

Inspection report of dwellings undergoing refurbishment works as part of the PFI 1 Contract

October 2005 – February 2006

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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback on United House's performance during current refurbishment works following on from Consul's earlier reports dated December 2004 and June 2005.

To allow this information to be accurately collated, random inspections, across all zones, were carried out to properties that were at various stages of having works undertaken. The occupants were interviewed and asked to provide comments on varying aspects of the works and performance of the contractor. The subject areas covered included;

- Quality of works in progress.
- Customer satisfaction
- Health and Safety on site
- Care and protection of occupant's property
- Duration/ programme of works
- Customer care
- Communication

In order to accurately record the responses given by the occupants and to ensure uniformity of response, a standard set of quotes were asked (see appendix 1).

The occupants were also asked to give their ratings on a scale of 1-10 in respect of;

- Communication
- Time-keeping
- Cleanliness/tidiness
- Politeness of operatives
- Helpfulness of management
- Standard of finish
- Complaints procedure
- Project overall.

During the inspections, observations were made by the inspecting officer with regards to;

- Standard of works in progress/completed works
- Health and safety issues
- Cleanliness/tidiness of the internal and external site.
- Safe access and egress to the property provided.

These findings were also rated on a scale of 1-10.

The following properties were inspected at random with the occupant in attendance (unless stated otherwise):

- Property 1
- Property 2
- Property 3
- Property 4
- Property 5
- Property 6
- Property 7
- Property 8
- Property 9
- Property 10
- Property 11
- Property 12
- Property 13
- Property 14
- Property 15
- Property 16
- Property 17
- Property 18
- Property 19
- Property 20
- Property 21
- Property 22
- Property 23

2.0 Inspection reports of properties currently undergoing refurbishment works.

2.1 Property 1

Works to the property had recently been completed at the time of the inspection but had not had a snagging inspection carried out.

The works undertaken were carried out to a good standard and the occupant stated she was pleased with the works. Items of snagging identified included;

- No vent to gas meter cupboard.
- Making good to bathroom door where furniture removed.
- Problem with heating thermostat not working.
- Cracked grouting to tiled bathroom splash back.
- Insufficient space for washing machine.

Occupant's overall score

- 8½ /10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 8/10

2.2 Property 2

Works to the property were near completion at the time of inspection and so had not been fully snagged.

The occupant stated that she was pleased with the result of the works carried out although there was an issue with a damaged fascia to the washing machine allegedly caused by the works team. The occupant confirmed that the matter was being dealt with by the RLO who was in the process of arranging a replacement.

Items of snagging included;

- Cracked glazing to kitchen windows not completed although decorations to the room were completed.
- Missing formica edging to kitchen plinth.
- Loose socket cover plates to living room (occupant stated that making good around sockets had only been completed the day before and so may have been the reason that they had not been secured).
- Poorly applied mastic sealant to perimeter of bathroom vinyl flooring

Occupant's overall score

- 9½ /10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 8/10

2.3 Property 3

This property was inspected at the request of the occupant who had some concerns over the poor workmanship of the works carried out. The works were completed approximately six months ago. The occupant also alleged that damage had been caused to her portable t.v by the works team but that she had not reported it to her RLO.

Despite all of this, the occupant was pleased with the works carried out and gave high scores in all aspects.

The issues noted that require attention were;

- Poorly applied mastic sealant to the perimeter of the kitchen floor covering.
- Nail/screw heads and joints of timber base showing through new floor covering.
- The occupant reported that water collected on the sink drainer and to overcome this, the works team returned to fit a strip of wood to the top of the end panel. Although this rectified the problem of the water collecting, the repair looks unsightly.

Occupant's overall score

- 9½ /10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 6½ /10

2.4 Property 4

The works to the property had recently been completed at the time of inspection and the occupant advised me that the works had recently been passed. The works undertaken had been carried out to a good standard and the occupant stated that he was very pleased with the works carried out.

No defects or issues with standard of workmanship were apparent.

Occupant's overall score

- 10/10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 8/10

2.5 Property 5

The works to the property were in progress at the time of the inspection. Taking into account the stage of the works that were being carried out i.e. in the process of rewiring and decoration, the works were being carried out to an acceptable standard.

Occupant's overall score

- 9½ /10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 7/10

2.6 Property 6

The works to the property were near completion at the time of inspection. Works undertaken were noted to have been carried out to a reasonable standard.

