

<b>Committee:</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Community and Children's Services	12 January 2018
<b>Subject:</b> Fire Safety Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report authors:</b> Paul Murtagh Assistant Director Barbican and Property Services  Jacquie Campbell Assistant Director, Housing and Neighbourhoods	

### 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 to the various Committees in July, September and November 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 and Children's Services Committee and the Audit and Risk Management Committee in July 2017. This paper outlined actions we had taken in the immediate aftermath of the fire. It also set out plans for further action.
2. An update report was brought to Members in September and November 2017 and this paper is intended as a further update.

#### Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs)

3. Frankham Risk Management Services Limited has been commissioned to carry out new FRAs for each of our residential blocks. These new FRAs 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 FRAs carried out on the City Corporation's residential blocks have been Type 1 FRAs as required by legislation. The new FRAs are Type 3 FRAs, which go beyond the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, covering everything required for a Type 1 FRA but also providing for an assessment of the arrangements for means of escape and fire detection (that is, 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 and compartmentation within the flat is considered.
5. The survey work on the new FRAs for our social housing estates is now complete and the draft reports are due to be submitted by 31 December 2017, although a limited number of draft reports have been received. As the assessments are completed and submitted to us, they are being analysed by staff in Property Services, Estate Management and by the City's Fire Safety Advisor for accuracy and detail.
6. It was a requirement of the contract with Frankham that any serious fire safety issues or concerns identified during the survey process would be immediately reported to the City Corporation. Only one such report was received in relation to Great Arthur House, details of which are set out later in this report.
7. As part of the new FRA process, urgent recommendations are being addressed as a priority and a detailed Action Plan will be developed to plan, programme and implement all other recommendations as appropriate.
8. A summary report outlining the headline findings from the newly completed FRAs will be presented to your Committee at the earliest opportunity after the Action Plan has been finalised.
9. It is intended that the new FRAs will be made available to the public through the Fire Safety pages on the City's website. The current FRAs, which are not due for review until August 2018, have already been made available here.
10. We have continued to carry out work to address the risks highlighted by the previous (2016) FRAs, including improving fire safety signage in our blocks, removing barriers to fire escape routes, improving emergency lighting and remedial works to communal fire doors.

### **Great Arthur House**

11. Due to the extensive refurbishment work being carried out at Great Arthur House, it had previously been decided not to carry out an FRA during 2016, when the City Corporation's other residential blocks were done. However, even though the refurbishment work is still far from complete, it was felt prudent to undertake an FRA on Great Arthur House as a priority.
12. Notification was received from Frankham that there were potentially serious compartmentation issues with the main entrance doors and side panels that required immediate further investigation. Further investigation revealed that, although not as serious as first thought, there are issues with compartmentation

at Great Arthur House that meant the 'stay put policy' in the event of fire could not be sustained.

13. Following discussions with representatives of the London Fire Brigade (LFB), an Action Plan has been developed and implemented to ensure the safety of residents in Great Arthur House. The Action Plan includes:
  - the installation of a communal fire alarm system as a temporary measure until a permanent hard-wired fire alarm system can be installed
  - 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 introduction of an evacuation process for residents in the event of a fire.
14. Implementation of the above measures will be sufficient to give the City Corporation time to address the compartmentation issues. Once the compartmentation issues have been rectified, it is intended that the 'stay put policy' will be reintroduced.

### **Communication with residents**

15. There has been a considerable amount of communication with residents in Great Arthur House in relation to the concerns raised and the need to implement an Action Plan to deal with those concerns. In general terms, residents have been relatively quiet on this matter with very few queries raised. Residents in Great Arthur House were invited to attend a 'drop-in' session in the Golden Lane Estate Office to discuss any concerns they had with these new safety measures. Only three residents attended and all three mainly wanted to discuss the refurbishment works and not fire safety.
16. There have been no new fire safety issues raised by residents since September 2017. 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.
17. 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.
18. We are continuing to progress our proposal to visit all tenanted properties for a one-hour visit. This will include collecting data about the household, carrying out an FRA on the dwelling, providing fire safety advice and looking at any support needs a household might have. We are in the process of preparing to recruit a Project Manager and team for a six-month period to carry out this extensive piece of work. The project will also cover Golden Lane leaseholders as a pilot to see if visits should be extended to all leasehold properties.

