

FAQ's

Who do I contact for further information?

- **Leaseholders** - Rebekah Brydon, Major Works Officer, Leasehold Team.
Email Rebekah at MajorWorks@Stevenage.gov.uk or telephone on 01438 242666

What does 'Compliance' mean?

- Stevenage Borough Council has a legal responsibility to maintain and test equipment in the block to ensure the safety of its residents. Compliance is the name given to all of those services which includes, amongst others; water risk assessments, legionella monitoring, lightening protection testing and all testing and repairs to emergency lighting and smoke venting equipment. You may have some or all of these in your block.

Why are you outsourcing these works?

- A local framework agreement is being procured in collaboration with North Herts District Council and Broxbourne Borough Council, and will cover Herts, Beds, Essex, Bucks & Cambs. The combined bidding power of the three authorities together is considered advantageous towards delivering value for money. SBC will then enter into a framework contract with a single supplier to deliver the building compliance, servicing, maintenance and repair to its corporate buildings and communal/common areas of its housing properties. Leaseholders will only ever be charged for works done to their own block, as per the leases you hold.

Have I been charged for this element before?

- Yes, we have charged you before within the repairs section of your invoice. If you have every asked for a breakdown of the repairs costs, you may have noticed the various aspects of this contract that your block requires.

Why have you decided to do this now?

- The current contracts are due to expire soon so we have teamed up with the other local authorities in the same situation to find the most cost effective way of procuring these services. By combining the service, we are able to give you the best value for money from the chosen contractor.

How do you select the contractors?

- Contracts are awarded on a competitive tendering basis, whereby contractors are invited to bid for the contract. The tender submissions are then assessed by a panel on the basis of cost and quality.

What happens if the contractor doesn't perform well?

- Our intention is to select a contractor who can demonstrate a strong track record of delivering works of this nature and work closely in partnership to ensure high standards of workmanship and customer care. Contractor's performance requirements are detailed in their contracts and will be managed using robust mechanisms which are also set out in their contract.

What is Section 20?

- Section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 sets out how a landlord must consult with leaseholders, where the landlord intends to carry out '**Major Works**', or enter into a '**Qualifying Long Term Agreement**'.
- **Major Works** are any works which will cost the leaseholder **over £250**.
- A '**Qualifying Long Term Agreement**' or QLTA, is an agreement entered into by the landlord with a wholly independent organisation or contractor for a period of more than **12 months**. Landlords must consult where the amount payable by *any one* contributing leaseholder **exceeds £100** in any one year.
- For more information, please go to The Leasehold Advisory Service website- <http://www.lease-advice.org/topics/?topic=section-20-consultation> or contact the Major Works Officer at SBC.

Can I recommend a contractor?

- While the opinions and views of leaseholders are invited and will be considered, leaseholders **do not** have the right to nominate a contractor for these contracts.
- For this contract, the works will be of such a high value, that EU procurement rules apply and the proposed contract must be advertised by public notice in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). This means leaseholders cannot nominate a contractor.

How will I be billed for the repairs works?

- The way in which you are billed for these types of works will remain the same as it is now. These contracts are for works which you have always benefitted from; they are not new elements being added to your service charge.

As a leaseholder, am I paying for the tenanted flats?

- No. Leaseholders pay for their share of the costs directly through their service charges whereas tenant's contributions are paid from their rent.

I am claiming benefits; do I still need to pay?

- The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) may be able to assist people receiving job seekers allowance, universal tax credits or pension credit with their Service Charges. Please seek independent advice.