

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

**Housing, Environment and Economic Development Committee:
8 December 2010**

Subject: Scaffolding Costs

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to consider current scaffolding practice and costs and recommend improvements.

2. Background

- 2.1** A motion was raised at the September 2010 Council Meeting noting Councillor Calvert's "extreme concern of the costly current scaffolding contract".
- 2.2** The motion further noted, while the Council would in no way sanction unsafe working practices, the expense of using scaffolding for work such as gutter cleaning did not provide best value and requested Executive Director bring forward a report to make recommendations as to how this situation could be greatly improved. In addition to reviewing the current contract, it was expected that methods of working practice would require to be examined in order to identify more cost effective methods of working.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The Scottish Housing Regulator (formerly Communities Scotland) pathfinder inspection of West Dunbartonshire Council's Housing Services carried out in 2004 recommended that all sub contractors should use the same Schedule of Rates (SOR) as the Main Contractor (Housing DLO).
- 3.2** The framework scaffold contract was based on the National Schedule of Rates (NSOR), housing schedule, mirroring the main MTC awarded to the Housing DLO which commenced on 18 June 2007.
- 3.3** Scaffolding Contract
- 3.3.1** This framework contract ended and was replaced at the Tendering Committee on 10 November 2010 by a new contract to supply, erect and dismantle scaffold access equipment.

3.3.2 The new contract has a more focused schedule reflecting West Dunbartonshire Council's requirements and is more economically advantageous to the Council than the previous framework contract.

3.4 Current Practice

3.4.1 Scaffold contractors are only engaged after all other options have been considered and discounted.

3.4.2 Where work can be completed safely from ladders and does not compromise the working at height regulations this is the method used.

3.4.3 Self build access systems are also used where practicable.

3.4.4 Following risk assessment the following systems are used to carry out works at height (Percentages are indicative):

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|---|-----|
| • Scaffolding | 30% |
| • Ladders | 30% |
| • Self assembly access platform/ladders systems (Easidec) | 20% |
| • Self assembly light aluminium towers (Zip Up) | 10% |
| • Cherry pickers | 10% |

3.4.5 Although both scaffolding and ladders are the systems chosen 30% of the time, due to duration and scale of works the number of days scaffolding is in use vastly outnumbers that for ladders.

3.4.6 Scaffolding charges relate only to the number of weeks erected until off hired by the Council. All scaffolding must be removed from site by the specialist contractor within five days of off hire notification.

3.4.7 Scaffolding rates charged to owner occupiers are the same charged to the Council by the DLO. There is no extra administration charge for scaffolding.

3.5 Health and Safety

3.5.1 Housing DLO complies with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all its employees and others who may be affected by its operations.

3.5.2 Housing DLO executes work in line with the Health and Safety Policies of the Council and is monitored by Departmental and Corporate Health and Safety Officers.

- 3.5.3** Each job is risk assessed and appropriate safe systems of work adopted. Alternatives to scaffolding, such as cherry pickers and aluminium towers, are used where safe and practicable. In 2009/2010 Housing DLO had no accidents involving falls from heights.
- 3.5.4** The Health and Safety Executive Guidance on Safe Use of Ladders and Stepladders, drawing from The Work at Height Regulations 2005, details a very limited range of suitable activities that can be carried out from ladders and for a very limited timeframe. Light work of no more than 30 minutes is permissible, with the work period relating to the duration of the job rather than the length of time spent on the ladder by any one operative. It is not possible, in the majority of cases to carry out work from ladders to complete repairs to roofs, gutters etc.
- 3.6** Options
- 3.6.1** Following risk assessment and the adoption of safe systems of work, the use of scaffolding, erected by a specialist contractor, will remain the safest and most practicable solution to carry out works at height.
- 3.6.2** Owner occupiers may exercise their right to procure the work themselves, with the Council paying its proportionate share direct to the chosen contractor on completion of the work. Chosen contractors would require to meet the Council's qualifying standards, with the owner arranging the work taking on responsibility for quality control, health and safety and ensuring all monies due to the contractor from other owners participating were paid.
- 3.6.3** The Housing DLO benchmark their rates on an ongoing basis with their peer groups including scaffolding and this may have implications for future charging. Any changes considered will be subject to a further report to committee.

4. People Implications

- 4.1** The welfare of Council's employees will continue to benefit from assessment of risks and safe systems of work, with scaffolding remaining the primary equipment to access elevated repair areas.
- 4.2** The Housing DLO training plan reflects ongoing training requirements on self build access platform equipment.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The Housing DLO regularly requests tenders from sub contractors for specialist works. The new framework scaffolding contract is more economically advantageous to the Council than the previous framework contract.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** Failure to utilise appropriate working methods for working at height would be considered a breach of the Council's duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act and other associated legislation and as a consequence it is critical that safe systems of work are adhered to.
- 6.2** It is acknowledged that in addressing this issue value for money also requires to be considered. This has been addressed through proportionate use of more costly systems i.e. scaffold alongside robust procurement arrangements for specialist sub contractors to minimise both cost and the social/environmental impact of this measure.
- 6.3** The Housing DLO as a statutory trading operation must perform within the financial parameters set out in legislation as failure to do so would attract criticism from the Council's auditors and potentially Scottish Government Ministers. As a consequence it is critical that costs are fully recovered from tenants and owner occupiers fairly and transparently.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1** No significant issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of this report.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 8.1** Following risk assessment and adoption of safe systems of work, the use of scaffolding, erected by a specialist contractor, will remain the safest and most practicable solution to carry out works at height. Alternatives will continue to be used where practicable.
- 8.2** Owner occupiers may exercise their right to procure the work themselves using a contractor approved by the Council and take on quality control, health and safety and financial responsibilities.
- 8.3** The Committee is requested to note the contents of this report.

Elaine Melrose

Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Date: 11 November 2010

Persons to Contact:

Stephen McGonagle - Maintenance and Repairs Manager, Overburn Avenue, Dumbarton, telephone: 01389 608338, e-mail: stephen.mcgonagle@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Martin Feeney - Maintenance Co-ordinator, Cochno Street, Clydebank, telephone: 0141 562 2381, e-mail: martin.feeney@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Appendix: None

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All