grows they will help to develop the planned approach. However, it is in the short term i.e. between now and April 2007 that we need to show more direction and improvement.

There are of course a number of existing term contracts in place both within this and other Council departments which can be used as a vehicle for actioning planned works programmes although in some instances
financial restrictions together with leaseholder considerations may hinder this. The following work areas have been considered.

Drainage etc.

The Council’s Environmental Health Department have a term contract for jetting, cleaning, CCTV surveying and repairing below ground drainage. Included within the same contract is paving, street lighting and fencing. There are already identified needs on some of our estates for this type of work. There are 2 contractors available for work in this area. They have been acting on the Council's behalf for many years. The financial limits are relatively high (100k approx.). A planned programme has commenced and is being developed.

Flat roofs etc.

It would appear that the number of roof repair requests is easing up. The term contractor has been instructed to visit certain identified estates and carry out roof surveys with a view to be included in the planned programme. Ancillary works to plant rooms and parapets should also be included. It has been emphasised that spend this year is imperative and that smaller manageable packages are needed in the first instance. There is also a sizeable pitched roof repair already identified which is being progressed by the use of one of our approved external consultants.

Rainwater Goods

There is already a term contract for works to Finlock gutters. However over and beyond this there is a need for general repair and cleaning/clearing works to more conventional gutters and down pipes. There are many 4 storey blocks with eaves gutters that have not received attention over the years because of access difficulties. A recent meeting of ALG/London Housing revealed at least one other borough (Newham) was looking at ways at progressing this area of work. Contact is being made to see if shared working is a possibility.

Water storage tanks

Water storage tanks are generally of galvanised metal or asbestos construction. Galvanised tanks are capable of being relined if deterioration is not too severe. Asbestos tanks however should be replaced where they exist. Often the insulation together with covers and lids needs attention from the weather and infestation from pigeons. There
may also be legionella considerations. There are companies that specialise in such works (e.g. Hertel) and a programme to address these together with compliance with the latest water by laws could be put in place.

Areas attracting anti social behaviour

There are a number of disused/underused areas such as garages and pram stores and the undercroft to tower blocks that attract anti social behaviour and give cause for concern to residents. The planned demolition of these garage and pram store areas and re-provision in its place of properly delineated and visible parking would not only improve the appearance of the whole area but would ease street parking and improve access for refuse collection and emergency vehicles. Work in this area is underway.

PROCURING THE WORKS

There is some scope within our existing term contracts and those operated by our colleagues in other departments to initiate some of these planned works. However they need to be considered in conjunction with the programmes for the ‘major works’ decent homes works. The works will not be exactly the same but they are likely to impact on each other and differing works programmes need to be properly managed so that they do not coincide. Although a more considered approach will be necessary it could be regarded that as a guide any works in the first 5 years of the ‘major works’ decent homes programme should not be included within the planned maintenance programmes unless there has been a clearly defined urgent need.

FUNDING THE WORKS

To move from a responsive programme to a planned programme will require careful financial management especially during the change process. Responsive repairs will always occur and only gradually will they reduce as the effect of the planned works takes hold. In the early stages therefore as planned works increase and only slightly reduced responsive works occur concurrently, additional funds are likely to be needed. An area from which these funds could be drawn is the RCCO (Revenue Contribution to Capital Outlay). The RCCO is set to diminish over the next few years. However the view could be taken that to use the RCCO to redress the planned responsive balance is justifiable in the short term because it will affect our ‘star rating’. In the long term there will be greater funds available if the 2/3 star rating is achieved. The net effect of
this is that there will be more planned works both revenue and capital and
the level of responsive works will diminish and better value for money
will be achieved.

SUMMARY IN CONCLUSION

Between now and April 2007 the department has to show a significant
swing from responsive repair to planned repair both in achievement and
intention. There is little time and some ‘quick wins’ are needed. All
actions under repair designation/definition, data laundering and budget
definition are being implemented. The virement of budgets may need to
be considered as a consequence. In addition manageable packages of
work in the areas described are being set in train. If at all possible
expenditure should be kept below leaseholder consultation levels initially
because of the additional time constraints this imposes.