

From: The Minister

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Our ref: AQW 34651 /22-27
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Cheryl Brownlee MLA
Northern Ireland Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont

Dear Cheryl

AQW 34651/22-27 – INFORMATION TO BE PLACED IN THE ASSEMBLY LIBRARY

Due to the volume of detail required to answer AQW 34651/ 22-27, the information attached at Annex A has been placed in the Assembly Library.

Yours Sincerely,



**Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities**

This issue is an operational matter for the Housing Executive.

I have sought the requested information from the Chief Executive, who has advised me as follows:

“Given the obligations of the Housing Executive to maintain the premises for all occupants, the determination of the works required rests with the Housing Executive. The Housing Executive understands the desire of a Leasehold owner of a flat to be involved in the determination of works required, however, you will appreciate that there is very limited opportunity for the Leasehold owners to direct what works are to be completed or are not to be completed.

The content for a planned scheme of works is developed following a survey to ascertain the components that require works to be completed as part of the scheme. This results in a specification which details the standards required to protect the asset.

Details of these works, and the associated apportioned costs are issued to the Leasehold owners prior to commencement of the scheme on site. This allows for discussion and presents the opportunity to address any queries raised by the Leasehold owners in relation to the works content required to maintain the Premises.

Whilst the costs of works can be raised as a concern by leaseholders, the apportioned costs for the works are based on a priced schedule which has been subject to a competitive tender process, with the appointment of a

contractor on that basis. The Housing Executive is required to tender for works and services for planned schemes to ensure value for money is achieved and the work carried out to the required specification.

Leasehold Charging

The Housing Executive does not receive any finance to subsidise sold flats and support owners in this type of ownership and recovers the costs incurred for works in accordance with the Flat Lease.

The Service charges collected for each flat is based on actual costs incurred for works and services. General Service Charges are charged to leaseholders on an annual basis and charged monthly. These General Service Charges in the main, includes a charge for insurance, servicing of lights, communal electricity and may include charges for works carried out under response maintenance. There has been no charging or collection in the Service Charges for future works to the block.

Where works are required to maintain the block and are delivered by a Planned Scheme of works, then these charges are applied to the leasehold account following completion of the work. As part of the discussions with Leasehold owners prior to a scheme of works commencing, the Housing Executive encourages payments to be made in advance of the scheme work being completed, to assist the Leaseholder to budget for when the final costs are added to their account.

The Housing Executive recognises that not all Leasehold owners may be in a position to make payment for the full amount of the costs of the planned scheme works and offer deferred payment agreements.

Quality

In terms of the quality of works, the Housing Executive have a number of control measures in place to ensure work is to a satisfactory standard. Throughout the delivery of the schemes the Housing Executive's quality inspectors are on site and carry out inspections. These officers also inspect before signing off works as completed. In addition, the Housing Executive's Project Manager responsible for the delivery of the scheme, completes inspections to be assured of the quality of the work that is being completed.

Further oversight is also undertaken by a Quality Inspector Manager and the Technical Inspection Unit. A random selection of completed schemes is used to identify samples for surveys to check on the completed works. These additional layers of scrutiny provide further assurance that the quality of work delivered meets required standards.

The Housing Executive encourages Leaseholder owners to contact them should they have concerns or issues regarding the standard of work completed and works closely with the Leaseholder and contractor to try to resolve any issues raised as quickly as possible.”