

Committees:	Dates:
Housing Management and Almshouses Sub Committee	27 November 2018
Subject: Fire Safety Update – HRA Properties	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services Report author: Paul Murtagh, Assistant Director Barbican and Property Services	For Information

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 24 September 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, February and September 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. Following further research and discussions with colleagues in the CoLC's Planning Team in relation to Great Arthur House, a Gateway 1-4 report was submitted to, and approved by, the Community & Children's Services Committee (2 November 2018) and Projects Sub Committee (7 November 2018). Approval was given to the recommendations to Option 1 outlined in the report which was to:
 - a) To undertake a compliant procurement exercise for the installation of sprinklers in our five high-rise tower blocks.
 - b) To seek Committee approval at Gateway 5 for a contractor to be appointed to carry out the installation of sprinklers in our five social housing high-rise tower blocks.
6. It is expected, at this stage, that the installation work will begin in June next year and be completed by the end of December 2019.
7. The Gateway 1-4 Report is included in the Agenda for this meeting for Members' consideration and information.

Fire Doors

8. As Members will be aware from previous reports, we have been carrying out random sample testing of a limited number of front entrance doors to individual flats in our residential blocks. 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.
9. 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.
10. The primary purpose of the destructive testing is to allow us to prioritise the door replacements on our estates as, it is likely that the door programme, in its entirety,

could take between 18 months and two years to complete. We still have some door sets to test before this work can be completed. Members will be aware from previous reports that the waiting times for door testing has been, and still is, significant. Recent estimates are that we are still some 4 to 6 months away from having these remaining door sets tested. However, as part of the work we have been doing with GERDA Security Products Limited, a specialist door manufacturer, an alternative accredited testing facility has been sourced that could reduce the waiting time down to 6 to 8 weeks.

11. Members will recall that we have developed a GERDA prototype door set, which provides 60 minutes fire resistance, as well as greater accessibility, which has been specified for the remainder of the Door Replacement Programme at Petticoat Tower, which is currently out to tender and is due to commence early in the New Year.
12. It is intended that a Gateway report will be submitted to the relevant committees early in the New Year for approval to undertake an OJEU compliant procurement process for the replacement door programme across all our social housing estates.

Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs)

13. As Members will be aware, Frankham Risk Management Services Limited 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.
14. 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 now been completed 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. The recommendations from the surveys have been assessed and we are seeking competitive tenders for the resulting works.
 - We will shortly be carrying out a pilot programme of Fire Safety Management Plans (FSMP) for 20 of our residential blocks of flats. These 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.

- 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 9 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 2700 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.
 - Work continues to change the electrical consumer units in our high-rise blocks of flats to comply with the new 18th Edition of the Electrical Regulations.
15. There is still some work required to revise and update the Fire Safety Action Plan following discussions with Frankhams and the information from the various additional surveys carried out as detailed above. This has taken a little longer than expected but will be presented to this Committee at its next meeting.
16. Members will recall that the CoLC is committed to carrying out independent Type 3 FRA's on an annual basis. Officers are working with colleagues in City Procurement on a preferred solution that will allow the surveys for the new FRA's to commence in February/March next year.

Great Arthur House

17. As Members will be aware, due to the unique nature of the building and its issues, Great Arthur House continues to be dealt with as a 'special project' in terms of the fire safety works. Further detailed investigation work is continuing to provide us with 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.
18. 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.
19. 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 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.

20. As Members will recall, it was always intended that the Waking Watch would be removed once the hard-wired fire alarm system was installed and commissioned. The phasing out of the Waking Watch has now been completed.

Estate Management

21. In addition to the various works, improvements, surveys and inspections that continue on our estates relating to fire safety, staff in our estate management team continue to make good progress with the 'Housing & Neighbourhoods Fire Safety Improvement Action Plan Summary 2017-19', which Members received at its last meeting in September.

22. 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

23. 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, there have been no further ad-hoc inspections to report.

Appendices

None

Paul Murtagh, Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services
T: 020 7332 3015
E: paul.murtagh@cityoflondon.gov.uk