

<b>Committee(s):</b> Housing Management & Almshouses Sub-Committee – For Decision	<b>Dated:</b> 28 November 2024
<b>Subject:</b> Fire Safety Update – HRA Properties	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	1, 2, 4, 12
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of</b> Judith Finlay Executive Director of Community & Children’s Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> David Blane Health and Safety Advisor Department of Community & Children’s Services	

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Members of this Committee with information on how the City of London Corporation (the Corporation), through its Housing Team, is ensuring that its homes on its twelve social housing estates are managed in a way that to comply with current health and safety legislation, best practice, and regulatory standards relating to fire safety

### Recommendations

Members are asked to:

1. Note, consider, and comment on the report.

### Main Report

#### Background

1. In July 2017, an initial 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 Corporation’s approach to fire safety in its social housing homes. The 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 reports have been brought back to 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 Corporation's social housing residents in the event of fire.
  3. This report is intended as a further update.

## **Considerations**

### **Automatic Water Fire Suppression Systems (Sprinklers)**

4. Members of the Community & Children's Services Committee have previously 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 Estate.
  - Petticoat Tower, Middlesex Street Estate.
  - West Point, Avondale Square Estate.
  - Centre Point, Avondale Square Estate.
  - East Point, Avondale Square Estate.
5. Following completion of a compliant, competitive tendering exercise, United Living was appointed to carry out the installation of automatic water suppression systems in each of the Corporation's five social housing high-rise tower blocks. However, due to escalating costs and potential time delays, Great Arthur House and Petticoat Tower were subsequently removed from the contract with United Living.
6. Although the retrofitting of sprinklers is a complex and challenging project, we are making good progress with the works as set out below.

### **West Point, Centre Point and East Point – Avondale Square Estate**

United Living have installed a system within the majority of 222 properties across the three Avondale Square Point Blocks and coverage is now live awaiting commissioning alongside Building Control sign-off.

Unfortunately, one tenanted property across this estate has required intervention and legal proceedings have been issued to obtain access. The first available trial date is April 2025.

Despite the intrusive nature of the works, resident satisfaction, gauged from ours and the contractor's in-house surveys has been largely positive, with no "very dissatisfied" scores for any aspects of the work and, only a few "fairly dissatisfied."

The issues that caused residents to be 'fairly dissatisfied' were identified and promptly addressed.

### **Petticoat Tower – Middlesex Street Estate**

The successful contractor, Harmony Fire, commenced on site in mid-October 2023, beginning with pre-condition surveys, site setup, and booking installation appointments with residents. So far 18 out of the 88 flats have permitted access.

Residents' main objections are the disruption to their home and perceived 'ugly' aesthetics of the works. In the circumstances the current contract has been suspended to the new year whilst work is done with residents to address their concerns.

To date, communal areas have mechanical rises and controls have been 23 installed on all floors. Textured coating materials that may contain asbestos are being identified and remediated. The main water storage tank for the sprinkler system has been installed.

### **Great Arthur House – Golden Lane Estate**

Members will be aware from previous reports that the sprinkler installation at Great Arthur House is to be incorporated into a wider compartmentation and fire safety works project. The project team are looking to commission a Fire Strategy for the building before an application for resident engagement and Listed Building Consent can proceed.

### **Fire Doors**

7. As Members will be aware, the Corporation has 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 Fire Door Replacement Programme also provides for the installation/upgrade of fire stopping/compartmentation solutions to, for example, penetrations above and through the communal doors and frames (service pipes, service cables etc).
8. GERDA, our specialist appointed contractor, continues to make good progress with the fire door installation programme as set out below.

## **Lot 1 – York Way and Holloway Estates**

The work in Lot 1, to install new upgraded replacement fire doors (front entrances and communal doors) on the York Way and Holloway Estates is now complete. Customer satisfaction with this project, as gauged from our Customer Satisfaction Surveys, was very high (around 96% satisfied or very satisfied).

## **Lot 2 – Avondale Square Estate**

All low-level general needs blocks are complete and have been very well received by residents (as evidenced by the Customer Satisfaction Surveys).

The residential front doors in the three Point Blocks are currently being replaced but the communal doors are on hold until ongoing issues are resolved with the Sprinkler system project.

Harman Close communal doors are also on hold as there are cables for door entry system, fire alarm system and warden call lines that have been installed by penetrating the existing doors, which would not allow the existing doors to be removed for replacement. The cabling is scheduled for removal in conjunction with renewal of the warden call and alarm systems.

## **Lot 3 – Sumner Buildings, William Blake Estate, Dron House, Petticoat Tower (communal doors)**

Work to Lot 3 is now well underway.

