

## FAQ's

### Who do I contact for further information?

- **Leaseholders** - Rebekah Brydon, Major Works Officer, Leasehold Team.  
Email Rebekah at [MajorWorks@Stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:MajorWorks@Stevenage.gov.uk) or telephone on 01438 242666
- **Tenants** – Brian Onyejeli, Project Manager, Investment Team.  
Email Brian at [brian.onyejeli@stevenage.gov.uk](mailto:brian.onyejeli@stevenage.gov.uk) or telephone on 01438 242666

### When will the works take place?

- An outline programme has been produced and works will be scheduled over the next 5 years. We will be able to provide further information once we have looked at the most cost effective and logistically viable plan with the contractor.

### Why are the lift works necessary?

- Lift condition surveys have been undertaken and have identified where and when lift works are necessary. This is based on reviews of safety, reliability, compliance and obsolescence.

### How did you select the contractors?

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

### What happens if the contractor doesn't perform well?

- Our selection process was vigorous and competitive and we selected a contractor with a strong track record of delivering lifts projects within independent living schemes with residents continuing to reside in for the duration of the works. The contractor's performance requirements are detailed in their contracts and will be managed throughout the contract.

### How long will the works to my lift take?

- Our contractors will soon be able to clarify our surveys and produce a plan of works. We will inform all residents prior to the works beginning at each block with the hope of having as minimal disruption as possible to all residents.

- We understand that provisions will need to be made for vulnerable and elderly residents. Prior to works commencing at your block, we will request information to identify all those who may require assistance.

### How do we get lift services during the time when the existing lift systems are removed?

- Lift services will be provided by programming the works to ensure that the lift services are never lost. In order to make sure this is the case, works will take place on one lift at a time where there are two in a block.

### Will the works cause much noise?

- The nature of this contract is that the contractor selected has the experience and competency of working on installations with residents residing in the premises. All installations and activities in this programme will happen within the lift shaft and as such, noise is quite negligible. However, works of this nature will be discussed with you in advance to ensure every support and convenience is provided.

### 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 the Major Refurbishment contract.
- For some contracts leaseholders are able to nominate contractors. When and how leaseholders can do this is detailed in the Section 20 legislation.
- For this contract, the works will be of such a high value, that EU procurement rules apply and the contract was advertised by public notice in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). This means leaseholders were not able to nominate a contractor.

### How is my contribution calculated?

- Each block is billed on a block by block basis. You will not be charged for works to other blocks.
- Charges will differ from block to block, because a) the amounts of works can vary widely between blocks; b) Charges depend on the size of the block and the number of flats it contains.
- Your individual charge will be calculated using the Government Rent Formula that we use for the calculation of the tenants rents. This will ensure that smaller properties will pay a smaller percentage of the costs. We will calculate based on all properties within the block, both Leasehold and tenanted.

### When will I know how much I have to pay?

- Under Section 20 we are required to inform you of an estimated cost.
- Detailed surveys will be carried out on an annual basis, for the lifts which fall into the coming year of the programme.
- For example, if your lift is scheduled for year 3 of the programme, a detailed survey of your lift will be done shortly before the works are scheduled to start at your block.
- At this point we will be able to provide you with an estimated cost.

### When will works actually start on my lift?

- Once we have sent you the Notice that contains your estimated cost, you will have 30 days to come back to us with any observations you may have.
- We will look at all the observations and implement any changes to the proposed works that may be necessary.
- Once the 30 day period is over and we are satisfied that there are no concerns that may delay the works, we will send the contractor a works order and they can begin shortly thereafter.

### When will I have to pay?

- You will be invoiced once the works have been carried out at your block.
- This means that if your block is in year 1 of the programme, with the current estimated procurement timescales, you can roughly expect to receive your bill towards the end of the 2018/19 financial year.
- If your block is in year 5 of the programme, you can roughly expect to receive your bill around 2023/2024.
- PLEASE NOTE THESE ARE ONLY ROUGHLY ESTIMATED TIMESCALES AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

### Can I see the full details of the works and costs for my block?

- Yes. If you wish to see more detailed information, we invite you make an appointment to attend the office during working hours where you will be able to review any documentation related to the procurement of the contracts and/or the works related to your block. You can also request to see copies of certification and qualification for the contractors who will be working at your block.
- We do not send all of this information in the post to you as we would have to pass on the significant costs involved in doing so.

### What are my options with the Council to help pay my bill?

- SBC have in place a Leaseholders Payment Options (Major Works) Policy. This can be found on the leasehold page of the SBC website.
- There are various payment options available to leaseholders. The options available depend on the leaseholders individual circumstances.
- Leaseholders will receive a percentage off their invoice if they make payment in full within specified timescales. This is as follows:

Invoice amount	Discount
£1,000 - £5,000	2.5%
£5,000+	5%

### As a leaseholder, am I paying the tenants share?

- No. Leaseholders pay for their works directly through major works service charges whereas tenant's contributions are paid from their rent.

### Can I refuse for the works to be carried out?

- The details of what we are able to charge for and what you are obliged to pay for are detailed in your lease. The lease is a legal contract so there is an obligation from both parties to abide to its terms, including maintenance responsibilities of the landlord.
- This does not mean that we will not take your comments into account; there is a period after each notice is sent to you that allows all leaseholders to make observations and we are legally bound to have due regard to these.

### 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 the costs of certain works or interest on amounts borrowed. You must send them a copy of the invoice within one month of the date on the invoice or they may refuse to consider your request.

### **I already pay service charges, why is this work not covered within that?**

- Your service charge pays for the day to day actual costs incurred in maintaining and running your block. It includes things such as buildings insurance, grounds maintenance, caretaking, communal electricity supply, a management fee and general day to day repairs, which you are billed for as and when they are carried out.
- There is no charge within your service charge for a 'reserve' or 'sinking' fund, so all major works have to be billed for at the time the works are carried out.
- We have consulted with you about the ongoing maintenance charge for the lifts and provided you with an estimate for this contract. The refurbishment works we are proposing will be a separate cost and billed accordingly.