

Committee	Dated:
Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee	12 February 2018
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, 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 & 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. Update reports were brought to Members in September and November 2017. This paper is a further update.

Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's)

3. Frankham Risk Management Services Limited (Frankham's) has now completed the FRA's for all the City Corporation's residential blocks and the draft reports have been received. The reports are now being analysed by staff in Property Services, Estate Management and the City's Fire Safety Advisor for accuracy and detail and work is underway to produce a detailed Action Plan to plan, programme and implement all recommendations as appropriate.

4. As reported previously, it is still intended that 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.
5. Previous FRA's carried out on the City Corporation's residential blocks have been Type 1 FRA's as required by legislation. The new FRA's are Type 3 FRA's, which go beyond the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, still covering everything required for a Type 1 FRA but also providing for an assessment of the arrangements for means of escape and fire detection (such as smoke alarms and heat detectors) 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.
6. The City Corporation's decision to opt for more detailed Type 3 FRA's not only results in much more detailed and robust information within the FRA's but also, inevitably, means that more potential issues have been identified than would have been with Type 1 FRA's.
7. It was a requirement of the contract with Frankham's 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.
8. The key findings of the FRA's so far to date have been:
 - Further investigative work needs to be done on the main entrance doors and frames in some of our blocks of flats to ascertain the level of fire resistance and their ability to support a 'stay-put' policy in the event of fire;
 - There are, potentially, some issues with compartmentation in some of our flats that require further detailed investigative work to confirm the integrity of structural components;
 - Communal wiring and emergency lighting;
 - Confirmation of fire protection/separation in refuse chutes, waste disposal units.
9. 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, which are not due for review until August 2018, have already been made available in this way.

Great Arthur House

10. Members will be aware that whilst carrying out the Type 3 FRA survey, notification was received from Frankham's that there were potentially serious compartmentation issues with the main entrance doors and side panels at Great Arthur House 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.

11. Following discussions with representatives of the London Fire Brigade (LFB), an Action Plan was developed and implemented to ensure the safety of residents in Great Arthur House. The Action Plan included:
- 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.
12. All the above measures have been implemented and remain in place, at least until the completion of the installation of the hard-wired fire alarm system, which is due to be completed by mid-February (subject to access).

Inspections by the LFB

13. 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.
14. The LFB has carried out several ad-hoc inspections on the City Corporation's residential blocks in the last few 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.
15. 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.

Communication with Residents

16. There have been no new fire safety issues raised by residents since September last year. 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. This is ongoing.
17. Our Fire Safety Communications Plan continues to be implemented, ensuring that residents are regularly given advice on fire safety, in newsletters, bulletins and so on, that is relevant to the season. The revised Fire Safety Protocol as

approved by Members at the last Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee, has been implemented.

18. The Tenancy Visits Project, which will see a team recruited specifically to visit all tenanted properties within a six-month period, has been initiated. The one-hour visits 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. We hope that the recruitment of the team will take place in February and they will then be given an intensive training programme. Private homes on the Golden Lane Estate will also be visited as a pilot to see if there is value in extending the project further.

Fire Doors, Sprinkler Systems and Alarms

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 of more than 16 weeks. Consequently, we have had some doors tested in-situ by recognised, accredited bodies such as the Fire Protection Association (FPA) and Gerda®, 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 typically 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. 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.
21. 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.
22. The first draft of a feasibility study into the potential installation of sprinkler systems in our tower blocks has been received and discussed with our consultant, Butler & Young and we are awaiting the final version of the report.
23. Although, the LFB continues to advise against the installation of fire alarms in communal areas, we are committed to reviewing this over time as part of the new FRA process and our holistic review of fire safety in general.

Estate Management

24. We are continuing to work with residents to ensure that balconies, walkways and exits are kept clear from hazards. Most residents have been supportive of this work and have complied, but there have been some who have been extremely challenging, and continue to be so.

Resources

25. 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 able 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

Fire Safety Update – report to Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee, 27 November 2017

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