

Committee(s)	Dated:
Barbican Residents Consultation Committee Barbican Residential Committee	5 March 2018 19 March 2018
Subject: Fire Safety Update	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Paul Murtagh Assistant Director Barbican & 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 reports submitted to Committee in September and November 2017.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note, consider and comment on the report.

Main Report

Background

1. Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in West London on 14 June 2017, which killed at least 80 people, concerns were, understandably, raised by City Corporation Members and residents about the safety of our homes and the possibility of a similar incident in one of our tower blocks.
2. In September 2017, a detailed report was brought to this Committee to update Members on the City Corporation's approach to fire safety on the Barbican Estate and, following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, to inform Members on the subsequent actions taken by the City Corporation. This report outlined:
 - Fire safety measures in place prior to the Grenfell Tower fire;
 - Our immediate response to the Grenfell Tower fire;
 - The next phase of work to be undertaken;
 - Issues for consideration for possible future inclusion in programmes of work.

3. An update report was brought back to Committee in November 2017 and this paper is intended as a further update.

Fire Risk Assessments

4. Frankham Risk Management Services Limited has been commissioned to carry out new Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) for each of our residential blocks including those on the Barbican. 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.
5. Previous FRA's carried out on Barbican have been Type 1 FRA's as required by legislation. The new FRA's are Type 3, which go beyond the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, covering all that is required for a Type 1 FRA but also providing for an assessment of the arrangements for means of escape and fire detection (i.e. smoke alarms) within a sample of the properties (typically around 10%). A Type 3 FRA is a non-destructive survey but, the fire resistance of doors to rooms and compartmentation within the property is considered.
6. At the time of writing this report, the survey work to the communal areas on the Barbican Residential Estate was complete and the internal survey work on a sample of properties is well underway. The draft reports are due to be submitted by 31 March 2018. 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.
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. There have been no such issues.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. 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 November 2018, have already been made available here.
11. We have continued to carry out work to address the risks highlighted by the previous (2016) FRAs, including, for example, removing barriers to fire escape routes.

Communication with residents

12. Detailed information, in the form of 'Frequently Asked Questions' bulletins, was produced specifically for the Barbican Estate. This was distributed to all House Groups and to residents through our email broadcast service and has also been posted on the Housing Fire Safety pages on the City's website.
13. There have been no new significant fire safety issues raised by residents since the last update report in November 2017. Detailed information on fire safety is available on the City's website.
14. Once we have completed our research into fire safety improvements and 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.

Fire Doors, Sprinkler Systems and Alarms

15. 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 20 weeks. Once the testing has been done and the reports received, we will be able to decide whether or not the doors on the Barbican Estate require upgrading and, if they do, we can properly prioritise, plan and cost a door replacement programme.
16. As part of all the projects included in our Major Works Programme, including those on the Barbican, 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.
17. The feasibility study into the potential installation of sprinkler systems in our tower blocks has now been received from our consultant, Butler & Young Group Ltd and has been analysed by staff in the Property Services Team. It is intended that once the work on the new FRA's is complete, along with our research into fire alarms, sprinklers and fire doors, a detailed holistic report on fire safety will be brought back to this Committee outlining proposals for fire safety improvements on the Barbican Estate.

Estate Management

18. Barbican Estate staff continue 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.
19. A further review of estate walkabouts and checks has been carried out, 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

20. 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.
21. 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 on a number of our premises but, only one of those was on the Barbican Estate. The Deficiency Notice issued for Willoughby House was challenged by the City's own Fire Safety Advisor as being incorrect and we are currently awaiting a response.

Resources

22. 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 Housing and Barbican 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.
23. 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.
24. We have previously alerted Members to the potential need for additional resources to ensure that we are able to deal effectively with the fire safety improvement measures that we are considering and have committed to with particular regard to:
 - Door replacement programme;
 - Installation of fire suppression systems (sprinklers);
 - Fire safety management planning;
 - Communications and website development.
25. At this stage, until we have the results of the fire resistance testing, feasibility study into sprinklers, completion of the new round of FRA's and information from government in relation to changes in Building Regulations and guidance from the Grenfell Tower enquiry, we are not in a position to properly identify any additional resources that may be required. We will naturally keep Members informed on this matter, and seek the necessary approvals, when we are in a position to do so.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

26. Clearly, as well as the resources issue outlined above, there are further serious financial implications for the City in carrying out the fire safety improvements included and outlined in this report. There will also likely be a financial impact on homeowners on the Barbican Estate if these works are undertaken.
27. The City must also be mindful of the reputational damage should it decide not to take reasonable measures to improve fire safety. The key issue for Members will be to decide what action and expenditure is reasonable and proportionate to the risk.

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