

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 4 August 2022

Repairs, Maintenance and Investment to Lifts in Multi Storey Tower Blocks

Executive/Routine Wards Council Commitments	Routine All
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1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the information provided on the processes and programme in place to maintain, repair and invest in lifts in multi storey tower blocks;
 - 1.1.2 Note that the Council maintains an in-house stock of commonly used replacement parts but that there are instances when bespoke parts are required due to the age of some of the lifts across the city; and
 - 1.1.3 Agree to discharge the motion agreed at Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee on [23 June 2022](#) to prepare a report for Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee detailing on the acquisition and storage of parts for emergency lift repairs.

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Report

Repairs, Maintenance and Investment to Lifts in Multi Storey Tower Blocks

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 On [23 June 2022](#), the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee approved a motion which set out that tenants face lengthy delays to lifts repairs due to procurement procedures for replacement parts. The motion asked for a report in one cycle, providing details of the restructuring of the acquisition and storage of parts for emergency lift repairs to ensure that vulnerable tenants are not put at risk.
- 2.2 This report provides information on processes in place to maintain, repair and invest in lifts in multi storey tower blocks, outlines the arrangements for storage of replacement parts for lifts and the challenges with completing lift repairs due to the bespoke nature of some of the parts required.
- 2.3 Repairs to lifts are prioritised to ensure the safety of residents. Where someone is trapped in a lift, the response time is one hour. There were two occasions where both lifts were not operating in a block over the last six months. At both blocks, a lift was repaired in one day.
- 2.4 A robust lift maintenance programme is in place for all 102 lifts across the 44 multi storey blocks in the city. Eight lifts within four blocks will be replaced in 2022/23. The planned investment over the following five years has been programmed to include a further 19 blocks and 46 separate lifts at an estimated cost of £5.5 million.
- 2.5 An in-house stock of common repair parts is held by the Council. Most lifts date back to the 1960's and sourcing bespoke parts can delay repairs. It is not possible to stock bespoke parts as each one has to be manufactured for the specific lift and repair issue. Officers are putting arrangements in place to retain specialist parts from older lifts which have already been replaced to reduce repair times until the investment replacement programme is completed.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council maintains 102 lifts over 44 multi storey tower blocks. Within these blocks, 3,033 properties are owned by the Council and 544 by owner occupiers and private landlords.

- 3.2 Concierge services are based in ten multi storey tower blocks, which support a further 29 nearby or adjacent blocks. Concierge staff provide an initial point of contact for tenants and residents to help them live in a safe, clean and well-maintained environment. Where a concierge office is not on site, or in an adjacent block, daily checks are conducted, and all tenants can be contacted through intercom systems. Five blocks, which have minority Council home ownership, have a lower level of service from the Concierge team but do still have access to repairs reporting through Repairs Direct. Concierge Team Leaders conduct site visits to these blocks every two to four weeks.
- 3.3 [On 4 November 2021](#), the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee noted the information provided on the response and processes in place if a fire or other major incident occurs in or near Council homes. The housing service works closely with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) on an ongoing basis to ensure tenants are safe in their homes and that they have access to fire safety advice and support.

4. Main report

Prioritising Resident Safety

- 4.1 The safety and welfare of residents is the Council's highest priority. When someone is trapped in a lift, the response time is one hour. For all other repairs, contractors have a target to attend sites within four hours.
- 4.2 Over the past six months there have been two occasions where both lifts were out of service in a multi storey tower block at the same time. This occurred when one lift in a block was already undergoing an upgrade and when a fault in another block caused a set of lifts to both stop functioning. Repairs to ensure that a lift was working were completed at both blocks in one day.
- 4.3 If a fault cannot be fixed and a bespoke part is required, the repair timeframe is then dependent on the speed in which the part can be sourced. Eight lifts were out of service for longer than five days in the six months period January 2022 to June 2022.
- 4.4 A regular servicing programme is in place for all lifts which are serviced within a two to six month period depending on age and usage. Lift monitoring system data is used to identify wear and tear and plan for any repairs to prevent outages in service. Additional checks are conducted bi-annually by Zurich Engineering, the Council's insurance inspectors.

Storage of Repair Parts

- 4.5 An in-house stock of lift parts is maintained by the Council to reduce the response time for common faults. The majority of repairs are completed quickly using this stock of commonly needed parts. Contractors have access to their own supply of standard parts in order to complete a repair.

- 4.6 In a minority of cases, the age of many lifts means that it may take a number of weeks to source some replacement parts. These are not easily available due to the bespoke nature of the systems. Some parts are obsolete and have to be manufactured or sourced out with the UK before the repair can be completed. As these parts are bespoke and specific to individual lifts it is not possible to hold these in stock.
- 4.7 Where possible, working parts from older lifts will be salvaged as the lift replacement programme progresses. These will be stored and used to try and reduce waiting times for any repairs on existing lifts until the lift replacement programme is completed.

