

## Report of the Chief Executive

**GRENFELL RESPONSE UPDATE**1. Purpose of report

To update the Committee on actions which have been taken since the last report in September 2019 and highlight work currently in progress.

2. Background

The Committee was last provided with an update relating to actions taken to improve fire safety in the light of the Grenfell fire tragedy in September 2019.

The internal officer working group has now progressed the actions identified in appendix 1 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.

The Inquiry has only so far produced interim recommendations and is not now sitting. The length of time being taken before any national guidance is produced on, for example, future required fire safety standards of fire doors, continues to be a problem as councils risk incurring abortive expenditure in purchasing and installing doors which may then have to be replaced if the new standards change.

This Council acted ahead of government legal requirements to ensure all building materials used within housing construction are incombustible.

3. Financial implications

The council increased its capital and revenue budgets in 2019/20 to accommodate additional safety measures for our housing stock including conducting more rigorous fire risk assessments and introducing a new "compliance officer" post to the Housing establishment during 2019/20. Unfortunately, this post subsequently became vacant and despite advertising it has not been possible to recruit a suitably qualified applicant. Neither have we been able to recruit a Housing repairs manager despite also advertising repeatedly. It is a tribute to the hard work of officers in Housing and capital works that we have been able to continue to make progress, and thanks are due to the acting Housing Repairs manager for stepping up to undertake the role. A further organisational review is planned to address the capacity issues within this area of work.

**Recommendation**

**The Committee is asked to NOTE the actions already taken and work in progress listed in appendix 1.**

Background papers:

Nil

**APPENDIX 1****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.

**Work completed since January 2018**

16. General Housing blocks have had fire risk assessments re-done and all fire detection equipment checked.
17. 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.
18. 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.
19. 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.
20. A proposal was presented to Policy and Performance Committee to increase resources for HMO inspection, licensing and enforcement.
21. A reminder was provided in an SMT briefing on the CDM regulations and the intranet updated with fresh guidance for responsible officers.
22. 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.
23. Data was been provided to the government as requested on our housing stock and known private sector stock in our area.
24. 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.

**Work undertaken 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

**Further actions now in progress:**

- (a) revisit housing risk register within the next month
- (b) Communications on fire safety and new communal areas policy to be fed into social media programme.
- (c) An update to Jobs and Economy Committee from Erewash on building regulations inspections/enforcement for Broxtowe.
- (d) Fire safety policy and risk assessment and training – new health and safety officer to take on in mid May as a top priority. Develop a specific fire safety policy for each of our Housing buildings . Ensure there is an identifiable duty holder relating to each building (to be contained in the fire safety policy). Further Increase skills and competence in relation to fire safety and safety compliance generally through internal training. Meanwhile, some high level desk top assessments for retirement living properties based on previously documented risk assessments, and ILOs still visiting properties being asked to check certain aspects on request.
- (e) Work to ensure each building has a “fire safety digital record”. 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
- (f) revisit the proposals for a new organisational structure for assets and repairs to ensure the role of compliance is adequately scoped and graded. Develop a clear asset plan for the council's Housing assets. This plan would set out a framework within which annual maintenance priorities are set and capital building projects delivered, providing better strategic co-ordination between housing maintenance and capital works. This will be a specific requirement of the new post holder to be recruited to post H126
- (g) By mid 2020 the capita system will keep a record of building assets
- (h) fire doors internal opening have been tested and are compliant - however guidance has not yet been issued on testing outward opening doors. In the light of this leaseholder doors which have been surveyed will be prioritised and officers will start considering which ones need replacing based on information we have available

- (i) A standard fire resistant door choice (price range) will be devised that leaseholders must choose from in future and the policy will be amended accordingly.
- (j) Survey all internally opening doors as soon as coronavirus restrictions permit to do compliance gap analysis
- (k) after that take stock on remaining outward opening doors.