

BRIEFING NOTE

TO: Health, Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel
DATE: 1st December 2008

RE: Accord Housing Association Report on the Lift Breakdown and the resulting contingency planning in place for other sites.

Purpose

This report is in response to an enquiry by Councillor Ault on a management plan for the Old Vicarage and other similar sites and what actions and contingencies will be put in place should there be a long term lift breakdown in the future.

Background Information and Actions Taken

The lift at Old Vicarage Close, Pelsall, an Extra Care Scheme, was serviced in September 2008 and the report received from the lift service engineers (Concept) advised that a new control panel and valve block would need to be budgeted for in the next six months.

On 7th October the lift stopped working completely and the engineers came out and repaired it the same day. However, the lift stopped working again on 8th October midday.

The engineers requested the parts to be ordered as they were unable to repair the lift. Concept were instructed to progress the issue as a matter of urgency. They informed us that due to the time implications of engineering bespoke parts for the lift, the installation would not be completed until mid November.

On the 10th October the order for the replacement parts was made.

Of the three floors at Old Vicarage Close, two remain serviced by alternative exits at floor level. The top (second floor) only has access via a staircase when the lift is not operational.

The situation with regard to the lift was communicated to tenants immediately. Measures were also put into place to ensure tenants could still access activities and meals in communal areas on their floors.

On 21 October Maureen Bradley (Director of Care and Support) met with tenants to discuss how we could better meet their needs. It was agreed that a stairlift would be installed so tenants from the second floor could get down to the first and additional paving would be commissioned so tenants could get outside from the first floor and get around the building and enter on the ground floor. Maureen also agreed with tenants to employ a concierge specifically to help with any mobility issues and assist with getting shopping up and downstairs etc. Maureen also agreed that at least weekly bulletins would be posted in the scheme to inform tenants of progress and that all tenants would be visited in the subsequent two days to ascertain any other additional needs.

Prior to the meeting, one resident had complained to BBC Midlands Today, which featured a story on 21 October 2008. Maureen Bradley Director of Care and Support gave an interview to the BBC and apologised for the disruption.

Since that meeting the following work has been undertaken at Old Vicarage Close. Accord have:

- ✓ Installed a stairlift which will take tenants from the second floor to the first floor where they have external access.
- ✓ Installed additional paving outside of the first floor external access door, and installed a lock for easy access to tenants.
- ✓ Employed a concierge to assist with carrying things up and down stairs.
- ✓ Revised the activity programme ensuring activities are available on all three floors.
- ✓ Delivered meals to tenants who cannot easily access the dining room.
- ✓ Revised everyone's care and support plans to take account of any additional difficulties or concerns because of the lift breakdown.
- ✓ Posted weekly bulletins updating tenants on progress with the lift repair.
- ✓ Informed tenants they will receive a rebate from their service charge costs for the lift costs.

The Lift Company engineers commenced on site on the 10th November 2008 and it is projected that it will be operational by the 28th November 2008.

On the 13th November, a further report appeared in the Express and Star Newspaper. It was subsequently agreed that a report would be submitted by Accord to the Scrutiny Committee. This report would highlight the work Accord have done to date and the strategy that has been put in place to manage and mitigate against any further recurrence, either at Old Vicarage Close or at similar schemes.

Following the lift breakdown Accord has:

- ✚ Commissioned an independent review of the status of all of our lifts. Our Asset Management Strategy will be revised following the survey in order to build in and prioritise any necessary works in a planned approach.
- ✚ Purchased a portable stairclimber- this can be taken out to schemes should there be a lift breakdown (please note this lift can also take wheelchairs).
- ✚ A commitment to undertake risk assessments on all tenants living above ground floor level in all relevant schemes should there be any lift failure.
- ✚ A commitment to ensure all schemes with lifts have clear and updated plans for dealing with lift failure as part of their business continuity plan

Recommendations

A lift breakdown anywhere is always at least an inconvenience and at worst very restricting and isolating for those with mobility issues. Accord's lifts are serviced regularly and we have a contract which ensures the engineers visit the site in less than 24 hours of any breakdown. Whilst we will always try and avoid breakdowns regrettably they can occur and major breakdowns can take up to 2 weeks in repair following the receipt of the parts.

The management plan we were able to mobilise at Old Vicarage Close including ongoing communication with tenants has worked well under the circumstance. We will of course review the plan following this occurrence to ensure should a similar event ever happen in the future we can improve on the services available to tenants during the time the lift is unavailable.

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