The occupant stated that she was pleased with the works carried out.

Items noted that requires rectification;

- The ceilings throughout the property are high. The newly fitted ceiling roses and lamp holders have been fitted with relatively short lengths of cable. This would mean that the occupant would have to use a large pair of steps whenever it became necessary to change a light bulb. I would suggest that the cables be lengthened to reduce the risk of falls during future changing of light bulbs.
- Plastic protection to floor was coming away in places and was allowing dust to permeate through to the tenants flooring below.

Occupant's overall score

- 8/10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 6½/10

2.7 Property 7

The works to the property were near completion at the time of the inspection. The occupant stated that he was satisfied with the works that had been carried out to date.

There were, however, a few minor points of concern noted;

- The newly fitted worktop had an excessive gap at the junction where it came into contact with the tiled splash back. Although the gap had not been sealed with mastic at the time of the inspection, it remains to be seen if a neat beading of silicone sealant can be achieved, taking into account the size of the gap.
- Damp penetration was evident to the kitchen wall. As external works were currently in progress, it was not clear if the defect had been rectified externally.
- Earth bond cable was left trailing on the bathroom flooring although the occupant stated that the works team were aware of this and that the matter was due to be shortly resolved.
- Plastic sheeting fixed to the stairs carpet had come away at the edges and was allowing dust to collect on the carpet beneath.

- The occupants' laminated flooring was removed to facilitate central heating works but he stated that he was not made aware that he would be compensated for the cost of the damage caused.

Occupant's overall score

- 8½ /10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 6 /10

2.8 Property 8

The works to the property were near completion at the time of the inspection. The occupant stated she was pleased with the works carried out although she had concerns that tradesmen were being sent to other properties instead of completing works to her property and so felt that the works were taking longer than they should have.

Item noted that required rectification;

- Minor cracking was noted to junction of kitchen wall/ceiling following recently carried out decorations.

Occupant's overall score

- 9/10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 7½ /10

2.9 Property 9

The works to the property were near completion at the time of the inspection. The occupant felt that there was often breakdowns in communication between the RLO and Works Team and cited the following examples;

- Damp to the rear kitchen wall had been identified to the RLO yet operatives turned up to fit units to the wall in question before the damp had been rectified.
- The kitchen window and rear door had been painted even though it was found to be rotten and required replacement.

Occupant's overall score

- 6/10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 6/10

2.10 Property 10

This property was inspected in the belief that it was a tenanted property. After a brief conversation with the occupant, it was evident that he was a leaseholder who subsequently raised a number of issues of concern.

- Toughened glass had not been fitted to the bathroom window.
- External painting being carried out when the weather was cold.
- Repair to roof still outstanding which has caused joist to bathroom ceiling to become rotten which in turn has caused the ceiling to partially collapse.
- Poor making good to external kitchen reveal.

Occupant's overall score

- 4/10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 5/10

2.11 Property 11

Internal works to this property were completed before the occupant moved in, approximately 18 months ago and the occupant expressed her satisfaction with the works undertaken. The occupant was however concerned with the external works that were currently in progress and in particular, the lack of communication and feedback that she had experienced during such.

- Number of broken appointments after being promised that tradesmen would call to check windows.
- No contact from RLO.
- Scaffold had been up for approximately 9 weeks but only pointing works had been carried out.
- Tradesmen ringing her bell to gain access to the rear of the property or to talk to colleagues located at the rear of the building.
- Nothing in writing to confirm that the external works were being carried out.

Occupant's overall score

- 5/10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 5/10

2.12 Property 12

The works to this property were near completion. The occupant, although happy with the operatives undertaking the works, expressed his dissatisfaction with the management team stating that he felt that he had been pushed into having what the contractor wanted to do and not necessarily what he wanted.

- The occupant stated that although he had been promised that his boiler could be located in an alcove, where he had wanted it, it was eventually fitted where the existing boiler was.
- The occupant claimed that the new heating thermostat and programmer were not working correctly.
- The radiator to the rear bedroom was not fitted centrally under the window.
- Earth bonding wires to the radiator and basin left trailing on the bathroom floor.

