

Report of the Chief Executive

GRENFELL RESPONSE UPDATE1. Purpose of report

To update the Committee on actions which have been taken since the last report in June 2020 and highlight work currently in progress.

2. Background

The internal officer working group has progressed the actions identified in the appendix in anticipation of the likelihood that the Grenfell Inquiry will result in significant suggestions for improvement action on the part of all agencies, including local government.

3. Detail

The Grenfell Inquiry has been separated into two phases. Phase 1 focused on the factual narrative of the events on the night of 14 June 2017 and concluded on 12 December 2018. The Chairman published his Phase 1 report on 30 October 2019.

Hearings are currently being held for Phase 2, which examines the causes of these events, including how Grenfell Tower came to be in a condition which allowed the fire to spread in the way identified by Phase 1, particularly:

- The decisions relating to the design of the refurbishment and the choice of materials.
- The regime for testing and certifying the reaction to fire of materials intended for use in construction.
- The design and choice of materials.
- The performance of fire doors in the tower, in particular, whether they complied with relevant regulations, their maintenance and the reasons why some of the self-closing devices do not appear to have worked.
- The organisation and management of the LFB, in particular in relation to the formulation of policy in the light of experience, the arrangements for training firefighters and control room staff, and the arrangements for sharing information about the particular problems associated with fighting fires in high-rise buildings.
- The warnings of potential fire hazards given by the local community.
- The authorities' response to the disaster.

4. Financial implications

All work to the Council's housing stock is paid from the Housing Revenue Account. Budgets are currently being reviewed. An increase in budget, particularly for fire safety remedial works will be required in 2021/2022.

Recommendation

The Committee is asked to NOTE the actions already taken and work in progress listed in the appendix.

Background papers

Nil

APPENDIX

ACTION TAKEN

1. Communication sent to all councillors on 20 June 2017.
2. Additional information sent to Leader, Deputy Leader and Committee on 20 June 2017.
3. The tenant's handbook has been re-written with revised information on fire safety.
4. Audit of all properties we own identified two sets of buildings in respect of which there was insufficient information recorded – leading to subsequent further actions in (a) and (b) below
 - (a) Inspections of older properties in Stapleford ascertained nature of materials used were mineral fibre and not considered to be a high fire risk.
 - (b) Further enquiries in relation to Beeston Square identified cladding used as not of concern.
5. External audit invited to review a number of our in-house fire safety risk assessments, and suggest further improvements.
6. Annual testing of smoke detectors integrated into annual gas safety inspections. If no smoke detector is found, one is installed
7. Test of all smoke detectors in retirement living properties confirmed all were in working order.
8. The specification on all building contracts was changed to stipulate that both cladding and composite panels to be used including constituent parts of materials should be fire resistant or incombustible. The matter will be kept continuously under review to take on board any recommendations from the Grenfell Inquiry.
9. Fire safety advice included in tenants' newsletter, reminding everyone about fire safety (cooking, candles, cigarettes, flammable items in storage, appropriate disposal of rubbish, no blocking of fire exits, mobility scooter storage, blockage of corridors, knowing escape routes, no propping open of fire door, explaining what the policy is in the event of a fire (stay put/evacuate as appropriate), notifying us if there are concerns etc).
10. Website updated with information on fire safety for tenants.
11. Assurance sought regarding active enforcement of building regulations from Erewash BC our partners. Erewash BC attended meeting of Jobs and Economy Committee at which the annual building control report was scrutinised.
12. A register established of all buildings with any form of cladding/composite panel construction and a five-year systematic rolling programme of inspections including random core sampling of products.

13. The regularity of fire risk assessments of non-communal scheme properties and general needs housing was established in accordance with the standard expected in the HHSRS, and documented and monitored.
14. Inventory undertaken of all electrical appliances in temporary accommodation.
15. Identification of privately owned buildings in Broxtowe which may contain aluminium cladding.

Action taken since January 2018

- General Housing blocks have had fire risk assessments re-done and all fire detection equipment checked.
- A representative from Erewash BC which delivers our building control service attended planning committee and gave assurance that building regulations are being actively enforced in Broxtowe.
- There has been a review of all electrical appliances within housing. Some old appliances were thrown out. There is now a register of all electrical appliances. This makes it much easier and quicker to identify and speedily respond to recall issues, and ensure better documentation and systematic testing of all electrical equipment.
- An additional £350,000 to cover the cost of independent fire risk assessments and remedial works was included in budgets for 18/19. Work completed on a rolling programme basis. Lawrence Avenue and The Spinney were first to be done. Grove Court and Bexhill Court were next.
- A proposal was presented to Policy and Performance Committee to increase resources for HMO inspection, licensing and enforcement.
- A reminder was provided in an SMT briefing on the CDM regulations and the intranet updated with fresh guidance for responsible officers.
- An internal audit on CDM regs was completed (a reasonable assurance verdict was reported to Governance and audit committee) and the recommendations implemented. As a result of this a new e-learning course was developed and is being rolled out across all relevant officers as a mandatory learning requirement.
- Data was been provided to the government as requested on our housing stock and known private sector stock in our area.
- The Chief Executive as the most senior manager responsible for Housing spent days with front line officers listening to ideas and concerns and interacting with tenants through this experience.

