

Cabinet – 13 October 2022

Questions from the Public

1 Janet Jackman to Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

Why have tin hats been put on at Five Acres just to do a survey? It is totally unnecessary and a very expensive cost. The roof of 45 to 49 is in perfect condition and just needs minor repairs. It still has 20 years of life, and the new roof is only guaranteed for 15 years.

Reply from Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

Thank you for your questions, Ms Jackman. As stated previously we welcome questions at any time in the process. Harlow Council require these works to be completed as part of the “investigatory works” as part of the statutory process. This provision is required whilst the investigatory works are in place to protect the properties from the elements and potential damage through bad and adverse weather. Once the roof surveys are completed copies will be sent to all Leaseholders.

2 Janet Jackman to Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

The cladding on 45 to 49 is in perfect condition and under 11 metres, so it doesn't require changing. They are saying they are charging the cladding for like for like which it isn't. Like for like would be changing it to UPVC from UPVC. Hardie board is an upgrade, as it is a totally different material, so we class that as an upgrade.

Please can you explain if it is like for like why are you changing it when it is in perfect good condition with many years life and why are we not being updated with the works?

It really is shocking how long they are taking to survey the job. The leaseholders are very concerned about the costs and how we going to pay. It has been going on for too long with not knowing what works need doing. It is affecting our health and wellbeing.

Reply from Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

It is acknowledged that the cladding is below the threshold of 11m, and it is noted that the cladding is not being replaced due to height. The cladding, however, is being replaced due to its age and updated fire regulation after inspections.

In the case of block 45-49, it hasn't been possible to provide an exact date when it was replaced as legislation states the records must only be kept for a maximum of 12 years. It is estimated the cladding to be over 20 years old. This type of cladding becomes brittle and prone to breakages as it ages. It is also unlikely to have sufficient insulation behind it, but we won't know that until the investigations have been carried out. The cladding will be replaced with current industry standards materials for the reasons stated above.

3 Sally Jones to Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

At the last Cabinet meeting, I queried who made the final decision regarding 'appropriate and necessary' works. Councillor Swords kindly explained that the Director of Housing would consult with you, Councillor Carter, as the Portfolio Holder. The Rt Hon. Robert Halfon made Andrew Murray aware that the Leaseholders are not happy with the situation at Five Acres and we still believe that a blanket approach has been adopted to all the blocks despite our continual comments on how they differ.

What proof will you provide of your discussions and what guarantees can you give us to ensure the details will be reviewed thoroughly and fairly for each individual block?

Reply from Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

Thank you for your questions Ms Jones. All works are individually reviewed a on a block-by-block basis.

When the works are completed and signed off, the invoice will be raised and a full breakdown of the works carried out to individual blocks will be supplied to all leaseholders. All leaseholders then have a further opportunity to raise questions concerning the works carried out to individual blocks and individual flats.

4 Sally Jones to Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

Please can someone explain if all the individual blocks will have scaffolding all at the same time for the surveys to be conducted soon, or will the scaffolding be removed once works are complete and moved to another block?

We are already five weeks into the project and the surveys have not been conducted on the pitched roofs or cladding. We trust we will not be penalised for the extra time that appears necessary to do these works correctly.

Reply from Councillor Simon Carter (Portfolio Holder for Housing):

All works are split into sections, scaffolding works will overlap to keep to programme. The Council is working to schedule for the agreed scaffolding completion dates that fit within the overall works programme. Survey dates have been previously advised and are still within these timeframes.