



Tenant Inspectors – Quarter Three

Planned Programmed Works

Introduction

For their third inspection of 17-18, the tenant inspectors chose to review Osborne's Planned Programmed Works. The inspection was made up of three parts:

- Site visit to see planned re-roofing
- Site visits to areas where new windows / doors and/or the renewal of kitchens and bathrooms have been installed recently
- Office-based review of satisfaction surveys by calling tenants to find out their experience and views

All Tenant Inspectors were given a bag containing personal protective equipment (PPE). They will all be required to wear these items whenever carrying out a site inspection activity with Dacorum Borough Council.

The four Tenant Inspectors who took part are Barry Merridan, Andrea Maloney, Michelle Mitchell and Debbie Barnes who have summarised their findings as follows:

Re-roofing of properties

The tenant inspectors went on a site visit to an area in Bennetts End on 26 October 2017, Hemel Hempstead. In Candlefield Road, Walk and Close there were 34 properties being improved, which were at all different stages of the re-roofing process. We also had the chance to visit one of Dacorum's sheltered schemes - Chapel Street

Some properties were at an early stage of the works with scaffold still being erected. We met Osborne's customer liaison officer Kath Brimicombe-Bloom and Osborne's site manager Mark Freeman who explained the procedures and health and safety induction before the tour began.

Dacorum Borough Council gets a 15 year warranty from contractors for roofing works. Soffits / fascia are renewed at the time due to the possibility that asbestos may be present and the life span of materials. Felt and battens within roof space are also replaced at the same time. Chimneys are taken down if they are not being used. If they are still functional then the flashing around chimney is replaced. The works are inspected by Redland, who supply materials, the site manager from Osborne and a Dacorum Borough Council surveyor at regular intervals to make sure things are moving along smoothly.

We had the opportunity to meet with some of the tenants to see how they had found the experience. Most said they were very happy with the work and had experienced little disruption or inconvenience. Some tenants expressed how helpful Kath had been and said that having a site office within the street was very helpful. There were a couple of complaints; one lady said nails had been spilled over the garden, which she had to clear up quickly as she had children and a dog and there was also a lot of rubbish left.

A tenant in Chapel Street had water damage in her flat due to insecure tarpaulin fixed over the roof, which meant some repairs and re-decoration was needed. She also thought it had taken a long time to complete the roofing work another tenant said she heard a lot of bad language and workers had been smoking in the hallway.

Recommendations

- Private property owners if possible could be offered a replacement roof at the same time, at a cost.
- Make sure site works and rubbish are cleared up before leaving site each evening.

Renewed Doors and Windows

On 14 November 2017 Tenant Inspectors went to various locations to speak to tenants about their new doors or windows.

Mostly, the tenants were contacted by telephone to arrange convenient date for measuring up. At this stage they were given picture of different doors and colour choices and then date for work was agreed. We were only able to speak to a few tenants but most were pleased with results. One tenant reported door was sticking and no-one had come back to rectify.

Recommendations:

- Recall appointments should be followed up to make sure they have actually happened

Satisfaction Surveys – Kitchen / Bathrooms

We asked Osborne for a sample of names and addresses so we could do some satisfaction evening phone calling over all areas of the planned maintenance works.

On 28 November 2017 the Tenant Inspectors met at The Forum to phone tenants who had recently had new kitchens or bathrooms fitted.

Replies were varied as some tenants were happy with the work and thought the workmen were very good and happy to explain anything. However, there problems were reported to do with timekeeping, which made it particularly difficult for those needing to drop off/collect children from school.

One tenant said several trades arrived together along with the asbestos team, which meant they had to go away as no work can start until after asbestos checking/removal has been done. There were reports of workmen rushing-even racing-each other and making mistakes which then had to be fixed on snagging call.

Floor covering in bathroom was incorrectly measured so a joint would then have been just inside bathroom door, which isn't ideal. A senior person then said a new piece must be laid that fitted correctly.

One tenant did not get a colour picture of how his kitchen would look on completion. Neither was he allowed to make a couple of small changes until he asked someone in higher authority and then suddenly it was ok to do so.

Summary

There is a lot of good work being done and many operatives are a credit to their companies. The most frequent complaint was regarding communication, or lack of it, causing frustration and dissatisfaction. Also, the rush some workmen seemed to be in meant mistakes were being made and this creates more work and is very annoying for tenants.

Recommendations

Tenants and leaseholders about to have work carried out should have clear information on the order of process and also how much flexibility there is if they change their mind over some small detail. It shouldn't be necessary to ask a supervisor/foreman to make a decision.

A couple of years ago it was suggested that Osborne's might make a DVD explaining the whole process, choices and timescale for kitchen and bathroom replacement programme and this would be sent to tenants before any work began. Was a DVD ever produced or implemented and if so is it still issued out to customers prior to works being carried out?

We discovered several tenants who had called Osborne's during works with a problem and quite often either couldn't get a reply or no-one returned their call. For tenants this is very frustrating and if they reach a point where they are at the end of their tether by then they can become abusive when they finally get through. This is not acceptable and perhaps Osborne's should hand over telephone numbers to DBC to be followed up.

Osborne's should impress upon sub-contractors that it is important that they adhere to DBC's and Osborne's standards, it makes for fewer mistakes and more happy tenants. Right first time where possible.

Sub-contractors should be paid according to a reasonable timescale for the work so that there is no need to rush jobs.