

Histories, expectations and politics of domestic infrastructure provision in council housing

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Workshop: Justice, governance and energy services
Paris 25th - 26th September 2014

Introduction

Presentation:

- What energy services matter and for what reasons?
- What degree of responsibility does and should the state have?
- What degree of access to energy services should it ensure?
- How do past, current and potential future governance arrangements serve to support or obstruct access to energy services of different forms?

Stevenage

Explicitly modern New Town

How did they take decisions about provision?

1949, 72nd Corporation Meeting: “It was agreed that, the Corporation’s building proposals should include the provision of both gas and electricity in order that tenants might have a choice of service.”

Negotiations with Gas and Electricity Boards

Money

“Freedom of choice”
important – promised
to tenants, when
negotiating with
Electricity Board.



But cost mattered
too.

(10) ~~that in~~ premises to be constructed by the Corporation adequate and satisfactory wiring be installed so that the occupant, if he so desires, has the opportunity of all reasonable electricity services.

(11) that tenants of Corporation property to be constructed shall, where such services are available, have free choice as to the use of electricity or gas for any purpose except that of lighting.

(12) that in such cases where it is not possible to leave the choice of apparatus to tenants, the Corporation will make a balanced choice between gas and electrical apparatus.

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Local Studies,
CNT/ST/1/1/1 Minute Book
Jan-Apr 1950, 86th CM,
7/2/50

“On the question of what constituted ‘adequate and satisfactory’ installation in premises, the Board representatives had been informed that while the Corporation wished to give the tenant the fullest facilities, **limits of cost** had to be taken into consideration”.

Change in provision 1953

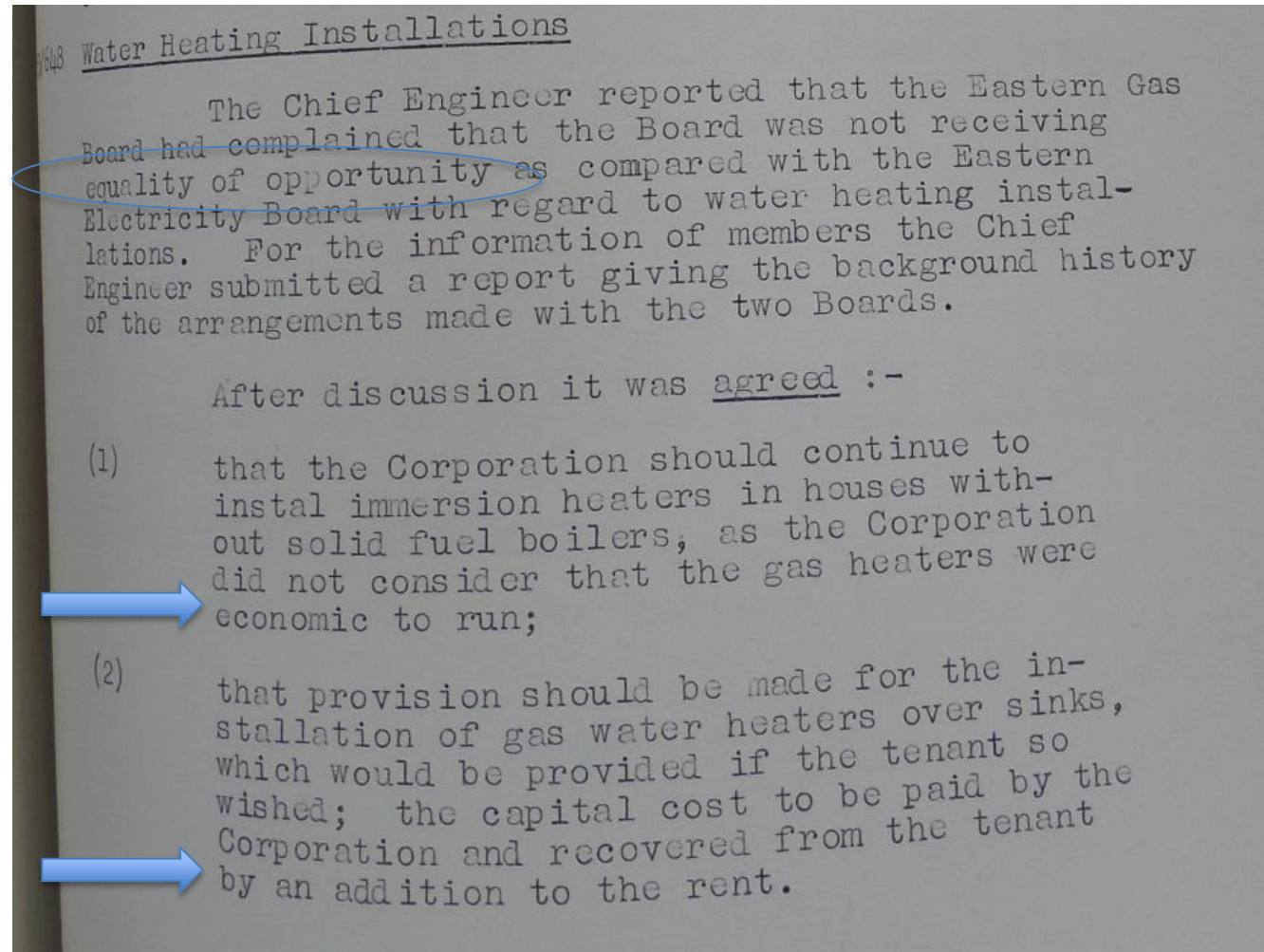
Issues:

Freedom of choice

Gas Board sales

Cost to tenants and Corporation

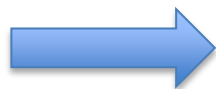
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CNT/ST/1/1/1 Minute Book
1953 173rd MC 10/11/53



Central government influence on provision

1956: To get subsidy approval
from Ministry, Corporation had
to reduce standard.

