

Report To: Environmental and Consumer Protection Department
22 April 2002

Report On: Pro-active Approach to the Repair/Maintenance of Stair Lighting within
Private Sector Housing Stock

Report By: Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection

Report No: 215-2002

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek approval of the committee for the introduction of a pro-active approach to the repair and maintenance of stair lighting within the private sector housing stock.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee approve the following measures, which will assist in preventing the decline of housing stock within the Privately Owned/Rented sector.

- the Environmental and Consumer Protection Department introduce a service for the replacement of light bulbs/tubes and the adjustment of stair lighting time clocks within communal properties in the privately owned/rented sector.
- the charges are as specified in section 6.2.2 of this report.
- the service is introduced on the 1st June 2002.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 No additional expenditure is envisaged in the provision of this new service other than the cost of equipment and materials. (See para 3.2)

3.2 The income incurred from the provision of this service, which is estimated to be £400 in the current financial year, will be used to cover the cost of equipment and materials.

4. Local Agenda 21 Implications

4.1 The acceptance of the contents of this report will enhance the aims of Dundee 21.

4.2 The key themes that will be directly addressed by the acceptance of this report are:

- Health is protected by creating safe, clean, pleasant environment.
- People live without fear of personal violence from crime

5. Equal Opportunities Implications

5.1 None.

6. Report

6.1 Background

6.1.1 In the late fifties the Corporation of Dundee came to an agreement with the predecessor of Scottish Hydro Electric to provide a maintenance service for stair lighting within communal properties in the Dundee area. The service included the replacement of light bulbs/tubes and adjustments to time clocks. However, the repair of electrical faults or replacement of the system remained the responsibility of the owners. This service was unique to Dundee and remained in place until the 1st March 2000.

6.1.2 At that time a number of changes had taken place within the electricity industry particularly the move into open competitive markets. This change in conjunction with proposed structural changes within the company itself resulted in the discontinuation of the maintenance service by Scottish Hydro Electric, as it was no longer a viable option for the company.

6.1.3 The discontinuation of this service provision has resulted in the responsibility for the replacement of light bulbs/tubes and adjustments to stair lighting time clocks within communal properties, reverting to the owner or joint owners of the property.

6.1.4 The Council's Housing Department and the various private Housing Associations within the city have arranged either to undertake this maintenance work in-house or contract the work out to a private company. However within the privately owned/rented sector within the city there are no arrangements in place, and the replacement of light bulbs/tubes and adjustments to stair lighting time clocks has become an additional communal responsibility for the owners.

6.1.5 Since the discontinuation of the stair lighting maintenance service by Scottish Hydro Electric, there has been a seven fold increase in the number of complaints received by the Environmental and Consumer Protection Department concerning stair lighting within the privately owned/rented sector. Previously the department only became involved with the service of notices under Section 90 of the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982 for the repair or replacement of stair lighting within communal properties where there were electrical fault/s.

6.2 Proposed Pro-active Approach

6.2.1 It is proposed that the Environmental and Consumer Protection Department introduce a service for the replacement of light bulbs/tubes and the adjustments of stair lighting time clocks within communal properties in the privately owned/rented housing sector in the city.

6.2.2 It is recommended that the following charges are made for this service:

Cost of Visits

Adjustment of time clock	£5 per visit (incl of VAT)
Replacement of light bulbs	£5 per visit (incl of VAT) visit includes the replacement of one bulb, additional bulbs will be charged at £1 per bulb.
Replacement of fluorescent tube	£5 per visit (incl of VAT) does not include cost of tube. Each tube will be charged at cost price (incl of VAT)

These charges are set at a rate to be attractive to users, and to partially offset the costs of the ECPD, although no significant income is anticipated. The main saving envisaged to the council, is in the reduction of officer-time, that might otherwise require to be spent on lengthy enforcement procedures, for minor items of work, which are nevertheless essential.

6.2.3 Following receipt of complaints from residents in tenemental properties, concerning defective stair lighting, the source of the problem is often found to be a spent bulb or the need for a minor time clock adjustment..

6.2.4 Following receipt of a complaint, it is necessary for an officer to visit to ascertain both the validity of the complaint and the action to be taken. As this initial visit would require to be made, regardless of the action to follow, no charge for this visit has been incorporated into this proposal. The scale of charges proposed will only apply should one or more residents choose to use the service on offer.

6.2.5 In the event of there being more than one spent bulb the complainer would have the option of paying for further bulb replacement as per the additional charge in 6.1.2. Should the complainant be unwilling to pay the additional charge, only the complainants bulb will be replaced and no further action will be taken.

6.2.6 It is proposed that this services will be provided on request an only following the payment of the charges detailed in 6.2.2. To facilitate payment it is recommended that the Environmental and Consumer Protection Department introduce the telephone and debit/credit card payment system for this service at 8 City Square. As an alternative, payment may also be made on site, direct to the investigating officer who will carry a receipt book.

6.2.7 By offering this new service, it is hoped to bring about an immediate resolution to problems that might otherwise persist, and result in an unsafe environment for residents living in a property.

6.2.8 In addition, the potential exists to reduce greatly the need to take formal enforcement action which is a lengthy and expensive procedure.

6.2.9 It is recommended that this service is introduced on the 1st June 2002. This will allow for the necessary equipment and procedures to be put in place.

7. Consultation

Chief Executive
Director of Finance
Director of Support Services
Director of Housing

8. Background Papers

8.1 None.

Signed: Date:
Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection