

10.00am, Thursday, 29 June 2017

Grenfell Tower – Council Response to Fire Safety and Contingency Planning

Item number	8.1
Report number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	All Wards

Executive summary

This report sets out the Council's response to the Grenfell Tower fire in London on 14 June 2017.

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Grenfell Tower – Council Response to Fire Safety and Contingency Planning

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Council is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 note the actions taken so far in response to the Grenfell Tower fire to ensure residents are safe and continue to be safe in their homes;
 - 1.1.2 note that a full review of fire safety in tower blocks is underway, working with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and residents; and
 - 1.1.3 agree that the outcome of that review will be reported to the Housing and Economy Committee in November 2017.

2. Background

- 2.1 On 14 June 2017 a catastrophic fire took place in Grenfell Tower, London. At least 79 people are believed to have lost their life, with many more injured or made homeless.
- 2.2 Coverage of the fire has led to understandable concern about fire safety among residents of tower blocks and significant questions have been raised about the effectiveness of Government and the local council's response.
- 2.3 There is considerable speculation over the potential cause or causes of the fire. A full understanding of the cause will be informed by the investigations and inquiries that are taking place. However, early indications suggest the material used in over-cladding and insulating the building played a significant part.
- 2.4 The Council manages 44 multi storey tower blocks. Within these blocks, 3,033 properties are owned by the Council and 544 by owner occupiers and private landlords.
- 2.5 Fire Safety has always been an important priority and the Council and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service work closely together to ensure that tenants and residents are safe in their homes.
- 2.6 Housing teams carry out daily inspections of all tower blocks to check that stairwells are kept clear and arrange for essential repairs to be carried out quickly. Fire safety equipment is regularly checked and maintained as part of a planned programme of maintenance. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service check tower blocks each year, fire safety leaflets are widely available in blocks,

and free home visits are also available to all residents to provide tailored fire safety advice or to fit homes with free smoke alarms.

3. Main report

- 3.1 Following the initial media reports of the fire on the morning of 14 June 2017, local housing managers mobilised housing teams and concierge staff to be visible and available to tenants and other residents of the tower blocks owned and managed by the Council. Housing teams will continue to be visible and available and will follow up this presence with meetings with resident groups in tower blocks over the coming days and weeks.
- 3.2 Face to face communications with residents have been followed up with an additional publication of the Council's regular newsletter to tenants, Tenants' Courier, which set out what we understand about the fire, what the Council is doing to keep residents safe and what action residents can take to improve fire safety in and around their homes.
- 3.3 As the effects of the fire became apparent a full review of fire safety in tower blocks was instructed to ensure that all the lessons arising from the incident would be acted upon. An external fire safety expert has been appointed to assist with the review.
- 3.4 Residents in tower blocks have been invited to join a Fire Safety Tenants and Residents Panel which will allow the Council to directly involve them in the review. All tower block residents will also be invited to take part in a survey to ensure their views are fully reflected.
- 3.5 An initial review of the materials used in over cladding was carried out within 24 hours of the incident. This established that materials used in over-cladding and insulating Council owned tower blocks were not the same material reported to have been used in the Grenfell Tower refurbishment. Fire risk assessments have been updated for each block following the incident.
- 3.6 A full briefing by officers from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Council was provided to elected members, MSPs and MPs on Monday 19 June. Elected representatives have played a critical role in supporting the work of housing and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service teams in reassuring residents at a very difficult and worrying time.
- 3.7 The Council has worked closely with the Scottish Government to help build a national picture of fire safety in tower blocks. Work is underway with the owners of other buildings, including housing associations, in the city to identify any potential risks.
- 3.8 Working with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, a project board will be established to oversee the review. Consultation on the scope of the review is currently taking place. It will include:
 - an assessment of building design, materials and construction methods;

- full building surveys and testing of materials used construction;
 - a review of existing management approaches to fire safety in tower blocks; and
 - an assessment of the effectiveness of domestic sprinklers and communal alarm systems.
- 3.9 The outcome of the review will be reported to the Housing and Economy Committee in November 2017, with an update on progress in August 2017.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 The fire safety review will provide assurances to the Council about the safety of tower blocks and the wider Council housing estate, and of the robustness of fire safety procedures and provision. The review will also identify any actions required.
- 4.2 Tenants and residents feel safe and secure in their homes, and are familiar with fire safety procedures.
- 4.3 Tenants and residents are involved in the fire safety review and are supported to have their say.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 The fire safety review will produce guidance on any works that may be required to maximise fire safety across the Council's housing estate. This will be reviewed after the review has concluded. There is contingency within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to facilitate any works that may be required to ensure fire safety.
- 5.2 The HRA is self-contained and has no direct impact on the Council's general revenue budget. The HRA is paid entirely from income from tenants' rents or assets held on the HRA account.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The Council has responded quickly to Scottish Government information requests to help build a national picture of fire safety in tower blocks. The Council will continue to work closely with the Scottish Government to provide any further information required.
- 6.2 It is requested that an update on the fire safety review is provided to the Housing and Economy Committee in August 2017, with the outcome reported in November 2017.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 As part of the fire safety review and associated consultation with tenants and residents, specific consideration will be given to fire safety arrangements for tenants and residents with additional support needs or vulnerabilities.
- 7.2 The Council will work with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to identify vulnerable tenants and residents who may benefit from a free home safety visit.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 There are no direct implications for sustainability emerging from this report.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Tenants and residents will be actively involved in the review through the Fire Safety Tenants and Residents Panel. A survey will also be carried out to capture the wider views of tenants and residents living in tower blocks.
- 9.2 The Council has provided a briefing for Councillors, MP's and MSP's. Actions from this briefing session have been taken forward to ensure members are suitably supported to respond to constituent queries and concerns.
- 9.3 The Council has fully supported the Scottish Government information requests to help build a national picture of fire safety in tower blocks.
- 9.4 The Council will ensure that tenants, residents, the public, elected members and local parliamentarians are kept informed as the Fire Safety Review progresses.

10. Background reading/external references

None

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11. Links

Coalition pledges

Council priorities

**Single Outcome
Agreement**

Appendices None