Occupant's overall score

- 5½ /10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 6/10

2.13 Property 13

This inspection was carried to the external of the property that had recently been completed. In attendance were the Asset Manager and a representative of the contractor with the purpose of the inspection being to check that the external works met the required standard. Items noted that required attention were;

- Missing and loose pointing to roof flashing and brickwork.
- One window stuck due to paint.

Due to the above works remaining incomplete, the property was not certified, with the Asset Manager instructing the contractors representative to return and complete the works on the next working day to allow a further inspection to take place.

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 6/10

2.14 Property 14

This property had been temporarily decanted whilst extensive damp proofing works were carried out and was jointly inspected with the zone manager. The damp proofing works had been completed at the time of the inspection and was currently in the process of drying out before the kitchen and bathroom could be fitted

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 7/10

2.15 Property 15

This property was two days into refurbishment works having started with the existing kitchen units (excepting the sink and sink base unit) and tiled splash-backs having been removed. Operatives were in the process of stripping the kitchen walls at the time of inspection. The tenant was otherwise engaged with his carer at the time of the inspection and so it was not possible to gain his feedback on the works that were being undertaken.

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 6/10

2.16 Property 16

This property had been decanted due to the tenants' poor health and was also two days into refurbishment works having started. At the time of the inspection, rewiring works were well underway.

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 6/10

2.17 Property 17

Works to the property had been started a week prior to my inspection with the electrics and central heating having already been completed. The occupants made reference that there was a leak on one of the newly fitted radiators but that the matter had been reported and was in hand. The occupants were pleased with how quickly the works were progressing.

Occupant's overall score

- 10 /10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 7/10

2.18 Property 18

As per the property above, the works had commenced a week prior to my inspection. At the time of my inspection, the occupant was on her way out, explaining that she was staying with her friend whilst the works were being carried out and was therefore unable to afford the time to answer questions on how the works were progressing. A quick inspection of the property revealed that extensive damp proofing works were being carried out to the basement property.

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 7/10

2.19 Property 19

Works to this property had been completed a week prior to my inspection. The occupant was pleased with the way the works had been carried out and the speed in which they were completed i.e. 3 weeks. All works had been carried out to a satisfactory standard.

Occupant's overall score

- 9/10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 7/10

2.20 Property 20

This property was vacant at the time of the inspection as the tenant had been moved into temporary accommodation whilst the refurbishment works were being carried out. The tenant of flat A who had a key to the property provided access. All works had been completed at the time of the inspection and were carried out to a satisfactory standard

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 7/10

2.21 Property 21

Works to this property had started two weeks prior to the inspection. The bathroom suite, along with the electric's and removal of the existing kitchen had been completed at the time of the inspection. The occupant expressed her satisfaction with works that had been completed so far but raised concerns about the when a box marked 'fragile-glass' had had another box stored on top of it causing breakage to some of the glass items stored in the box.

Occupant's overall score

- 9½ /10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 7/10

2.22 Property 22

Works to the property had started a week prior to my inspection. The tenant was concerned about not being kept informed as to when heating was being installed. The date that was given for the heating installation to commence resulted in no one showing up. The tenant claimed that she was not given an alternative date and so I made enquiries as to when the tenant could expect the heating to be installed. The tenant was contacted shortly after and the heating installation completed. The tenant raised a further issue of an operative taking the key to the back door and not returning it in addition to some nails protruding from the floorboards of the bathroom following removal of the old hardboard. Both of these issues were resolved shortly after my telephoning United House to report the matters.

Occupant's overall score

- 6/10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 6/10

2.23 Property 23

Works had started the day before the inspection and central heating installation was taking place at the time of the visit. The tenant confirmed that he had been notified of the start date.

