



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

AREA PANEL 2 6 SEPTEMBER 2006

Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing Management

Petition regarding new kitchens and bathrooms for Council homes in Old Sinfon

ISSUE

A petition was received requesting an explanation from Derby Homes as to why certain areas of the Old Sinfon estate, which are more modern houses, have had new kitchens and bathrooms and yet the far older properties in Thackeray Street, that are in much greater need of modernisation, have been put back until the next financial year.

RESPONSE

It is not the case that work is being put off until next year. But it is about three years of work to get through the whole estate and some properties or streets inevitably have to wait until the final year. The work is about half way through and is expected to be finished by next year.

To give some background, the Council's older pre-war estates, like Old Sinfon, that were built in the 1920s and 30s, benefited from millions of pounds of investment in the 1980s and 90s. This included new kitchens and bathrooms, so these already meet the government's 'Decent Homes Standard'.

At that time very little was spent on post-war homes. Until recently, most post-war homes still had the kitchens and bathrooms dating back to the 1970s or even the 1950s, perhaps having been repaired or added to over the years. Because of this, the large majority of the recent major investment in kitchens and bathrooms, through the Homes Pride programme, was targeted at post-war properties. The houses may have been newer than estates like Old Sinfon, but the kitchens and bathrooms were generally older.

In 2003 the Council started a gradual re-modernisation programme for replacing kitchens and bathrooms in the various pre-war estates. Although these homes already meet the Decent Homes Standard, we recognise that most tenants want more modern facilities. We are attempting to meet these aspirations, within available funds, although this is going to take quite a few years. Old Sinfon is actually one of the earlier estates to be improved.

Work was due to start in Old Sinfon in 2004, but this had to be postponed. The Council did a study of the estate and two others to make sure they were sustainable and had a secure future. The good news is that Old Sinfon has noticeably improved, demand for homes has increased and the area is now considered to have a promising future. But while the study was being done, we could not make major investment in the area.

This was looked into during the recent Audit Commission in-depth inspection, which awarded Derby Homes the highest possible rating of three stars with excellent prospects for improvement. Derby Homes had to justify to the inspectors that the future of estates had been carefully considered and that we had not invested substantial money without first being able to show that an area had a sound future. This highlights that there was a very good reason for the study and for postponing the work at that time.

The work to replace kitchens and bathrooms in Old Sinfen is already about half way through and is continuing steadily. There is no intention of halting work or further postponing work. It won't be possible to finish the whole estate this year, but it is expected to be completed by next year. Derby Homes won't be starting work on another pre-war estate until Old Sinfen is completed.

Over the last two months, staff from Derby Homes have visited, or attempted to visit, all of the petitioners, as well as every other house in Sinfen that hasn't already been done. This involved visiting about 180 homes and the age and condition of every kitchen and bathroom was recorded. These survey results have been assessed and a programme of work across the estate is being finalised. Derby Homes have given a commitment to write to all affected tenants by the end of August, confirming whether they will be receiving a new kitchen and/or bathroom and showing the order in which the remaining work will be done. The intention is to work street by street across the estate, concentrating first on finishing off those streets or blocks where lots of work has already been done.

The petition and the action that is being taken in the area was also discussed at the last meeting of the Sinfen Community Panel, which was attended by managers from the maintenance section of Derby Homes.

RECOMENDATIONS

The Area Panel note the report.

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Background papers: None
List of appendices: None