

CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

5 OCTOBER 2006

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET DECISION

Housing – Lead Member - Cllr Leonard

TRISTAR WINDOW AND DOOR REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

1. Summary

The report outlines the request from the Board of Tristar Homes to change the materials used in the window replacement programme for Council homes from timber to UPVC based on a review of the current programme which has included consultation with customers and value for money considerations.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet consider the information provided by Tristar Homes Board and approves the use of PVC-U windows instead of timber.

3. Reason for the decision

To ensure investment programmes continue to meet the needs and aspirations of customers and achieve value for money.

4. Members Interests

Members (including co-opted members with voting rights) should consider whether they have a personal interest in the item as defined in the Council's code of conduct (paragraph 8) and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with paragraph 9 of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest in the item, he/she must then consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgment of the public interest (paragraph 10 of the code of conduct).

A Member with a prejudicial interest in any matter must withdraw from the room where the meeting is being held, whilst the matter is being considered; not exercise executive functions in relation to the matter and not seek improperly to influence the decision about the matter (paragraph 12 of the Code).

Further to the above, it should be noted that any Member attending a meeting of Cabinet, Select Committee etc.; whether or not they are a member of the Cabinet or Select Committee concerned, must declare any personal interest which they have in the business being considered at the meeting, and if their interest is prejudicial, they must also leave the meeting room during consideration of the relevant item.

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TRISTAR WINDOW REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME

SUMMARY

The report outlines the request from the Board of Tristar Homes to change the materials used in the window replacement programme for Council homes from timber to PVC-U based on a review of the current programme which has included consultation with customers and value for money considerations.

RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet consider the information provided by Tristar Homes Board and approves the use of PVC-U windows instead of timber.

DETAIL

1. The original decision to use timber windows instead of PVC-U was taken by Tristar Board in 2001 as part of the planning for the carrying out of improvement works and decent standard works to Council homes. The Board decision was made following a number of presentations and site visits.
2. There is not currently a Borough wide window replacement programme. Window replacement is not automatically part of decent standard works. Window replacement is based on condition in the same way the overall decent standard works element is determined, hence the reason tenants receive different works to their properties. To date however 4063 properties have received new windows as part of the decent standard works.
3. Recent consultation with tenants detailed at appendix A of this report has shown us that window replacement is a high priority with tenants. Tristar Homes, in conjunction with SBC, are currently undertaking a piece of work to identify 'other works' that are required in addition to decent standard works to meet tenant expectations and ensure properties remain popular and sustainable. Once this work is identified as part of the asset management plans within the Company, Tristar and SBC will consider the resource implications of such works and a further report will be brought to Cabinet.

Current Policy

4. The Council's current policy is to use timber for window replacement except in high rise dwellings. This policy has been in place for a number of years and was based on the premise that wooden windows were more environmentally friendly. However, over time the PVC-U market has changed considerably particularly in respect of environmental issues and a thorough evaluation was therefore required. In considering this proposed policy change Tristar have considered the following elements.

Economic Sustainability

5. With regard to economic sustainability it can be very difficult to generalise about costs which inevitably vary depending upon product specification, quality and market conditions, however the life cycles of PVC-U windows appear to involve significantly lower costs than equivalent products made out of alternative materials. Results from the Northern Consortium of Housing Authorities surveys on the cost of window systems show that over a 30-year period the total capital and maintenance costs for a softwood window will be a third (33%) more than for a window in PVC-U. Faults on PVC-U windows usually occur in the operating mechanism or the seals i.e. the components that are not made of PVC-U. Hence the long-term characteristics are determined by the durability, low maintenance and wear characteristics of the components installed into the PVC-U window frames and not by those of the frame itself. Since PVC-U window frames do not have to be painted with fungicides or protective coatings, no maintenance is required apart from occasional cleaning, unlike timber windows that are subject to weathering. PVC-U windows do not rot, warp, peel or chip. The growth and success of PVC-U windows in the UK market clearly demonstrates their cost effectiveness in relation to competing materials.

Social Sustainability

6. PVC-U windows are durable with low maintenance requirements. This provides considerable social benefits in terms of allowing more “free-time” for the owner and user of the product whilst also reducing or eliminating the need for potentially hazardous maintenance operations that exist with the repainting of timber windows every six years.
7. The modern PVC industry provides a safe working environment for a large number of people.

Environmental Sustainability

8. We need to consider the environmental effects on the manufacture, use and disposal of all construction components including the supply chain, total life cycle and waste management.
9. It is now generally accepted that there is very little difference between the environmental impact of PVC-U and timber windows. There have been recent major advances in the recycling of PVC-U products, both pre and post use, with much less waste going for incineration and land fill.
10. PVC-U windows are robust, durable, cost effective building components with good weathering resistance and insulation properties, and have established consumer and public acceptance. Many authorities are now of the opinion that PVC generally is safe in manufacture, use and disposal and that there would be no tangible environmental or safety benefit in banning its use.

Conclusion

11. In conclusion, while timber comes just ahead on environmental grounds, PVC-U windows have a distinct advantage when it comes to socio-economic considerations. In practice this means that we can install twice as many PVC-U windows than timber for the same cost, optimising available resources and give customers what they want. For example the average cost of replacing windows at an average property (9 windows per dwelling) is currently £4,200 and would be approximately £2,200 if PVC-U windows were used.
12. As stated earlier in the report there is no comprehensive window replacement programme at present and this is one of our business and funding considerations for the future.

However, a number of properties are receiving window replacement as part of decent standard works (based on condition) and this policy change will therefore result in future areas receiving PVC-U windows instead of wooden. Clearly there will be logical places to stop the existing programme and begin the new programme to prevent us changing the profile of windows in the same road.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13. This is a good opportunity to optimise resources. As detailed in the body of the report PVC-U windows are approximately half the cost of the wooden windows we are currently using. The change to PVC-U windows will require the appointment of appropriate contractors.

RISK ASSESSMENT

14. There are low risks associated with this proposal as there is a high level of public support for the change in materials.

COMMUNITY STRATEGY IMPLICATIONS

15. None

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD COUNCILLORS

16. The issue has been fully debated and considered by the Tristar Homes Board. Consultation with tenants is detailed at appendix A and shows the level of support for PVC-U.

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CUSTOMER CONSULTATION OUTCOMES, APRIL 2006

What additional improvements outside of the Decent Standards would you prefer?

ISSUE	OUT-COMES
Windows	42%
Security	14%
Fencing	9%
Paths	7%
Internal Walls	7%
Communal Areas	7%
Estate Works	7%
Extra Wall Tiling	6%
Exterior Doors	1%
Roof	0%

As a result the customer who attended the Customer Conference were asked the following questions;

From the list of items that are not currently included in decent Standards Works. Which would you identify as your top priority?

New Windows	82%
Repair and make good fencing/boundary walls	9%
Security Measures	9%
External Works - paths and Estate Works	0%

Tristar's recent 'Have Your Say Day' showed that 42% of respondents said they would like windows replacements in addition to the current Decent Standards work. How much do you agree with this view?

Yes I total agree	85%
I am not sure	0%
No I do not agree	0%
I have no view/I have new windows	15%

If you were to have new windows installed by Tristar would you prefer?

Timber	9%
PVC-U	73%
I already have new windows	9%
I have no preference	9%

Additionally the issue has been raised at the Technical Services Group, previously known as the Repairs, Maintenance and Investment Tenant Group, and the Group wholeheartedly endorsed the outcomes of the two involvement exercises.