

<b>Committees:</b>	<b>Dates:</b>
Community and Children's Services Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee	08/03/2019 26/03/2019
<b>Subject:</b> Fire Safety Update – HRA Properties	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community & Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> Paul Murtagh Assistant Director Barbican and Property Services	

### 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 27 November 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. Further update and review reports have been brought back to this Committee and the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee on several occasions to inform Members of the work that has been done 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 and Building Control Teams in relation to Great Arthur House, which Members agreed was the priority as a result of the compartmentation issues. A Gateway 1-4 report, which was approved by this Committee on 2 November 2018 and Projects Sub Committee on 7 November 2018, agreed:
  - A total project cost of £3,200,000 including design, project management and staff costs;
  - Survey, planning, design and tender costs of £75,000 to get to the next stage of the Gateway process (Gateway 5);
  - That a compliant procurement exercise be undertaken for the installation of sprinklers in our five social housing high-rise tower blocks;
  - That Committee approval be sought at Gateway 5 for the appointment of a contractor to carry out the installation works.
6. We are currently in the process of appointing an M&E Design Consultant to carry out the pre-contract design, specification and tender works and, we are working to the following outline programme:
  - Survey, planning and design – March to May 2019;
  - Resident consultation – March 2019;
  - Procurement process – May to July 2019;
  - Contract awarded and contractor appointed – August 2019;
  - Works commence – October 2019;
  - Works completed – March 2020;
  - End of Defects Liability period – March 2021.

### **Fire Doors**

7. As Members will be aware from previous reports, random sample testing of several 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.

8. 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.
9. Members will be aware of concerns raised by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), that a replacement glazed, composite 30-minute fire door from Grenfell Tower failed a fire resistance test after 15 minutes. Further investigations highlighted similar problems with doors from other high-profile specialist fire door manufacturers. These findings have caused considerable uncertainty in the industry and has led a serious shortage in suppliers and contractors to satisfy the demand from housing associations and local authorities seeking to upgrade the doors to their homes.
10. We have continued to work 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.
11. 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 now due to commence in the spring/summer this year.
12. Officers have now finalised 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. A Gateway 1-4 report is being prepared and will be submitted to the relevant committees at the next available cycle of meetings.

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

13. As Members will be aware, Frankham Risk Management Services Limited completed FRAs for each of our residential blocks of flats in October/November 2017 and, as agreed by Members, these were published on the CoLC's website in June last year.
14. At its meeting on 5 June 2018, Members were first presented with the '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 good progress is being made. An updated version of the Action Plan is included at Appendix 1 to this report.
15. Carrying out FRA's under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO), is a vital and legally required part of the CoLC's fire safety strategy for its residential portfolio. The RRO does not specify how often FRA's should be carried out or reviewed. However, the Local Government Association (LGA) has published guidance on fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats, which recommends the following procedure for FRA's:

#### Low-rise blocks up to 3-storeys built in the last 20 years

- reviewed every 2 years;
- redone every 4 years.

#### For blocks with higher risks (such as age), or those more than 3-storeys high

- reviewed every year;
- redone every 3 years.

16. The FRA's for the CoLC's housing stock have been done annually for the last 3 years. The FRA's from October/November 2017 have been reviewed and mandated in line with the Corporation's auditing procedures for FRA's.
17. Clearly, simply carrying out FRA's is worthless if they are not updated regularly and the improvement work identified is not undertaken. As Members will be aware, there is a considerable amount of fire safety work that has been done, is being done and is scheduled to be done to bring our housing stock up to the required standard. There is no requirement for, or value in, commissioning further FRA's this year and the focus will be on continuing the progress we are making on the improvements identified in the Action Plan appended to this report.

#### **Great Arthur House**

18. 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.
19. 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. The destructive testing is scheduled to commence.
20. 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.

21. With regard to the hard-wired fire alarm system that has been installed, residents had been experiencing an unexpected number of 'false' activations. As a result, the sensitivity of the alarms within the flats have been adjusted to reflect the life style of our residents and the layout of the interior of the flats. It appears that this adjustment has remedied the problem with 'false' activations. The effective operation of the fire alarm has meant that the Waking Watch service has now been discontinued.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Fire Safety Action Plan

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