

Committee	Dated:
Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee	27 November 2017
Subject: Fire Safety Update	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
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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 reports submitted in July and September 2017.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note and comment on the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in West London, a paper was presented to your Sub-Committee, the Community & Children's Services Committee and the Audit & Risk Management Committee. This paper, in July 2017, outlined actions we had taken in the immediate aftermath of the fire and also set out plans for further action.
2. An update report was brought to Members in September 2017 and this paper is a further update.

Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's)

3. Frankham Risk Management Services Limited has been commissioned to carry out new FRA's for each of our residential blocks. These new FRA's will be very detailed and will cover not only those areas previously inspected, but also any further concerns raised since the Grenfell Tower fire.
4. Previous FRA's carried out on the City Corporation's residential blocks have been a Type 1 FRA as required by legislation. It has been decided that the new FRA's will be Type 3. A Type 3 FRA, which goes beyond the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, covers everything required for a

Type 1 FRA but also provides for an assessment of the arrangements for means of escape and fire detection (i.e. smoke alarms) within a sample of the flats (typically around 10%). A Type 3 FRA is non-destructive but the fire resistance of doors to rooms within the flat is considered.

5. Work on the new FRA's has now commenced on our social housing estates and it is expected that they will be completed by the end of the calendar year. Once all the assessments have been completed and submitted to us, they will be analysed by staff in Property Services, Estate Management and the City's Fire Safety Advisor for accuracy and detail. Any urgent recommendations will be addressed immediately and a subsequent detailed Action Plan will be developed to plan, programme and implement all other recommendations as appropriate.
6. A summary report outlining the headline findings from the newly completed FRA's will be presented to your Committee at the earliest opportunity after the Action Plan has been finalised.
7. It is intended that the new FRA's will be made available to the public through the Fire Safety pages on the City's website. The current FRA's have already been made available [here](#).
8. We have continued to carry out work to address the risks highlighted by the previous (2016) FRA's including improving fire safety signage in our blocks, removing barriers to fire escape routes, improving emergency lighting and remedial works to communal fire doors.

Communication with Residents

9. There have been no new fire safety issues raised by residents since September. Detailed information on fire safety is available on the City's website. Records of vulnerable residents have been checked and updated and residents have been offered visits from staff to demonstrate fire escape routes.
10. New fire safety posters have been developed and installed throughout all of our blocks of flats. These clarify the position on our 'stay put' policy in the event of a fire in a block, but also give clear instructions to residents on what to do if there is a fire in or affecting their home or if they feel in personal danger.
11. We have developed and implemented a Fire Safety Communications Plan, which sets out a series of messages relating to fire safety that will be communicated at various times throughout the year. Rather than overwhelming residents with fire safety information, we plan to have a continuous flow of short messages, covering topics like domestic appliances, Christmas lights, use of candles and so on. These will appear in newsletters, bulletins and on social media feeds.
12. Once we have all the relevant information, we will write to residents again to outline the City's position regarding retrofitting sprinklers, fire alarms and new fire doors.
13. We have developed a proposal to visit all tenanted properties for a one-hour visit, which will include collecting data about the household, carrying out a fire risk

assessment on the dwelling, providing fire safety advice and looking at any support needs a household might have. The Town Clerk and Chamberlain have approved the proposal and agreed resourcing. We will now be recruiting a temporary manager and team to carry out the work, as well as developing a training programme, procedures and the necessary administrative arrangements.

Fire Doors, Sprinkler Systems and Alarms

14. We have identified a number of front entrance doors from our residential blocks of flats that will be tested for fire resistance, some of which have been, or will be sent away to the Building Research Establishment (BRE). We are still awaiting the results from the doors that have been sent away and, due to capacity issues with the BRE, some doors will be tested 'in-situ' by recognised accredited bodies such as the IRE Protection Agency and GERDA. This will give us the information we need in relation to the level of fire resistance these doors and frames currently provide and whether or not that level of fire resistance is adequate. Consequently, we will be able to properly prioritise, plan and cost out our door replacement programme.
15. Following liaison with the London Fire Brigade (LFB), contractors have now upgraded the existing glazed fanlights to the front entrance doors to flats in Great Arthur House except, where they have been refused access. We continue to try and liaise with residents on this matter.
16. The current programme of electrical testing on all estates includes the installation of hard-wired carbon monoxide, smoke and heat detectors in all our tenanted flats. 500 flats have now had this work completed and a further 800 properties will be completed in the next 12 months. The detectors are equipped with a battery back-up of six months to ensure they continue to function in the event of a power failure.
17. As part of all the projects included in our Major Works Programme, fire safety is given the highest priority and, as a result, we have introduced new methods of containment to protect fire escape routes and fire stopping is being checked and improved wherever necessary.
18. The first draft of a feasibility study into the potential installation of sprinkler systems in our tower blocks has now been received from our consultant, Butler & Young and is currently being analysed by staff in the Property Services Team.
19. The LFB continues to advise against the installation of fire alarms in communal areas but, this will be reviewed over time as part of the new FRA process and our holistic review of fire safety in general.

Estate Management

20. Estate staff continue with their work to ensure that balconies, walkways and exits are kept clear from hazards. This includes the removal of combustible material from outside properties, along with any items which might cause a trip hazard for residents or firefighting crews in the event of an emergency.

21. Residents have, for the most part have complied with these requirements and have supportive of our actions. There are some residents who continue to resist but progress is being made. In a recent court case relating to anti-social behaviour connected to a refusal to remove items, the judge was extremely supportive of the City's position and an undertaking was given that any items we specified had to be removed by a specific date.
22. We have updated our Fire Safety Protocol to clarify and give detail on some areas and this is being brought to Members at this meeting for approval.
23. We have recently commenced a review of the estate walkabouts and checks, with a view to improving consistency and monitoring and to introducing an automated system for recording data and follow up actions.

Resources

24. As Members will appreciate the level of work relating to fire safety that has arisen, and continues to arise, in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire has been unprecedented. The vast burden of this work has fallen on the existing staff within the Housing Property Services and Estate Management teams. Staff have responded commendably to the challenge that this considerable amount of extra work has thrown up and their efforts have been reflected in the positive feedback we have received from residents in dealing with, and allaying, their fears in relation to fire safety in their homes.
25. We have recently appointed a new Health and Safety Manager within DCCS, whose main priority is to co-ordinate our work around fire safety with particular focus on the FRA process and the implementation of the resulting Action Plans.
26. We have also made a case to the corporate centre for funding for a project to carry out a six month programme of detailed tenancy visits to incorporate home fire risk assessments and fire safety advice.
27. Members will be aware that additional resources are likely to be needed to implement fire safety improvement measures once we have the information in place to inform a programme of work. We will naturally keep Members informed on this matter, and seek the necessary approvals, when we are in a position to do so.

Background Papers:

Fire Safety in the City's Residential Blocks – report to Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee, 03 July 2017

Fire Safety Update – report to Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee, 26 September 2017

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