William Blake Estate - all residential doors are complete. There were some communal doors in Blake House that required special testing, this is now complete, and the doors are in fabrication with the subsequent install to take place in due course.

Sumner Buildings - there is one outstanding residential door to be replaced, but we are liaising with the legal department to obtain access.

Dron House – All the doors here have now been fitted.

Petticoat Tower- we have been unable to replace the communal doors in Petticoat Tower to date. An HRB/BRS application must be made before we are able to commence with the installation of the communal doors.

## **Lot 4 – Southwark Estate, Windsor House, Isleden House, Sydenham Hill Estate, Spitalfields**

Reform Architects have been appointed to lead the design work for Lot 4. The planning applications are ongoing. Sydenham Hill and Isleden House have been approved, and we are contacting residents to make appointments for their individual/bespoke surveys in preparation for the costing to be offered by Gerda.

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

9. As Members will be aware from the report prepared for its meeting on 2 June 2023, following a corporate procurement exercise, Turner & Townsend (T&T) was appointed to undertake the next round of FRAs for the Corporation's social housing estates.
10. Residential blocks and, where appropriate, associated community centres, have FRA reports, in which observations on key areas found on the day of the assessment were recorded. Areas identified in each of the FRAs are broadly categorised into the following:
  - issues that require immediate remedial action and could be resolved immediately by teams on site.
  - matters requiring contractor intervention.
  - matters that are/will be subject to or incorporated into major works projects.
11. The latest FRAs also refer to positive practices/innovation, acknowledging that some of the Corporation's fire safety and major works improvements projects go beyond the current minimum statutory requirements including, the new fire doors and installation of sprinklers. The FRAs also refer to future considerations and impacts of the introduction of new legislation, regulations, best practice etc.
12. The main themes identified by the latest FRAs undertaken by T&T include:

#### **Fire doors/fire stopping/compartmentation.**

The areas highlighted under this category form part of the Corporation's Housing Major Works Programme. The Corporation's Fire Door Replacement Programme incorporates front entrance doors to all flats (including, associated door frames and surrounds), communal fire doors and riser/service cupboard doors (part of the fire stopping and compartmentation work). Work to replace fire doors and improve compartmentation has already been completed on a number of estates and work continues as part of the major works programme, as mentioned above in this report.

#### **Fire alarms**

Any problems identified with existing fire alarms on the day that the FRA survey was carried out, were addressed, and remedied immediately by the on-site estate teams.

The FRAs have identified potential improvements (not statutory) in some of our homes and, in some cases, these may be incorporated into future major works projects. One example of this, is the City of London's Almshouses, where it is proposed to carry out a significant upgrade to the existing fire alarm installation, to incorporate both carbon monoxide and environmental monitoring. The enhanced system will also allow for live remote monitoring of alarm activation and faults.

A full pilot system has been installed in one flat. A full scope of the enhanced fire alarm is being undertaken by our contractors, incorporating electrical installation condition reports, to provide full surveying and costs of this project.

### **Emergency lighting**

Where the FRAs highlighted that whenever emergency lighting systems are to be upgraded/replaced, due consideration must be given to the presence of 'borrowed' external lighting, which may no longer be relied upon to provide sufficient additional lighting to meet the new requirements.

### **Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS)/Premises Information Box (PIB)**

Although the introduction of PEEPS did not make it into recently introduced legislation as expected, this topic continues to be discussed within several forums at national level.

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Building Safety and Homelessness made a statement on 2 September 2024 to Parliament bringing forward proposals in the Autumn to improve the fire safety and evacuation of disabled/vulnerable residents in high-rise and higher-risk residential buildings in England in response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 recommendations that relate to Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans, or PEEPs. These proposals will be called 'Residential PEEPs.' Progress of this introduction will continue to be monitored, and updates provided to this Committee.

As part of its work to ensure a high standard of fire safety in the homes it manages, the Corporation has introduced a new procedure for assessing vulnerable residents, who may need help evacuating in an emergency or, who may benefit from further help and advice on fire safety issues in their homes. Having previously carried out over 220 evacuation assessments of vulnerable residents; relevant information has been included in the Premises Information Boxes (PIB) installed across our estates.

These lists are refreshed every six months or, when new person specific information becomes known. No personal details are included within the list, only their location within the residential block.

### **Testing/records**

As stated previously, in the case of emergency lighting, a key part of the FRA process is demonstrating that systems and equipment in our blocks of flats are tested as per

the required regulatory frequency. In addition to the testing, records are kept demonstrating effective management of both active and passive fire protection.

13. Carrying out FRAs 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 however, specify how often FRAs should be carried out or reviewed. Officers have been working closely with colleagues in the Corporate Fire Safety team to ensure that FRAs on our housing estates are not only carried out in line with the provisions of the RRO but also, are carried out in accordance with the Corporation's own guidance and best practice.

