

<b>Committees:</b>	<b>Dates:</b>
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee	24 September 2018
<b>Subject:</b> Fire Safety Update – HRA Properties	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community & Children's Services  <b>Report author:</b> Paul Murtagh Assistant Director Barbican and Property Services	<b>For Information</b>

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress that has been made in relation to fire safety matters since the last update report submitted to Committee on 5 June 2018.

### Recommendations

Members are asked to note, consider and comment on the report.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. In July 2017, an initial detailed report was presented to this Committee, the Community & Children's Committee and the Audit and Risk Management Committee updating Members on the City of London Corporation's (CoLC) approach to fire safety in its social housing portfolio and, following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, the subsequent actions that we had taken. This report informed Members of the progress we had made with matters such as:
  - fire risk assessments,
  - communication with residents,
  - estate management,
  - fire safety maintenance and improvement works,
  - inspections by the London Fire Brigade (LFB),
  - potential future improvement works.
2. Subsequently, further update reports were brought back to this Committee and the Community & Children's Committee in January and February 2018. In addition, at its meeting on 5 June 2018, this Committee received a further report entitled 'Fire Safety Review', which informed Members of the work that has been done on potential improvement works to enhance the safety of the CoLC's social housing estates and its residents in the event of fire.

3. This report is intended as a further update.

## **Considerations**

### **Automatic Water Fire Suppression Systems (Sprinklers)**

4. At its meeting on 11 May 2018, Members of the Community & Children's Committee agreed a recommendation from its Director to retro-fit automatic water suppression systems in each of its five social housing high-rise tower blocks below:
  - Great Arthur House, Golden Lane;
  - Petticoat Tower, Middlesex Street;
  - West Point, Avondale Estate;
  - Central Point, Avondale Estate;
  - East Point, Avondale Estate.
5. Further discussions have been held with colleagues in the CoLC's Planning Team in relation to Great Arthur House, which Members agreed was the priority as a result of the compartmentation issues. A Gateway 1-4 report has been prepared and will be submitted first to the next meeting of the Corporate Projects Board on 15 October 2018.

## **Fire Doors**

6. As Members will be aware from previous reports, recent random sample testing of a number of front entrance doors to individual flats in our residential blocks has been carried out. This destructive testing indicated an average fire resistance of 16 minutes. Although this is in line with what was predicted for doors in their original state, it gives serious cause for concern when set against the recommendations from many of the 2018 Fire Risk Assessments.
7. The CoLC is committed to replacing all front entrance doors in its residential blocks of flats with fire doors that give up to 60 minutes fire resistance (30 minutes as an absolute minimum). The estimated cost of this programme is in the region of £4million.
8. Members may be aware of the recent concerns raised by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), which found that a glazed, composite fire door from Grenfell Tower failed a 30-minute fire resistant test after 15 minutes. Further investigations highlighted similar problems with doors from a further four high-profile specialist fire door manufacturers. These findings have caused considerable uncertainty in the industry with manufacturers desperately trying to recover their credibility. It has also led to a shortage in suppliers to satisfy the demand from housing associations and local authorities seeking to upgrade the doors to their homes.
9. We have been working closely with GERDA Security Products Limited, a specialist door manufacturer (not implicated by the recent MHCLG investigations), to develop a prototype replacement doorset that has been rigorously tested to provide 60 minutes fire resistance and has passed appropriate door smoke tightness tests.

The prototype door set has been manufactured and fitted in one of our homes in Petticoat Tower, Middlesex Street and it has been very well received.

10. It is intended, subject to final agreement from City Procurement, that the GERDA prototype will be specified for the remainder of the Door Replacement Programme at Petticoat Tower, which is due to commence at the end of October 2018.
11. Officers are currently finalising the programme and delivery schedule for the remainder of the main Door Replacement Programme, which will be spread over the next 18 to 24 months and will likely need to be subject to a fully compliant OJEU procurement process.