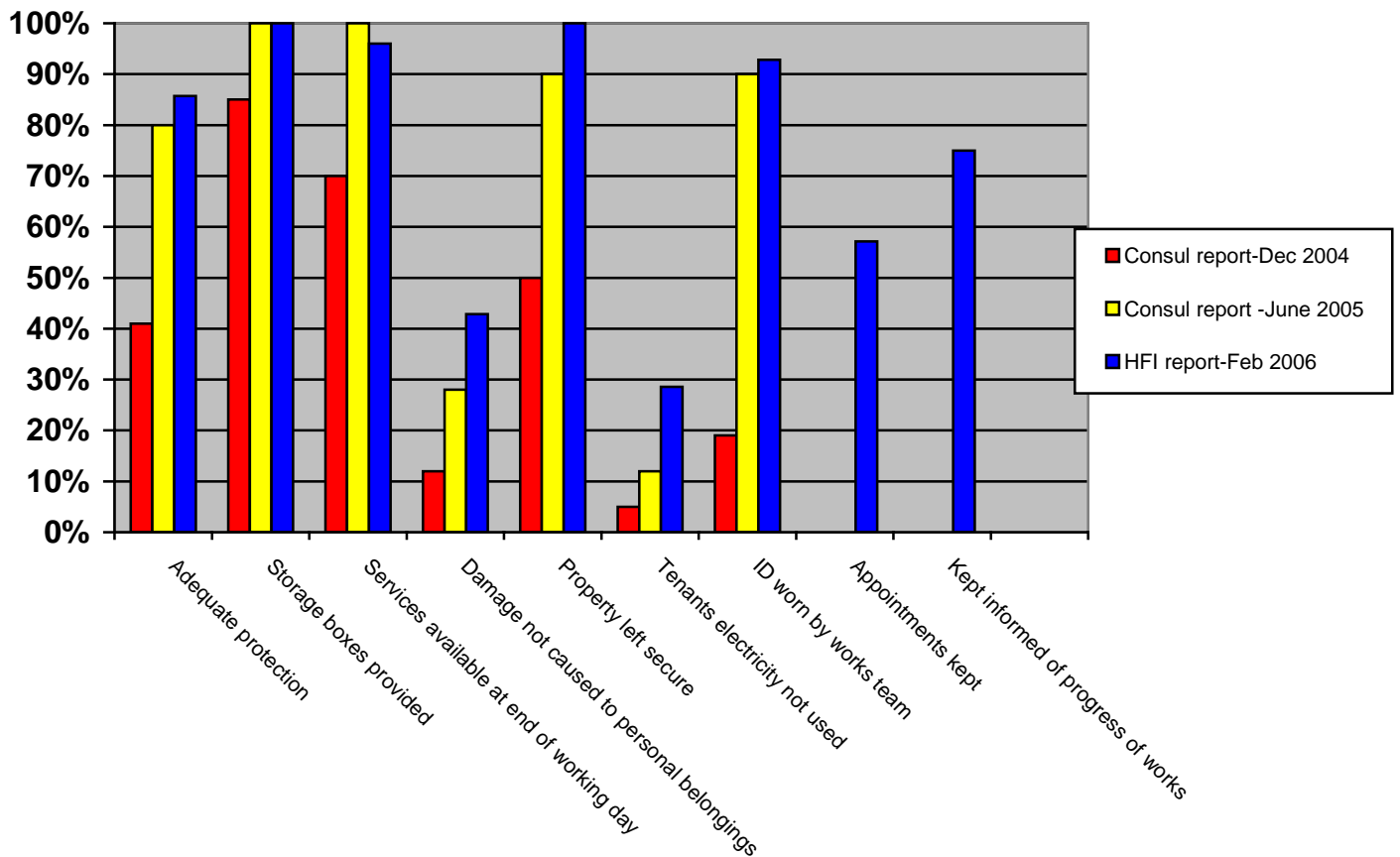
Occupant's overall score

- 8/10

Inspecting officer's overall score

- 7/10

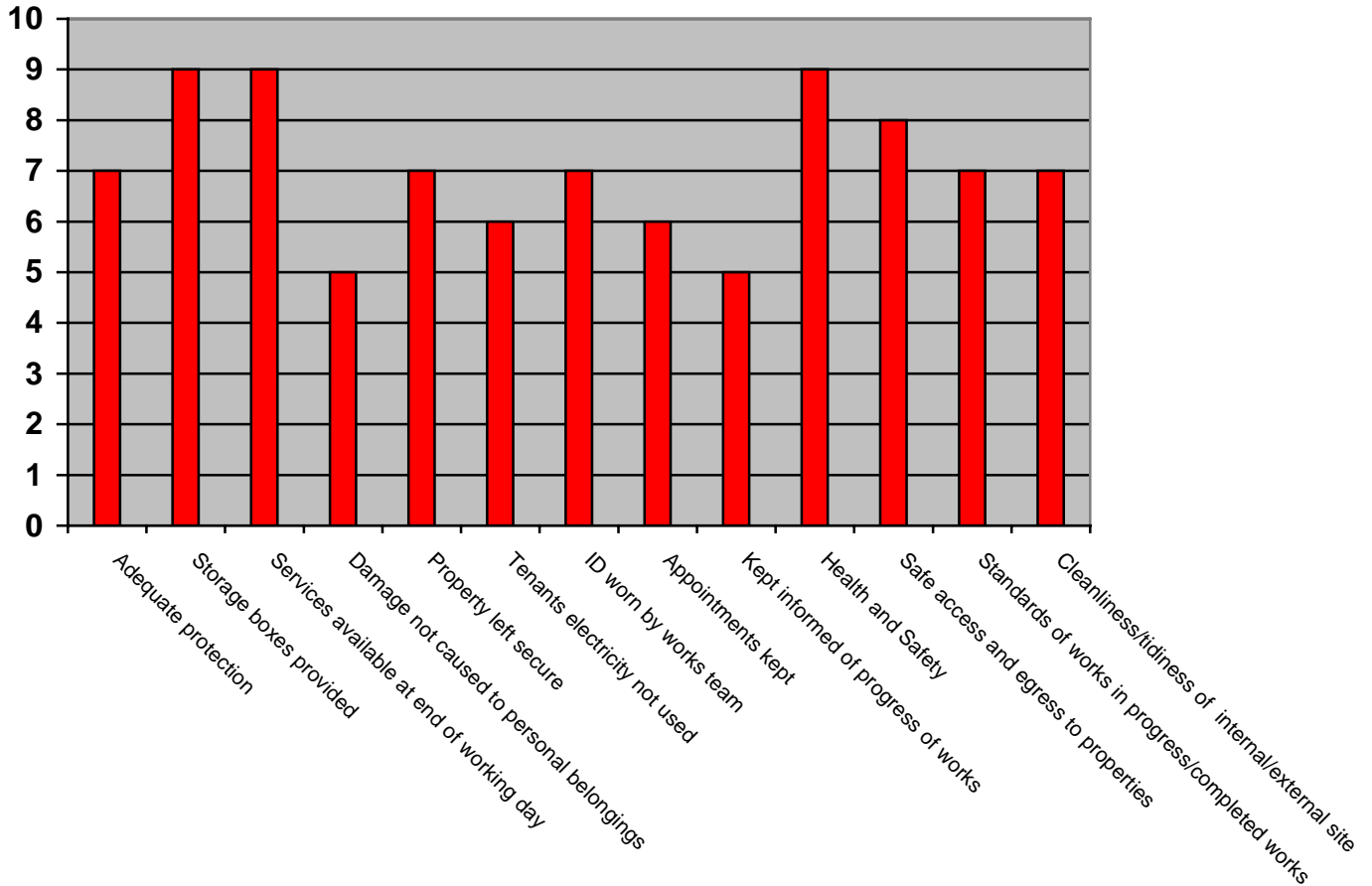
3.0 Graph depicting occupant's feedback and comparison with Consul tenants surveys dated December 2004 and June 2005.



Two new areas of data collection have been included in the above survey i.e. 'appointments kept by works team' and 'occupants being kept informed of progress of works'.

As can be seen from the previous surveys carried out by Consul in December 2004 and June 2005, these latest survey details that most areas surveyed have continued to improve. The one area that has slightly dropped off was 'services available at end of working day', this as a result of one occupant being without heating over night.

3.1 Graph depicting inspecting officers' scoring (out of 10).



Definition of scoring system

- 0-5 Unsatisfactory
- 6-8 Satisfactory
- 9-10 Good

The scoring system employed entailed taking the individual scoring of each property inspected for each subject area of the graph and then dividing that total score between the number of properties inspected to give an average score.

Summary

As can be seen from the graph above it is the inspecting officers' opinion that most areas of works are being satisfactorily undertaken. Areas that could be improved upon include reducing amount of damage to occupants' belongings, keeping occupants more informed of when appointments cannot be kept and providing more feedback and information as to how works are to progress.

It will be noted that the overall scores awarded by the inspecting officer are generally lower than those given by the occupants. It was evident from the inspections undertaken that the majority of occupants were pleased with the works being undertaken and the level of competence and politeness of the operatives. In light of this they tended to mark high on all aspects even where it was felt by the inspecting officer that this was not always possibly justified. Likewise, the majority of occupants will not be technically aware or have the level of expertise in health and safety issues as that of the inspecting officer. I have therefore attempted to give a balanced view of all areas identified during my inspection and feel the marks awarded fully reflects this.