Planned Investment in Lifts in Multi Storey Block

- 4.8 An investment programme to refurbish and replace lifts in multi storey blocks is currently underway. Eight lifts within four blocks will be replaced in 2022/23. The planned investment over the following five years has been programmed to include a further 19 blocks and 46 separate lifts at an estimated cost of £5.5 million.
- 4.9 Delivery and further acceleration of investment in the lift replacement programme will be sought, subject to contractors' capacity to deliver and supply chain availability. All lifts where the Council has majority ownership in a block will be upgraded and replaced by the end of 2025/26.
- 4.10 The Council has minority ownership in five multi storey blocks and investment is subject to private owners' agreement. Engagement will continue with private owners to discuss their responsibilities and future options for investment.
- 4.11 As part of the planned works, the lift motor room equipment will also be modernised and standardised with the intention to improve availability of parts, to simplify repairs, maintenance and servicing and therefore reduce periods of time where lifts are not available for tenants and residents to use.
- 4.12 The lift monitoring system is also being upgraded in line with the capital investment programme. This will provide improved information on performance and support the prioritisation of planned repairs and investment in lifts. The servicing programme is currently carried out at regular set periods but new technologies, such as sensors which would provide real time data on how lifts are operating and could pre-empt the need for repairs, is being explored. Many breakdowns cannot be foreseen and may be due to accidental damage or vandalism.

Concierge Services and Supporting Tenants and Residents

- 4.13 Concierge services are based in ten blocks and provide support for 29 adjacent and nearby blocks. Concierge staff work closely with locality patch officers to address any complaints, repairs or maintenance issues and support communications with tenants.
- 4.14 Where concierge are not based in a block, but are still supported by the service, daily checks are carried out to ensure stairs and landing spaces are clear and common areas are clean. Vandalism or emergency repairs will be reported and

concierge can communicate with all residents in the event of an emergency through the intercom system.

- 4.15 Tenants and residents are able to join an 'opt-in' service for additional support and engagement with concierge if they live alone, are vulnerable or have mobility issues. Through a fob key checking system, concierge can check on residents and will note if there has been any changes to patterns of behaviour. Concierge will visit homes and may alert emergency services to access urgent medical intervention or make a referral to Social Care Direct if needed.
- 4.16 Concierge will contact these tenants and residents to make sure they are aware of any ongoing repairs and check if they need any assistance. Where someone is struggling due to a lift failure the Concierge Team Leader will raise this with the local Housing Operations Manager to consider offering temporary decant accommodation. The 'opt-in' system is also used to alert and contact tenants and residents in the event of an emergency situation.
- 4.17 Officers will proactively try to engage with anyone they think may need additional support and offer help. The 'opt-in' service will be readvertised to tenants and residents to ensure that everyone is able to access support.
- 4.18 Concierge services are not provided in five multi storey blocks where the Council has a minority of home ownership. Residents are able to report any concerns with Repairs Direct and Concierge Team Leaders conduct site visits every two to four weeks.
- 4.19 Concierge staff play a vital role in reporting out of service lifts, with repairs most often initially reported by concierge who are notified by residents or through daily inspections. Communication with residents when lifts are out of service is extremely important and procedures will be reviewed to introduce improvements in how information is shared between Council services and with residents when faults arise.

Fire Safety and Prevention

- 4.20 The housing service works closely with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) on an ongoing basis to ensure residents are safe in their homes and that they have access to fire safety advice and support.
- 4.21 The SFRS carry out annual inspections of all 44 of the Council's multi-storey blocks along with the Housing Service. Daily block inspections are carried out where a concierge service is provided to ensure stairwells are kept clear of waste and flammable materials and any essential repairs are carried out quickly. Officers work closely with emergency services to alert them to anything which may impact on decision making in the event of fire, such as lifts being out of commission due to upgrades.
- 4.22 In the event of an incident such as a fire, the Council's response is determined by the extent and scale of the incident and the instructions from the relevant emergency services who have overall control of the scene during incidents. Lifts would not be in service during an incident.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Where possible, parts from lifts which have already been replaced will be salvaged and held in storage to reduce potential waiting times for bespoke repairs.
- 5.2 The lift monitoring system will continue to be reviewed to ensure that future investment is sequenced by priorities such as frequency of service outages. An acceleration of the investment lift replacement programme will be sought where this is possible.
- 5.3 A review will be conducted into the full process of fault reporting to job completion to include Concierge service, Repairs Direct and Contractor to enable improved communications with residents.
- 5.4 The 'opt-in' concierge service for vulnerable residents will be readvertised to all households in multi storey tower blocks. Concierge will continue to engage with anyone they think may benefit from additional contact.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no new financial impacts arising as a result of this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The Housing Service is in regular contact with tenants and has a wealth of information on tenant satisfaction and priorities from a variety of sources including repairs tenant satisfaction surveys, complaints analysis, an ongoing tenant focus group programme, feedback from frontline housing officers and tenant feedback submitted to the Housing Service Improvement Programme mailbox.
- 7.2 The Council act as Property Factor for the 44 multi storey tower blocks across the city and provide a level of service to all residents. The service is set out in the Council's Written Statement of Service which is sent to owners and is available on the Council's website.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [2022/23 Housing Revenue Account \(HRA\) Capital Programme](#), Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 24 March 2022.
- 8.2 [Housing Service Improvement Plan Update](#) – Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 20 January 2022.
- 8.3 [Housing Service Response Following a Fire Incident](#), Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee, 4 November 2021.

9. Appendices

9.1 None.