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Chief Executive's Office

James Dornan MSP  
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Date: 8 June 2017

Dear Mr Dornan

### Education and Skills Committee

I refer to your letter dated 15 May 2017 in relation to the inquiry being undertaken by the Education and Skills Committee on school buildings across Scotland.

I note your request for a response to the questions in both parts 1 and 2 of the remit agreed by the Committee for this inquiry, and would confirm South Lanarkshire Council's position is as follows.

#### 1. *Inspection and remedial work of the current estate since January 2016*

To what extent:

- has the school estate been inspected
- have faults been identified; and
- has remedial work been undertaken and the impact of this

#### Secondary School Estate

South Lanarkshire Council has a secondary school estate consisting of 17 schools which were modernised through a PPP arrangement between 2007 and 2010.

Whilst none of South Lanarkshire Council's PPP Secondary Schools involved Miller Construction, following the issues identified by the City of Edinburgh Council and the subsequent technical information provided by the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT), South Lanarkshire Council's PPP partners commissioned Fairhurst Consulting Structural and Civil Engineers to undertake intrusive surveys at three identified schools, as a precautionary measure.

The schools chosen for survey represented one school from each of the Council's three construction phases and the two building contractors involved in the construction of South Lanarkshire Council's Secondary Schools.

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INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE



The commission to Fairhurst Consulting Structural and Civil Engineers was to check:-

- areas highly susceptible to exposure to localised high wind pressures
- a representative selection of wall panel configurations, paying particular attention to entrances, exits and public areas

The areas identified for survey were chosen during a visual inspection of the buildings and were targeted following Fairhurst's review of the wall head details noted on as-built drawings.

Within the areas selected, a section of the outer leaf of brickwork was locally removed at the wall head to enable inspection of the cavity to establish the tying details between the outer and inner leaf, all of which were found to be satisfactory.

In addition to a visual inspection of all external facades, Fairhurst also undertook an internal inspection of the masonry walls within the Games Halls, Gymnasiums and in the Street areas. No areas of concern or unstable masonry were identified.

The visual and intrusive inspections were carried out between Friday 15 April and Tuesday 19 April 2016.

In summarising Fairhurst's inspections of the Secondary School estate, all masonry wall panels appeared to be stable and within the particular areas inspected, suitable tying details were confirmed.

Based on their inspections, Fairhurst had no concerns with regard to the stability of the masonry wall panels at the surveyed schools.

During the inspections, a small number of non-structural issues were identified which were not considered to compromise the safety of any of the wall panels and repairs were undertaken during the next holiday period, to minimise disruption at the schools involved.

#### Primary School Estate

South Lanarkshire Council is currently in the final stages of its Primary School Modernisation programme which commenced in 2004. To date 121 of the 128 primary schools in the estate have been renewed or refurbished through a series of projects undertaken through the Council's capital investment programme. These projects have been delivered through 3 phases of a Design & Build framework as well as a series of individually procured construction projects managed by the in-house Design Service.

In response to the issues identified by the City of Edinburgh Council, and the information provided by the SFT, all Primary School Project Partners engaged through the Design & Build frameworks were contacted to determine whether or not the same wall construction details had been used on any projects undertaken.

The individually procured schools delivered outwith the Design & Build framework were reviewed by the in-house Design Service.

The reviews of the construction details determined that:-

- the Council had no external wall arrangements of the same type within the Primary Schools Modernisation Programme to those where the issues had occurred in the City of Edinburgh Schools

Given this, taking a risk based approach, the Council implemented the following actions:-

- a visual inspection was carried out to all new primary schools. These inspections were completed on 13 April 2016 and no major structural issues were identified
- intrusive surveys were carried out to five new primary schools. These covered five different construction companies engaged on the Programme and were carried out on 26 and 27 April 2016. The investigations confirmed that the external walls were all constructed as per the design drawings
- an audit of design details, relating to brickwork wall ties and head restraints, was undertaken through discussion and assurances given by key designers
- on all projects, regardless of how they were procured, the Council utilised its team of in-house Clerk of Works to monitor progress and check adherence to specification and build quality. Part of their remit included checking the construction of external walls as they were being built. This included checking wall ties/cavities and as part of the assurance process project files/records were checked. In many cases digital records (photographs) were available of the external wall construction which clearly showed the positioning and embedment of wall ties
- during the course of these checks, a small number of repairs of a minor nature were identified. These were subsequently carried out with no impact on the operation of the schools

#### Generally

Following the report on the Independent Inquiry into the Construction of Edinburgh Schools being published, the Council's Corporate Management Team set up a cross resource internal review group, led by the Head of Property Services, to review the findings and recommendations of this report and to address each of these. This review group reports on its findings, recommendations and on progress on agreed actions to the Corporate Management Team.

#### Fire Stopping

In your letter you specifically make mention of fire-stopping being an area of concern raised in the Independent Inquiry into the Construction of Edinburgh Schools Report and would confirm South Lanarkshire Council's position is as follows.

#### Secondary School Estate

The Council's PPP partner, InspirED, has a mature inspection regime in relation to the inspection of fire stopping. This has been independently checked by a UKAS accredited consultant.

#### Primary School Estate

The Council's primary schools are the subject of annual condition surveys by the in-house Building Surveying Section, as well as regular inspections by the Council's insurers. In light of the specific issues raised in relation to fire stopping, the Council has engaged a specialist consultant to carry out a survey of all new primary schools in order to assess the condition of fire stopping.

This survey commenced in May 2017 and is programmed to be completed in September 2017. Any remedial works identified will be attended to as a priority.

Going forward, an inspection of fire stopping will be specifically included within the annual inspection of each school.

## 2. **Quality Assurance Practices**

- How quality assurance is undertaken on current capital projects on the school estate

South Lanarkshire Council have an internal resource of multi disciplinary construction professionals who manage all construction projects carried out by the Council. This team includes architects, engineers and clerk of works, who monitor quality assurance through the construction process, including adherence to specification, together with the quality of workmanship and quality of materials.

- Whether the quality assurance of school capital projects has been re-assessed since 2016

South Lanarkshire Council has not specifically reviewed the quality assurance procedures since 2016. However, in light of the Edinburgh Schools Inquiry, information and instruction has been provided to designers, clerks of works and construction teams, relative to the findings.

- Whether there are, or were, particular issues depending on the funding model and the lessons to be learned

Since 1999, the Council has not fundamentally altered the process for quality assurance on construction projects, including schools, in that this is carried out by the Council's in-house technical team of architects, engineers and clerk of works.

Due to the scale of the Secondary School Modernisation Programme, the delivery of this contract was managed by a cross Resource team of Council officers, who were seconded into a Schools Modernisation Team.

This team included a qualified architect and an experienced clerk of works, who represented the Council relative to technical and quality matters during the construction process and had the ability to draw on additional resources from the in-house service, as required.

The Council also employed external technical advisors, Turner Townsend, and the Partnership was also subject to independent certification by Davis Langdon.

During the delivery of this works programme, the Council did not experience any issues as a result of the funding model.

Finally, in terms of lessons learned, as noted earlier, the Council is carrying out an internal review into the findings and recommendations of the report and from this will determine and implement any changes deemed necessary.

I trust the above clarifies the matter and provides you with the details you were looking for. If you require any further information or clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

**Lindsay Freela**  
**Chief Executive**