### **Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs)**

12. As Members will be aware, Frankham Risk Management Services Limited has recently completed new FRAs for each of our residential blocks of flats. These new FRAs are of a Type 3, which cover everything required for the previously used Type 1 FRA's but also provide for an assessment of the arrangements for means of escape and fire detection (smoke alarms, heat detectors, etc.) within a sample of the flats (typically around 10%). The new Type 3 FRA's, as agreed by Members, were published on the CoLC's website in June this year.
13. At its meeting on 5 June 2018, Members were presented with the recently agreed 'Specific Hazard Identification and Action Plan Template for Fire Risk Assessments', which lists the recommendations from all the FRA's on our residential blocks. Officers continue to work on the various recommendations contained within the Action Plan and the following notable areas of fire safety work have been commissioned or carried out:
  - Specific 'Fire Safety Signage Surveys' have commenced on our residential blocks of flats with a view to ensuring that the deficiencies noted in the FRA's are rectified and the signage in all our blocks is accurate, up-to-date and complies fully with the legislative requirements and best practice.
  - Tenders have been sought for the compilation of Fire Safety Management Plans (FSMP) for 20 of our residential blocks of flats. These FSMP's will cover detailed inspections into the levels of compartmentation and protection to fire escape routes, common areas, plant rooms, voids, service ducts, refuse chutes and risers and doors. Further invasive testing of vertical and horizontal structures providing fire compartmentation will also be undertaken.
  - A specialist fire engineering consultant has been appointed to carry out a sample number of Type 4 surveys to address specific concerns raised in the FRA's relating to fire stopping.
  - Periodic electrical testing of our tenanted properties has been enhanced to ensure that all homes have been tested, and all necessary remedial works completed, within the next 12 months.
  - A detailed document audit has been carried out to ensure information relating to testing of emergency lighting, gas safety inspections and alarms is readily available for inspection and verification.

- The installation of 2500 heat, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in our tenanted properties.
- The introduction of Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) initiative that tests the 'white' goods in the homes we carry out electrical testing (this has already identified 16 faulty and potentially dangerous appliances on the Golden Lane Estate including washing machines, refrigerators and cookers).
- A successful pilot installation of a new 60-minute fire door at Petticoat Tower, which will provide the basis of the specification for the main door replacement programme;
- Work is underway to change the electrical consumer units in our high-rise blocks of flats to comply with the new 18<sup>th</sup> Edition of the Electrical Regulations.

14. There have been further discussions with Frankhams in relation to some of the recommendations and timescales contained in the FRA's. As a result of these discussions, and due to the amount of work that has been done, or is being done, the Fire Safety Action Plan is being revised and updated to provide a more inclusive and robust document on a block-by-block basis and this will be presented to this Committee at its next meeting.

### **Great Arthur House**

15. As Members will be aware, due to the unique nature of the building and its issues, Great Arthur House is being dealt with as a 'special project' in terms of the fire safety works. Further detailed investigation work has been carried out that has confirmed initial concerns about the level of compartmentation in the service ducts. We have appointed Checkmate Fire Solutions Limited, a specialist nationwide 3<sup>rd</sup> party accredited building fire safety, installation and compliance services company to carry out a full compartmentation audit of Great Arthur House to identify the full extent of the issues and to prepare a schedule of remedial works to be put out to tender.

16. Approval has been obtained under the Gateway process to facilitate the removal and replacement of two front entrance 'screens' and doors to individual flats. These will be replaced to replicate the ones removed and the units taken out will be used for destructive testing to assess their level of fire resistance, one in its original condition and the second in an upgraded condition. This will allow us to determine the extent of work required to upgrade the compartmentation of the front entrance doors and screens to the rest of the flats in the block. At the time of writing this report, we are still awaiting a date for the destructive testing.