Of the 23 properties inspected, 21 were found to fall within the scoring range of satisfactory whilst 2 were deemed to be unsatisfactory.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 Communication

Feedback obtained from the occupant's questioned showed that communication between the works teams, R.L.O's and the occupants in the main was satisfactory. There were however comments made by four occupants that there had been poor or no communication at all between the R.L.O and themselves with regards to being kept fully informed as to how works were going to progress and how long they would take.

One occupant stated that he had been assured three times that his boiler could be located in the position that he had requested. When it came to fitting the boiler, the occupant was disappointed to discover that it had not been fitted where it was agreed it would be.

Four occupants confirmed that they had experienced broken appointments, two of which were by electricians, one by the heating engineer and another due to a plumber reporting in sick.

4.2 Quality of works

Due to the various stages that works were at, it was not always possible to comment on the finished product. Likewise, where works were identified as requiring snagging, it is highly likely that the minor snagging items identified will have been resolved prior to the Availability Standard inspection.

That said, the quality of works inspected were found to be good. A number of the occupants made reference to the good standard of work carried out by the wall tillers and this was found to be almost consistent throughout the properties inspected.

The standard of kitchen and bathroom fitting was found to be good. There were however a few instances of poorly applied mastic sealant to the perimeter of the floor coverings.

The protection seen to a number of properties was carried out well although to others, attention needed be paid to areas where the protection became detached and allowed dust to collect on the floor covering below.

4.3 Time-scales

It was evident that the occupants interviewed had been informed that works to their properties would be complete in time-scales varying from 6 weeks (where no kitchen or bathroom was being fitted) through to 8 weeks (where bathroom and kitchen works and/or damp works were being carried out). Feedback indicated that these works were generally completed within or before these time-scales had expired.

United House have provided programmes as to time-scales for works to be carried out, allowing 35 working days for properties requiring a new kitchen, bathroom, heating and a re-wire but not including damp proofing works. It is felt that this time period is too long and negotiations are currently underway to reduce this to a more reasonable period.

4.4 Complaints

A number of occupants passed comment on how disruptive and messy the electrical works were with one occupant stating that 'the electrical works went on for three weeks' and the 'attitude of the electrician left a lot to be desired'. It has to be noted however, that on more recent inspections, the time taken to complete electrical works has dramatically improved.

It was clear from the feedback of the occupants interviewed that over 50% said that the level of disruption that the works caused was far worse than what they expected.

Having watched Partners DVD 'Carrying out refurbishment works to your property', the message put across does hit home on the point that the works are disruptive. I also understand that the occupants are again informed prior to the works commencing as to the high level of disruption that can be expected. It is difficult to gauge how to make this message clearer as everybody's level of expectation differs.

As part of future inspections, it is intended to seek occupants' feedback on this particular area to see if they would prefer to have more operatives in their property to speed up the process and reduce the length of disruption (although this will possibly result in more disruption during the course of the works due to more trades being on site).

It was also evident that there were a few issues of occupants belongings being damaged although in fairness, the occupants reported that these matters are being addressed.

5.0 Recommendations

- Inclusion of detailed programmes and time-scales included in door pack so that occupants are aware of how works are to progress.
- Identify time taken for electrical works to be undertaken and monitor and review as necessary.
- Further discussions to take place in respect of refurbishment works period.

Appendix 1

- Check contents of door folder (heating and kitchen design, end of day check-list, code of conduct)
- General appearance-clean/tidy
- Adequate protection to floors and belongings
- Adequate storage facilities and assistance in storing belongings provided
- Care of occupants belongings
- Has any damage caused by workers during works currently in progress
- If damage to belongings caused, contractors response/remedy
- If promise of compensation made for damage how quickly was this paid
- If issue of defective works reported, were they quickly resolved
- Availability of services at end of working day
- Property left secure during course of works
- Occupants electricity/WC used
- Have occupants been kept fully informed on how works will progress
- Have all appointments been kept by the contractor
- Has RLO maintained regular contact and checks and were they easily contactable to address any issues raised
- Did workmen wear Photo ID at all times
- Was notice given as to when works were due to start
- Are occupants being kept informed of how works will progress and time-scales for such.