

FAQs – S20: Mechanical and electrical contract – Stage 2

What does the mechanical and electrical contract cover?

This is the service we provide for ad-hoc repairs of mechanical and electrical installations in all of our residential properties including communal areas. It is the planned servicing and safety inspection and repairs to fire alarm systems, fire fighting equipment, sprinkler systems and emergency lighting. As well as planned servicing and repairs to stair lifts and hoists, passenger lifts, CCTV and water testing. You pay for this service via your service charge.

Why are you changing it?

The current contract for mechanical and electrical repairs and maintenance finishes on 31 March 2018. We are therefore taking this opportunity to ensure that we have the most appropriate supplier providing the services required.

The preferred contractor(s) will undertake the programmed and ad-hoc repairs of mechanical and electrical installations in all of our residential properties including communal areas.

I don't have any of these services, why have you written to me?

We are writing to all of our customers to let them know about the planned changes to the mechanical and electrical contract as at some point you may be in receipt of some of the services provided under this contract. We have a legal obligation to inform you of any proposed changes to services you receive now or those that you could receive in the future. This does not mean that these services will necessarily become available to you. If we are going to provide a new service to you in the future we will let you know in advance.

If I don't have any of these services will I still be charged for this contract?

You only pay for the cost of a service you receive.

How did you select the contractor?

A two stage tender process has been undertaken in accordance with required procurement regulations and an evaluation was undertaken of all bids received from the invitation to tender (ITT). The same evaluation criteria were used when assessing all of the bids received and the contractor with who was evaluated with the best bid for each service has been appointed.

Why have you selected the contract terms specified in the agreement (four years, with the option to extend for three lots of two years)?

In order to establish consistent service levels and to allow for accurate budget setting, an initial four year period was decided upon. A review of the services will

be undertaken before the contract extension to ensure that required scope of service is supplied with annual reviews after this to allow for necessary adjustments.

If a contract is for a number of years, what happens if the contractor doesn't perform well? Do they keep getting the work?

The contract will say that if works or services are not delivered or are not value for money, we may end the contract.

What will you do about the lots where no bids were received? How will those services be provided and how can we be sure they will be value for money?

For these lots we will package the work into regional tenders and approach the supply market with further tender opportunities. In the meantime existing service providers will continue to deliver services.

What do you mean when you say costs for some lots are under the threshold required for S20 consultation?

Under S20 legislation a landlord must consult with all service charge payers when they are looking to sign contracts for services which will cost more than £100.00 per property per year. In this instance Lots 1, 5 and 6 have had tenders submitted which for those properties affected will mean their charges are less than £100.00 per year. Whilst Section 20 consultation is no longer required, the procurement process is still followed to ensure value for money for customers.

Why have you chosen a contractor in Wakefield to cover lifts in Devon and Cornwall. Will they be able to get out quickly in an emergency?

This is the contractor's head office. They have local operational teams in the areas where service is due to be delivered so there should not be any unnecessary travelling costs, meaning they can also respond quickly in an emergency.

Why is a company based in Belfast chosen for Dorset, Devon and Cornwall to test water?

This is the contractor's head office. They have local operational teams in the areas where service is due to be delivered so there should not be any unnecessary travelling costs.

Couldn't you get one contractor to cover all the lots?

This was an option requested in the tender but no contractor bid for all lots. This is not surprising due to the specialist nature of many of the services and the need to have locally based teams providing the services.

What will you do about the lots where no bids were received? How will those services be provided and how can we be sure they will be value for money?

For these lots we will package the work into regional tenders and approach the supply market with further tender opportunities.

Will you be installing stair lifts in communal stairways?

Stair lifts will be installed if after an assessment by an occupational therapist there is no alternative means of a customer accessing their home. All other options would be considered first i.e. relocation to another property.

We already pay into a fund for replacing the passenger lift in my building, why do we need this as well?

This contract would be for servicing of passenger lifts and emergency repair call outs. It does not include replacement of a lift.

What will the call out time be for emergency repairs to a lift?

If someone is trapped in the lift a contractor should attend within one hour. For a lift that has broken down then an engineer should attend within four hours. However if the contractor is experiencing high volumes of work there could be a slight delay.

What does water quality mean?

Communal water supplies can, in the right conditions be breeding grounds for bacteria. We therefore need to ensure that this is controlled and monitored by ensuring that there is good turnover of water supplies, flushing through outlets that are used infrequently, monitoring water temperatures and testing. These services are carried out by specialist companies.

What 'works' are you planning to do on my water quality and why? Is there something wrong with our water?

We carry out regular tests to reduce the risk of there being anything wrong with the water. Whilst the associated risk from communal water supplies is very minimal, keeping water temperatures within defined parameters, flushing water outlets, testing the water, etc reduces this risk.

Does this mean you will need to come into my property to check on my water?

No. We will only be visiting properties where there is a communal water tank which feeds cold water to multiple properties.

Will you be installing water softeners?

No.

How much will this cost me?

This is not a demand for payment at this stage.

You say this is a legal consultation, are you now going to add legal costs to my service charges?

No. Although this consultation process is required by law there are no legal costs involved.

Please send more information about the services you are looking to provide

A description of the services to be provided under the agreement can be found on our website www.aster.co.uk – search for 'Have Your Say' or inspected by appointment at our main offices. Alternatively we can email this specification to you.

I am not happy with the current services provided

Under this consultation process we are unable to deal with complaints about quality of current provisions. Please visit our website or contact us to log any issues you are experiencing as a formal complaint.

What is an observation?

You have a right to reply with your comments to a Section 20 notice up to 30 calendar days from the date of the notice. Your reply is known as an 'observation'. We will acknowledge any observations we receive within 21calendar days.

A summary of all the observations received and our responses to them are sent out with the next stage of the consultation documents and may also be available on the website.

All the comments and feedback we receive are taken in to account when planning the work and awarding the contract.

How do I make an observation?

You can make an observation about a notice in writing either by letter or e-mail. You can't make observations verbally either over the telephone or in person.

I have received a Section 20 letter, is this notice a bill?

No, this is not a bill. You don't need to make any payment in response to receiving this letter or any enclosed notices.

Will my service charges increase?

Your service charge will depend on the services and works which take place in the building/estate that you live in. We will not be asking you to pay for anything for which you are not receiving or will not receive a service for in the future.

What will I pay for services?

You would only pay for the cost of maintaining a service you receive and these costs will be included in your service charges.

I am planning to sell my property before the work described in the S20 notice is completed

You should keep the documents safe and pass them to your solicitor when you have accepted an offer. Any potential purchaser needs to be aware of works that are planned at your property.

Where can I go for advice?

You can contact your local Citizens Advice Bureau for independent advice. The following websites also have useful information about the S20 process:

<http://www.lease-advice.org>

<http://www.leaseholderadvicecentre.co.uk>