17. Members will be aware that there has been a significant amount of work done at Great Arthur House to address initial concerns with compartmentation including:

- the installation of a permanent hard-wired fire alarm system to the whole of the building.
- the delivery, and installation where required, of individual smoke detectors to all flats in Great Arthur House.

- the introduction of a 'Waking Watch', a team of four security staff patrolling the building at all times, whose role is to alert residents in the event of a fire and to assist in any evacuation process.
  - the completion of a detailed 'fire safety signage survey' and subsequent upgrading of all fire safety signage to reflect the new evacuation arrangements and to pick up the deficiencies noted in the FRA's, to ensure, that the signage in the block is accurate, up-to-date and compliant.
  - the introduction of an evacuation process for residents in the event of a fire.
18. The Waking Watch provision is expensive and it has always been intended that once the hard-wired fire alarm system was installed and commissioned, the Waking Watch would be removed. Although we have recently achieved access to all flats in Great Arthur House and all detection units have now been installed, we have decided that the removal of the Waking Watch will be 'phased' to allow us to give adequate notice to the residents. It should be noted however, that depending on the advice given in relation to the new compartmentation issues, it may be necessary to retain the Waking Watch for a further period of time.

### **Estate Management**

19. Since the last meeting of this Committee on 5 June 2018, there have been several tasks completed and processes implemented by our estate management team that will go some way to ensuring the safety of residents in our social housing estates. Attached as Appendix 1 to this report is the 'Housing & Neighbourhoods Fire Safety Improvement Action Plan Summary 2017-19', which outlines the tasks completed and processes implemented.
20. Members will be aware that the biggest area of work by far for the Housing & Neighbourhoods Team is the Tenancy Visits Project, which is the subject of a separate report to this Committee.

### **Inspections by the LFB**

21. As part of the government's response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, fire services across the country have been instructed to carry out ad-hoc inspections on residential flat blocks to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and to ensure that appropriate FRAs are being carried out. Since the last meeting of this Committee, an impromptu fire safety inspection was carried out at the Holloway Estate. The Fire Safety Inspecting Officer advised that he was satisfied that everything was in order although, he sought clarification on the timescales for implementing three of the recommendations included in the recent FRA. This has been provided.

### **The Hackitt Review**

22. Following the Grenfell Tower fire, the Home Secretary, Amber Rudd and the Communities Secretary, Sajid Javid, commissioned Dame Judith Hackitt to conduct a review into building regulations and fire safety. The review, which was carried out independently of government, has a particular focus on regulations as they apply to high-rise residential buildings.

23. Dame Judith Hackitt's 'Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety' was published on 17 May 2018. The review is 156 pages long. There are 53 recommendations contained in the review, some of the key ones are summarised at Appendix 2 to this report.
24. It is fair to say that the Hackitt review has been met with something of a mixed reaction by professionals within the industry. Some think the report is underwhelming and those who expected the review to provide the answers, are largely disappointed.
25. The biggest change in thinking in the Hackitt Review is the creation of a two-tier system, whereby high-rise buildings will be subject to a different system to other buildings which, creates an arbitrary 10-storey cut off point. This has drawn considerable criticism as, by inference, blocks of less than 10 storeys are 'overlooked' and if fails to take into consideration other high risk buildings such as hospitals, schools and even nursing homes.
26. The Hackitt Review has also been widely criticised for failing to recommend a ban on combustible cladding although, in her response, somewhat surprisingly, Dame Judith said that it was not in her remit to look at Grenfell.
27. We are still some way from understanding the full impact of the Hackitt Review and the resulting legislative changes that may be brought about. The Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government is presently consulting on the clarification of Approved Document B – Fire Safety in line with the Secretary of State's commitment in Parliament on 17 May 2018 to consult on clarifying building regulations fire safety guidance. The consultation closes on 11 October and it will likely be some time before we know the outcome.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Housing & Neighbourhoods Fire Safety Improvement Action Plan  
Summary 2017-19

Appendix 2: Summary of the Hackitt Review

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