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James Doman MSP  
Convener  
Education and Skills Committee  
T3.40  
The Scottish Parliament  
EDINBURGH  
EH99 1SP

Dear Mr Dornan

## **STIRLING COUNCIL SCHOOLS RESPONSE**

Further to your letter of 15 May 2017 requesting a response to the Education & Skills Committee remit for school buildings, I can confirm the following information in respect of inspection and remedial work on the current Stirling Council estate since January 2016.

### **School estate inspection**

Since January 2016, and in response to the issues raised by the events in Edinburgh, the Council undertook targeted inspections on the school estate. This focussed primarily on areas of substantial and high level cavity blockwork in more recently constructed or extended properties. The surveys were both visual and intrusive, undertaken by an independent consultant structural engineer. Other school buildings assessed as lower risk were given visual inspections by building surveyors employed by Stirling Council. No issues were identified during these inspections.

Our PPP estate comprises five high schools and one community campus. Following January 2016, our PPP contractor appointed an independent consultant structural engineer to undertake a review of design and construction of the six facilities. No faults were identified in this process but two additional wall head restraints were installed at two schools. These were not deemed essential but works were carried out as a precautionary measure.

On our single PFI High School - Balfron High School - visual structural surveys, followed by additional intrusive investigations identified a significant number of issues relating to wall tie installation and structural wall head restraint failings. The remedial works package was developed by the consultant structural engineer appointed by our PFI contractor. The majority of the remedial work has been completed, and during this period a number of pupils in Years 1 to 3 were located within other High Schools for four weeks, and thereafter accommodated within onsite modular accommodation for a further four weeks, until the summer holidays. Most remedial works were completed by the time pupils returned in August. The remainder of the works are due to be completed during this summer holiday, with no impact on education delivery. These Category 3 works are of a non-safety nature and are required for Building Warrant completion which would be issued only after verification by inspection by our Building Standards service.

The Council has a rolling programme of condition surveys for schools, and this is currently up to date. Additional surveys may be commissioned in advance of specific projects, and targeted surveys may also be instructed should issues be identified by Property Maintenance Officers making routine visits or by teaching or facilities management staff raising issues. Additional wall ties were installed at a primary school last summer when corrosion of existing ties were identified in advance of a refurbishment project.

There are currently two primary school boundary walls being monitored after identification of issues during routine visits. There has been no impact on education delivery within these properties. This work is supported by a Property Maintenance Officer for the school estate, and a Building Surveyor with specific responsibility for structure fabric.

### **Quality Assurance Practices**

Stirling Council appoints a Clerk of Works, along with a Project Architect or Project Manager to manage the quality aspects of capital programme projects. The Clerk of Works has generally been a directly employed officer, however, this has been supported by a consultancy framework in the past, to support periods of higher requirement. This has been a long standing approach by the Council. The Clerk of Works has day to day responsibility for quality monitoring and reporting. The Clerk of Works will typically visit sites most days during projects, recording works, liaising with contractors and designers, proactively identifying issues, and reporting progress, safety and quality issues through informal and formal routes.

The remit and scope of the Clerk of Works role will vary in terms of the form of contract. There have been no significant changes to the approach to quality assurance practices since 2016, however, a review of the Clerk of Works scope of service has taken place and a more focussed approach to certain activities and trades has been developed on design and build projects. Taking a more active approach to monitoring quality. This can include agreeing a schedule of 'sign offs' with the Site Manager on specific trades, and recording within the reporting process. Quality inspectors will select around 12 specific processes, such as blockwork/brickwork, in-situ concrete, firestopping, vinyl flooring and would monitor in greater detail, reviewing contractors quality assurance processes in parallel to their own review.

In parallel with this assurance, Stirling Council's Building Standards service will also verify any capital project design in accordance with the Building Regulations and undertake a robust inspection regime on specific stages of the construction as part of the Construction Compliance Notification Plan (CCNP) issued with the Building Warrant approval. Only when reasonable enquiry through inspection has been verified would the Building Standards service consider issuing an Acceptance of the Completion submission for any project.

I trust that this response is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Stewart Carruth  
Chief Executive