



**West Lothian
Council**

Chief Executive Office

West Lothian Civic Centre
Howden South Road
Livingston
West Lothian
EH54 6FF

Our Ref: CEO/LK
Your Ref:

Contact: Lorna Kemp
Tel: 01506 283519
e-mail: lorna.kemp@westlothian.gov.uk

Mr James Dornan MSP
T3.40
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

By email

9 June 2017

Dear Mr Dornan

Education and Skills Committee – Inquiry on buildings across Scotland

I refer to your letter of 15 May requesting details of West Lothian Council's response to events in Edinburgh last year and the publication of the Cole report. I can confirm that West Lothian Council has always given the highest priority to maintaining all of our schools in good quality condition and this will continue to be the case in future. In terms of action taken in relation to the Edinburgh Schools Inquiry, the details of the council's response are 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?

Intrusive surveys were carried out to ascertain if there was adequate wall tie embedment at high schools in West Lothian. The investigations involved removing small sections of brickwork in specified locations to allow the Structural Engineers to assess wall tie embedment and other forms of restraint. On completion of the investigation all openings were closed up.

In one case, the investigation concluded that header ties and frame cramps were present as required however where wall ties were exposed approximately half did not achieve the minimum required embedment in the outer leaf. The structural engineers concluded that remedial work was not urgently required but should be programmed at the earliest convenient opportunity. The installation of remedial wall ties to all areas of brick / block construction followed and this work was undertaken in Summer 2016 and overseen by in-house Clerk of Works and West Lothian Council appointed structural engineers.



westlothian.gov.uk

The investigation at another school concluded that in general the wall ties had adequate embedment with the exception of one area at the dining hall. Installation of remedial wall ties was carried out to this area. This work was undertaken in May 2016 and was overseen by in-house Clerk of Works and West Lothian Council appointed Structural Engineers.

Finally, the investigation at another school concluded that apart from one specific area within the sports hall the wall ties were installed correctly. Remedial work was carried out to this area by the relevant public private partnership contractor. This work has been reviewed by West Lothian Council appointed structural engineers for assurance purposes.

With regards to fire stopping, this is an important consideration across the school estate in terms of change works or maintenance that may involve creating openings in fire walls or compartments. There is a programme of five year Fire Safety Risk Assessments (FSRA) undertaken in all schools with annual FSRA's also undertaken. These highlight any actions in relation to the Fire (Scotland) Act (these actions can include training, housekeeping, evacuation drills, building improvements, etc.) and those actions are monitored until complete. West Lothian Council has a capital programme of Fire Precaution investment which supports any work required through the risk assessments. The annual capital budget for this is £450,000.

2. Quality Assurance Practices

- How quality assurance is undertaken on current capital projects on the school estate;
- whether the quality assurance of school capital projects has been reassessed since 2016; and
- whether there are, or were, particular issues depending on the funding model and the lessons to be learned?

West Lothian Council currently adopts a robust approach to the delivery of construction projects and the ongoing management of property assets and this is outlined below:

- **Procurement** - West Lothian Council has a number of suitably qualified and experienced professionals within Finance and Property Services who have the requisite expertise to manage diverse and complex construction projects, including PPP and Design Build Finance and Maintain (DBFM - the replacement for PPP). This includes the ongoing contractual management of properties that were delivered via previously entered PPP contracts;
- **Independent Certifier** - The procurement of the Independent Certifier is undertaken through an approved framework operated by the Scottish Futures Trust which ensures that experienced and appropriate professionals are available for appointment. (applicable mainly to D&B and DBFM contracts);
- **Clients Relationship with Design Team** - West Lothian Council has in place a consultant framework agreement which covers traditional forms of construction and retains the services of the design team throughout the duration of the contract. The form of contract clearly defines the scope of services to be performed. For D&B and DBFM contracts the timing of novation of the design team to the contractor is key;
- **Information Sharing** – the council currently requires consultants and contractors to provide information throughout the procurement and delivery processes and upon completion provide final construction drawings as part of contracts for all projects;

- **Construction phase monitoring and quality** - all construction projects are managed by suitably qualified and experienced professionals and overseen by a member of staff within the council. Suitably qualified and experienced Clerks of Works are appointed on all construction projects to oversee quality of workmanship on site.

In addition, there were a number of recommendations which the council considered in light of the Cole report and which have been incorporated into council procedures. These primarily relate to how the council manages projects particularly during the tender and construction stages. In summary the main areas are as follows:

- Suitably qualified and experienced staff from Construction Services provide technical expertise on all large building construction projects;
- Independent Certifiers are appointed on all Design and Build (D&B) and Design Build Finance Maintain (DBFM) contracts with the scope of service required aligned to the scale of the project;
- Within D&B or DBFM projects, the design team will be retained until a later stage in the contract;
- Final construction issue drawings are provided at practical completion by consultants and 'as-built' drawings obtained from the contractor. This is included as mandatory in the scope of services for all projects;
- The tender process includes marked questions regarding contractor quality assurance processes. Inclusion of a requirement to provide digital photographic evidence at regular intervals and prior to any closing up of work is also required for all large construction projects; and
- A risk based approach to fire surveys of all council buildings is being used as part of the ongoing management of the council's property assets.

I trust this is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



for
Graham Hope
Chief Executive