

Committees:	Dates:
Community and Children's Services Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee	13/09/2019 16/09/2019
Subject: Fire Safety Update – HRA Properties	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
Report author: 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 in March 2019.

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 the Community & Children's Services Committee, the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-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. 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 work,
 - 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 Services Committee agreed a recommendation from its Director to retrofit 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. 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 complex 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. Further preparatory and investigative work has been done to enable the production of the Employer's Requirements to appoint a consultant to carry out the necessary planning, design and specification works. We are currently working with colleagues in City Procurement to procure and appoint a suitable consultant to do this work.

7. The preparatory and investigative work has taken longer than originally anticipated to complete and, as such, we have revised the outline programme as set out below:
 - Survey, planning and design – November 2019;
 - Resident consultation – November 2019;
 - Procurement process – January to February 2020;
 - Contract awarded and contractor appointed – June 2020;
 - Works commence – August 2020;
 - Works completed – March 2021;
 - End of Defects Liability period – March 2022.

Fire Doors

8. 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. We have carried out further destructive testing to front entrance doors on other estates and, some of the results have been considerably below the previous average fire resistance of 16 minutes.

9. As a result of the further testing that has been carried out, officers have carried out a more detailed and comprehensive survey of front entrance doors to all 63 blocks of flats. We have subsequently reviewed and revised the programme and delivery schedule for the main Door Replacement Programme.
10. Although this necessary, additional preparatory work has slowed up progress to some extent, we are still expecting that overall programme will be completed by March 2021, as previously indicated.
11. The Gateway 1 report for this project has been approved and signed off by the Chief Officer and, a Gateway 2-4 report is being prepared for submission to this Committee at its next meeting on 9 October 2019.
12. As Members will be aware, 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.
13. We have been working closely with GERDA Security Products Limited, a specialist door manufacturer, 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 fitted in one of our homes in Petticoat Tower, Middlesex Street and it has been very well received.
14. 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 later this month.

Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs)

15. 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.
16. 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.
17. 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.

18. 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 again been reviewed and mandated in line with the Corporation's auditing procedures for FRA's.

19. 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 appreciate, a considerable amount of fire safety work has been done, is being done and is scheduled to be done to bring our housing stock up to the required standard. It will, however, take time.

20. 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. This includes carrying out more intrusive Type 4 FRA's that focus on areas highlighted by the recently completed Type 3 FRA's.

Great Arthur House

21. 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.

22. In March this year, we undertook the installation of a temporary door set at one property in Great Arthur House so that, the original door set could be removed and sent away for destructive testing to assess its level of fire and smoke resistance. The notional expectation for a door set of this type and age, is 15 to 20 minutes fire resistance however, in this instance, the door set failed in less than five minutes.

23. As Members will be aware, as a result of concerns with the level of compartmentation in Great Arthur House, we have carried out a series of precautionary improvement works 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.

24. A Gateway 3/4 Options Appraisal report has been prepared for consideration by the Housing Management & Almshouses Sub Committee at its meeting on 16 September. The report is seeking approval from the Committee to procure and appoint a design time and fire engineering consultant to carry out the necessary preparatory works to progress the project to Gateway 5.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Fire Safety Action Plan

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