## **Fire doors, sprinkler systems, alarms and other works**

19. We have identified a number of front entrance doors from our residential blocks of flats that are being tested for fire resistance. Some of these have been, or will be sent away to the Building Research Establishment (BRE) but, due to capacity issues, the BRE has a turnaround period in excess of 16 weeks. Consequently, we have had some doors tested in-situ by recognised, accredited bodies such as the Fire Protection Association (FPA) and Gerda<sup>®</sup>, a leading manufacturer of innovative design-engineered fire safety, security products and services. Although we have only had a limited number of reports back to date, early indications are that the doors on our social housing estates give between 20 and 40 minutes fire resistance. Clearly, we do still need much more information to be able to assess the level of fire resistance these doors and frames currently provide, and if that level of fire resistance is adequate. Subsequently, we will be able to properly prioritise, plan and cost our door replacement programme.
20. Following liaison with the LFB, contractors have been upgrading the existing glazed fanlights to the front entrance doors to flats in Great Arthur House. Despite our best efforts, completion of this work is being prevented by a number of residents who continue to refuse us access. We will soon be left with no alternative but to take necessary enforcement action.
21. The current programme of electrical testing continues on our estates. This includes the installation of hard-wired carbon monoxide, smoke and heat detectors in all our tenanted flats.
22. As part of all the projects included in our Major Works Programme, fire safety has been given the highest priority: new methods of containment to protect fire escape routes have been introduced; and fire stopping is being checked and improved wherever necessary.
23. The first draft of a feasibility study into the potential installation of sprinkler systems in our tower blocks has been received from our consultant, Butler & Young Group Ltd and has been analysed by staff in the Property Services Team. A meeting has been held with the consultant to discuss the contents of the report and clear up issues and concerns raised by officers. The final report is due to be submitted within the next few weeks.
24. 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**

25. 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. The Housing

Management and Almshouses Sub-Committee recently approved an update to the Fire Safety Protocol, which sets out in detail what type of items can be kept and in which parts of communal areas.

26. Residents have, for the most part, complied with these requirements and have been 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. This was not done and the City was forced to remove them.
27. Enforcing the Fire Safety Protocol is difficult for staff where residents do not voluntarily comply, and this is taking a considerable amount of staff resource. Some social landlords, and most private ones, have adopted 'sterile' policies (where no items whatsoever are allowed in communal areas) for this reason. We do not wish to adopt such a policy, as we appreciate the important role that plants play in promoting wellbeing and making estates look attractive, but we will monitor the situation and report back to Members if we consider that this requires review in the future.
28. 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.

### **Inspections by the LFB**

29. 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.
30. The LFB has carried out several ad-hoc inspections on the City Corporation's residential blocks in the last two or three months. Subsequently, we have received Fire Safety Deficiency Notices for the following premises:
  - Great Arthur House
  - East Point, Avondale Estate
  - Mais House
  - Brushfield Street, Spitalfields.
31. The Deficiency Notices, in the main, relate to issues with compartmentation, fire stopping, use of fire escape routes and common areas for storage and general housekeeping matters such as fire doors being wedged open. We continue to deal with the deficiencies reported to us in a timely and responsible manner.

## Resources

32. 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.
33. 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.
34. We have also successfully 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 FRAs and fire safety advice.
35. Members will be aware from previous reports 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. As stated previously, we will naturally keep Members informed on this matter, and seek the necessary approvals, when we are able to do so.

Paul Murtagh, Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services

T: 020 7332 3015

E: [paul.murtagh@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:paul.murtagh@cityoflondon.gov.uk)

Jacquie Campbell, Assistant Director, Housing and Neighbourhoods

T: 020 7332 3785

E: [jacquie.campbell@cityoflondon.gov.uk](mailto:jacquie.campbell@cityoflondon.gov.uk)