

Mr James Dornan MSP
Education & Skills Committee
T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
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Dear Mr Dornan

SHORT INQUIRY ON SCHOOL BUILDINGS ACROSS SCOTLAND

Further to your letter dated 15 May 2017 requesting a response, from an Argyll and Bute Council perspective, to the unfortunate events in Edinburgh last year and the publication of the Cole report, I comment as follows:

Inspection and remedial work of the current estate since January 2016

The condition of the Council's school estate is assessed in the following ways:

- On a cyclical basis (a minimum of 2 surveys every 5 years) by the Council's in-house Property Team;
- Following capital projects to establish the benefits to the condition/suitability of investment; and
- Where information pertaining to particular construction defects are highlighted by the construction industry/obtained following national events.

Both visual and intrusive surveys of the Council's school estate, including the Non Profit Distributing Organisation (NPDO) estate were carried out during 2016. Some surveys identified that remedial works were required to certain areas in regard to wall and header ties. A programme of remedial works was completed in summer/autumn 2016 to address all concerns. The surveys and remedial works were carried out by the Council's term contractor and, in regard to the NPDO schools, our project partner ABC Schools Limited. The Council liaised closely with the appropriate contractors in regard to the surveys, remedial works and independent Structural Engineers who were appointed to oversee matters. Throughout the entire exercise all occupied areas were confirmed safe for use by the independent Structural Engineers.

Information on works undertaken in the NPDO estate has been shared with the SFT.

Within the NPDO estate there were no financial implications for the Council however within other parts of the estate a financial investment was necessary to allow the inspections to take place and for remedial works to be completed in one school.

Quality Assurance Practices

The Council's capital programme covers projects ranging in value from tens of thousands of pounds to tens of millions of pounds. Irrespective of the project size, they are closely monitored to cover Financial, Legal, Health & Safety and Technical risk.

In particular the Council;

- Monitors the quality of the build through site inspection and review of site design and quality information by Construction Professionals including Architects, Civil/Structural Engineers, M&E Engineers and Clerk of works;
- Monitors the quality processes of the construction contractor;
- Receives and reviews regular reports on quality and progress from the Construction Contractor;

The Council is currently engaged in the construction of Campbeltown Grammar school, Oban High school and Kirn Primary school in Dunoon. Additionally in relation to these projects the Council;

- Is sharing with hubNorth the appointment of a Mechanical and Electrical Clerk of Works;
- Receives and reviews reports from the Independent Certifier, appointed on the Project, the technical Adviser appointed by the Funders and the hubNorth construction director who each conduct regular site inspections and review site design and quality information;
- Has instigated and convenes a monthly "quality forum" meeting which is attended by the Council's Architect and Clerk of Works and also the Independent Certifier, appointed on the Project, the technical Adviser, appointed by the Funders, the hubNorth construction director and the Project Manager from the Construction Contractor. The purpose of the meeting is to share and review all information on construction quality for the last period and look forward to the next period to determine what works are taking place and what information in relation to quality is to be reviewed and shared.

The Cole Report

The Council is currently reviewing the content and recommendations of the Cole report and, in regard to the schools being delivered through hubNorth as part of the Scottish Government's Schools for the Future initiative, we are liaising closely with hubNorth in that exercise. We expect to complete that in early course and would be happy to share that with you if that would be of assistance.

I trust the foregoing provides you with the necessary information for your short inquiry on school buildings across Scotland however should you have any queries then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Cleland Sneddon
Chief Executive