To provide the Committee with improved oversight of the number of actions produced following FRAs and when actions are completed, data has been captured below in the following tables and graphs. This new data format will develop moving forward as new FRAs are undertaken, and actions undertaken with completion dates. Some actions may have been completed but we are working retrospectively to capture completion dates to add to 2024 data.

The data below indicates a large number of actions raised in May 2024. This is due to the largest housing estate being assessed, Avondale Square Estate.

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Table 1

The below outlines the number of actions raised (monthly) when fire risk assessments are undertaken

2024	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Total Raised</b>	92	0	0	0	239	0	82	20	0	0	0	0
<b>High</b>	11	0	0	0	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Medium</b>	41	0	0	0	121	0	36	11	0	0	0	0
<b>Low</b>	38	0	0	0	97	0	46	9	0	0	0	0

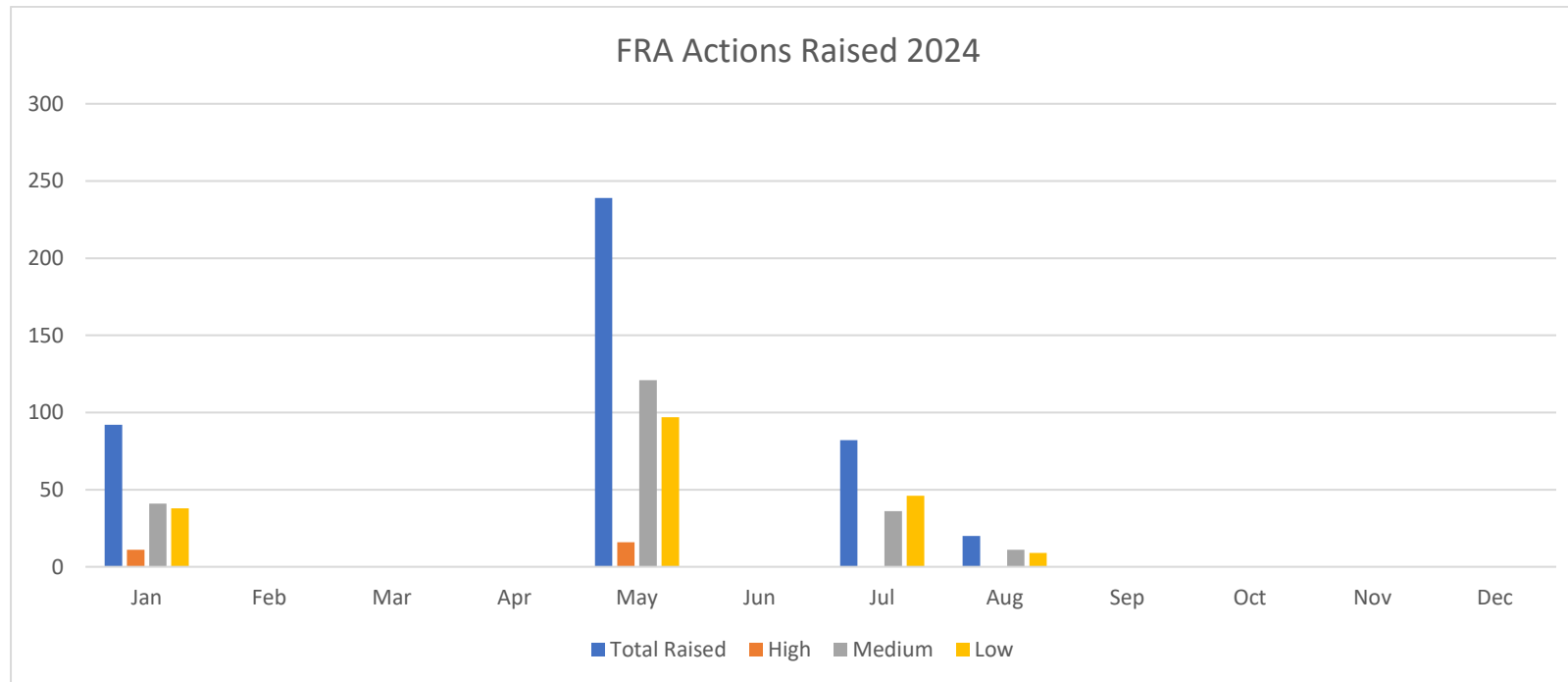




Table 2

The below captures the number of actions completed monthly

2024	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Total Completed</b>	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	4	1	3	39	0
<b>High</b>	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0
<b>Medium</b>	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	3	1	1	36	0
<b>Low</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0

### Action Completed Monthly

