

Independent Inquiry – Riverside Upgrade Project

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Scope of the Inquiry

- ▶ a) To explore available information relating to the approach taken by SKDC in the past to provide hot water and heating services to the residents of Riverside.
- ▶ b) To explore the commissioning process used to appoint the Contractor to carry out the work on site and whether this followed the agreed SKDC process.
- ▶ c) To explore the management of the project from when work began on site on 29 April 2019 until completion
- ▶ d) To explore the impact of the project on Riverside residents

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Findings

a) To explore available information relating to the approach taken by SKDC in the past to provide hot water and heating services to the residents of Riverside.

- ▶ Replacement of parts of the hot water and heating system in 2012 and 2016, given the age of the connecting pipework, was perhaps short-sighted
- ▶ Serious issues with hot water and heating began in 2016
- ▶ Lack of a central point to record issues and complaints and management oversight
- ▶ Lack of action by the Council to fully investigate and resolve the root cause of the concerns until a decision to replace the pipework was made in January 2019.

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Findings

b) To explore the commissioning process used to appoint the Contractor to carry out the work on site and whether this followed the agreed SKDC process.

- ▶ The Council's Contract and Procurement Procedure Rules were correctly followed in appointing the contractor
- ▶ The Project Officer may not have been suitably qualified in commercial heating to provide accurate information to the Framework provider, Fusion 21, to enable a suitable contractor to be recommended
- ▶ Pre-contract actions were not completed by the contractor or the Council before work started.

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Findings

c)To explore the management of the project from when work began on site on 29 April 2019 until completion

- ▶ The following actions as required by SKDC policies/processes were not completed or correctly followed by the PO: Project Check Sheet not completed, FH10 notification not sent to HSE, no records of contract management meetings or evidence of weekly site visits to monitor safe practices, no risk register, the Construction Phase Plan not completed by the contractor, yet this was not challenged
- ▶ The Corporate H&S Asbestos Management Policy and Property and Facilities Asbestos Management Procedure had not been followed resulting in the PO providing the contractor with the wrong asbestos survey information and the HSE issuing a prohibition notice
- ▶ Lack of management oversight of the PO's actions

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Findings

c)To explore the management of the project from when work began on site on 29 April 2019 until completion

- ▶ The CPPR process was not followed as no-one was appointed to manage the contract and progress works during the PO's 7 weeks sickness absence
- ▶ The H&S Compliance Officer's concerns about site management, when the project was 2 months behind schedule and the PO absent, did not result in any action to robustly manage the contract and get the works on track
- ▶ From 1.11.19 there was a more structured and robust approach to deal with the asbestos effectively and manage the contract.

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Findings

d) To explore the impact of the project on Riverside residents

- ▶ Considerable hardship endured due to the project not completing until February 2020, instead of the end of August 2019
- ▶ Temporary measures put in place were insufficient to provide enough hot water and heating during the cold winter months
- ▶ Most residents are elderly and retired, some with long term health issues, so the impact was significant
- ▶ Residents felt let down, not cared about and lied to
- ▶ Honesty and regular and an approachable presence on site after 1.11.19 was welcomed.

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Recommendations

- ▶ Single point for incoming calls from residents concerning hot water and heating issues
- ▶ Manage the collated data to facilitate analysis and regular formal review by senior managers
- ▶ Complete review into Council properties with similar commercial type hot water and heating systems
- ▶ Ensure Project Officers appointed to procure works and manage contracts are suitably qualified
- ▶ PO's to work more collaboratively from the outset and utilise internal expertise to identify risks and mitigating actions e.g. H&S, Asbestos, Equality

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Recommendations

- ▶ **Develop a communications plan tailored to residents' specific needs**
- ▶ **Be honest if problems arise and provide opportunities to explain and respond to concerns**
- ▶ **Continue with work to deliver one shared drive for the team and a standard file structure**
- ▶ **Quarterly Audits of projects to be conducted by H&S Compliance Officer and Asbestos Co-ordinator and feedback provided to the PO and Senior Manager**
- ▶ **H&S Compliance Officer and Asbestos Co-ordinator to conduct unannounced site visits to carry out observations and ensure compliance with SKDC policies and legislation**

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Recommendations

- ▶ **Tighter project management and governance**
- ▶ **Key stages of projects to be formally signed off by the PO, checked and countersigned as correct by a Senior Manager**
- ▶ **Templates to be developed to facilitate this process and provide a clear audit trail of robustly managing contracts**
- ▶ **Managers at all levels to conduct regular one to one meetings to ensure accountability for actions and checking of outputs**
- ▶ **Continue with efforts to create more of a "one team" culture across both sites**
- ▶ **Continue recent practice of PO's checking each other's project folders, including site visits.**

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