Action taken since September 2018

- Following an increase in resources for Leaseholder work as a result of the Oct 17 Housing restructure, work was undertaken and is still in progress to identify any areas of risk where leaseholders may have, for example, replaced front doors with doors which are not providing a high enough fire resistance limit.
- A thorough audit of existing doors was conducted. From that we have an established list of the current stock – stated fire resistance -of existing doors This is a significant issue for the whole sector as the fire resistant qualities of most doors supplied by the industry have been shown to be inadequate or wrongly specified. Central government guidance is awaited.

- Increased resources dedicated to compliance in Housing. Housing Committee agreed to appoint an additional “compliance officer”.
- The tenant engagement strategy newly approved gives greater potential for informal feedback from tenants on safety issues and a wider range of new communication and engagement methods
- Fire shutters ordered for 12 schemes of communal kitchen areas to automatically prevent a fire starting in this location from spreading.
- Installation of free swing door closers to residents’ flats continuing. (Equality Act ease of access)
- Fire Document boxes installed where fire panels are located. (fitted with FFE1 Keys)
- Regency Court – External Emergency and maintained lighting works soon underway.
- Renewal of smoke detector heads at Rockwell Court (communal)
- Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service Fire Audit (Lawrence Ave, Tattershall Drive, Regency Court) completed.
- Fire safety training for independent living co-ordinators imminent.
- Housing risk register to feed the corporate strategic risk register refreshed
- More manager days on the front line and work shadowing to produce new insights and challenges.

Action taken since September 2019

- New Housing risk register created
- All general housing stock risk assessments have been completed, and are next due 2021
- Class O tamperproof notice boards have been fitted to general needs housing communal areas. They include details on the fire action plan, no smoking, not storing materials & flammable liquids, and a list of Housing contact details.
- Similar class O notice boards will be rolled out in retired living properties as well (surveys will resume when we can)
- All remaining fire shutters (for kitchens) have been fitted in retired living schemes.
- All fire document boxes have been completed across retired living schemes.
- Fire compartmentation surveys and improvements are ongoing to retired living schemes, and will resume when we can after coronavirus.
- Regency Court emergency lighting has been completed
- Bexhill Court had new smoke detectors and heat detectors fitted as part of the Tunstall system. Compartment repairs to the lift shaft, and communal facilities have been completed.
- A presentation was given to the Nottingham Fire and Rescue Service, other local authorities and RSL’s on the fire stopping/compartmentation our contract partners are doing on our behalf. It was well received.
- Free swing door closers are largely complete within retired living schemes where needed.
- Recent assurances have been received from Erewash BC regarding compliance with building regulations.
- Stay put policy: should be unchanged for now

- (a) because of our residents who are vulnerable, older and potentially confused and number of false alarms.
- (b) our buildings are lower rise and therefore easier to evacuate
- (c) our buildings are less risky on compartmentalization thanks to ongoing programme of work

Action taken since June 2020

- The Housing Risk Register created in 2019 has been reviewed and updated
- Following committee approval, a new Communal Areas Policy has been introduced and the safety benefits of the new approach has been promoted to tenants
- A new more thorough fire risk assessment template has been used to assess all Independent Living schemes
- A fire risk assessment working group has been established to progress and monitor any items identified from fire risk assessments and prioritise work accordingly
- Face-to-face training has been delivered to key employees, including Independent Living Co-ordinators and Cleaners by the Health, Safety and Emergency Planning Manager
- The key themes for a new Asset Management Strategy was approved by Housing Committee, which are:
 - (a) Implement recommendations from the stock condition survey
 - (b) Ensure compliance with all regulations and legislation
 - (c) Improve the energy efficiency of our stock
 - (d) Improve our Neighbourhoods
 - (e) Make the best use of our assets
- A new Head of Asset Management and Development role was approved by Personnel Committee, repairs and capital works to move into the same department
- Survey of doors on leaseholder flats completed

Work in progress

- Face-to-face Fire Safety Training for all employees who visit housing schemes by the Health, Safety and Emergency Planning Manager to be delivered
- Fire Safety Digital Record to be created for each building. This will include details of what materials went into the construction; full plans for the building; any alterations; a record of any approvals for alterations; fire safety risk assessment; copies of inspection reports
- Asset Management Strategy to be produced to develop a clear asset plan for the council's Housing assets. This plan will set out a framework within which annual maintenance priorities are set and capital building projects delivered, providing better strategic co-ordination between housing repairs and capital works.
- Role of Senior Maintenance Officer for compliance to be reviewed and recruited to
- Development of the Housing Management System to improve the recording of assets
- Review of all inward and outward facing doors

- Review of budgets for 2021/22 to ensure that the work that has been identified can be completed