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CNT/ST/1/1/1 Minute Book
1956, 208th CM 26/6/56



(10)	Felt and			4. 0. 0
(11)	Modifications to verge details			1. 5. 0
(12)	Reduce concrete paths			
(13)	Close-boarded fencing in lieu of brick			
			Total per house	£ 50. 0. 0
In addition to the above, the following reductions can be made:				
(14)	House Type C.14.	Omit one window to bathroom; Substitute folding door for sliding door		6. 3. 0
(15)	" "	B.11. Roof to Store in timber in lieu of concrete; Roof to Porch in timber in lieu of concrete Foundations to Porch modified		8. 0. 0
(16)	" "	C.29 Roof to Porch in timber in lieu of concrete. Foundations to porch modified		3. 10. 0
(17)	Old People's dwelling.	Substitute folding door for sliding door		3. 15. 0
<u>Garages.</u>				
(18)	Reduce P.C. sum for facing bricks			2. 0. 0
(19)	"	external walls to 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ " with piers		11. 0. 0
(20)	Protected metal sheeting in lieu of wood wool			
	Felt and asbestos to roof			5. 0. 0
(21)	Modification to ironmongery			10. 0. 0
			Total per garage	£ 18. 10. 0
Regarding Item 8, the immersion heaters can be put back at tenant's request, for which they pay an additional weekly charge. Electrical connections and the boss required on the cylinder to take the immersion heater are provided for in the contract.				
At the time of preparing this report, 20th June Ministry approval				

The role of tenants

Tenants in Stevenage had important but more piecemeal roles:

- Provided their own cookers and wash-boilers, sometimes hiring washing machines by the hour
- Tenants were provided with space and water heating appliances – but provided additional electric or gas space heaters
- Paid extra for electric immersion heaters (through rent or on top of it) and gas water heaters
- Hire-purchase was important for acquiring appliances
- Asked for permission to put in extra radiators or power points
- Protested about poor building standards and rents

Mid 1960s:

- Began retrofitting central heating and increased insulation – paid for by addition to rent, using Corporation schemes

So, how did all these factors come together the shape provision?

Stocksbridge was a small town in South Yorkshire, outside Sheffield in the north of England. Rapidly growing town from the 1840s, when Samuel Fox established a steelworks.

Stocksbridge: Shay Lane Estate, 1923-31

Service	How provided
Space heating	Yorkshire range in living room, open fires ('register grates') in two bedrooms & in 'nice' living rooms if the house had two living room
Water heating	Back boiler attached to the Yorkshire range in living room and hot water cylinder
Cooking	Yorkshire range in sitting room (later the Gas company installed a point for gas cooker in the scullery). Larder for cold storage.
Bathing	Fixed bath, at least some in a bathroom with hot water either from back boiler or copper
Laundry	Gas copper, clothes line
Light	Gas light, one point per room

‘Unfit’ dwellings 1920s & 1930s

Dwellings declared slums:

No exact definition, but

Housing Act 1936 included
concerns with

- Cellar dwellings
- Very low ceilings
 - Unsafe
 - **Unlit**
 - Undrained
- Unventilated

Stocksbridge: Spink Hall Estate, post-war, 1946-1950

Service	How provided
Space heating	Background central heating (solid smokeless fuel) to 55F (12.8C) in bedrooms and 63F (17C) in the living room when outside 30 F (-1.1C). Topped up with gas fire in living room.
Water heating	Indirect hot water system combined with the central heating.
Cooking	Gas cooker provided. Larder for cold storage.
Bathing	Bathroom with hot water hot water system.
Laundry	Gas copper, clothes line
Light and electricity	Electric light. Four 15 amp sockets, one 5 amp socket.

Stocksbridge: later part of Stubbin Farm Estate, 1955-57

Service	How provided
Space heating	“Sitting room type fire” (New Marathon Fire). Radiator in dining-kitchens (not in working kitchens) and convection heating in two bedrooms. Perhaps open fire in bedroom(s)?
Water heating	Back boiler from sitting room fire.
Cooking	Either gas (New World S4183) or electric (Creda model 310/2 Star Gazer) cooker provided (tenant’s choice), with points for both. Larder for cold storage.
Bathing	Bathroom with hot water system.
Laundry	Gas wash boilers (20a Elton type?, 10 gal capacity), clothes line
Light	Electric light.

Stocksbridge: East Whitwell Estate, 1960-62

Service	How provided
Space heating	Gas warm air heating, OR electric underfloor heating with an electric panel fire in living room
Water heating	Unclear how gas-warmed houses heated water – gas? Electric immersion heater in those with electric heating.
Cooking	Cooker according to heating system. Pantry (larder).
Bathing	Bathroom with hot water system.
Laundry	Unclear.
Light	Electric light., a 13 amp socket in each main room.

'Unfit' dwellings 1950s & 60s

1957 Housing Act, code for defining 'fit' housing:

- Repair
- Stability
- Freedom from damp
- **Natural lighting**
 - Ventilation
 - Water supply
- Drainage and sanitary conveniences
- **Facilities for storage, preparation and cooking of food**, with waste water supply

1989 'fitness standard' added

- heating
- hot water

Conclusion

- Sense of change
 - in standards of provision
 - living standards
 - what was considered unacceptable
- Sense of non-change
 - in the services provided for
- Sense of complex politics
 - Consumers/tenants, suppliers, Local Authorities and central government all influenced provision