

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 5th July 2017
Report of: Director of Growth and Regulatory Services

Report Title

Fire Safety in Trafford

Summary

The report provides an update on the current position in Trafford in relation to fire safety following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower.

Recommendation(s)

To note the contents of the report.

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

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Background Papers: N/A

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Everyone was shocked by the dreadful fire at Grenfell Tower last week and the tragic loss of life. Understandably there has been a lot of concern about the potential for similar events at other high rise blocks, and this report provides an update on the actions taken both by the Council and our partners, and at a Greater Manchester level .

2. CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 There are nine high rise blocks (over 18m) owned by social landlords in Trafford. Eight of these are owned by Trafford Housing Trust (THT) and one by Irwell Valley Housing Association (IVHA). The Council have been in contact with both THT and IVHA to share information and update on current activity.
- 2.2 THT – five of the THT blocks have external cladding. Samples of cladding from these blocks, all of which are in Old Trafford, were sent for urgent testing as part of the government’s urgent review of fire safety within high rise buildings. The Council and THT received the results of the testing last week. Despite the cladding material used on these buildings being specified as safe and compliant with legislation, THT have been told that a component within this cladding system is potentially a safety concern.
- 2.3 All customers in the five Tower Blocks with cladding have been informed via letter of the results of the testing on the cladding, and informed about the actions that the Trust is taking to manage the situation. Residents have also been informed of a change to an evacuation policy (rather than stay put policy) in case of fire.
- 2.4 The Greater Manchester Fire Service (GMFRS) visited all five Old Trafford Tower Blocks last week, and undertook a detailed inspection. They identified a number of issues that need rectifying, and these are all being actioned.
- 2.5 In addition, to ensure THT have the most up to date information on all residents, staff are visiting every individual property in all eight towers to:
- Physically test smoke detectors;
 - Capture up to date information regarding any extra help required by the customer to leave their property in the unlikely event of an evacuation;
 - Capture up to date contact details (email and mobile numbers, so that we could communicate with/account for all customers in the event of an emergency);
 - Remind customers of general ‘safety in the home’ guidelines eg don’t overload plugs etc;
 - Spot any hoarding activity that needs to be addressed;
 - Try to get an understanding of alternative communication formats required (eg alternative languages, braille etc) to ensure critical communications are accessible and inclusive for all customers.

- 2.6 THT have commissioned new 'Level 4' Fire Risk Assessments for all tower blocks. These are the most detailed assessments available; and work on these is underway.
- 2.7 24-hour security is in operation in all eight Tower Blocks to provide a 'wakeful watch' to raise the alarm and manage the building evacuation in the event of a fire.
- 2.8 THT have appointed Devonshires and Probyn Miers to provide legal and technical advice. Probyn Miers will be inspecting the towers and cladding week commencing 3rd July, and will advise on solutions, including replacing the panels or removal and replacing with render (which currently covers 85% of the building).
- 2.9 IVHA - their one high rise block does not have ACM cladding, and they have also obtained the full specifications and reassurances from the manufacturers and installers of the cladding on this block. IVHA hand delivered letters to all residents in the period after the Grenfell Tower fire, and invited residents to a drop in session on Friday 23rd June, at which Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) were present. The block has an up to date Fire Risk Assessment, which is being reviewed, and in addition they are carrying out daily inspections to ensure any fire hazards are identified and removed.
- 2.10 As well as all residents being issued with a FAQs document, fire safety and tenancy audit visits are being undertaken for all residents in the block, which includes:
- Checking fire closers on doors
 - Checking fuse boxes
 - Providing support/advice re hoarding/clutter
 - Checking power points for overloading
 - Provision of register my appliance details
 - Referrals for Safe and Well visits with GMFRS
 - Re-affirming current guidelines for fire safety on stay put for the block
- 2.11 Other social landlords operating in the Borough, who don't have high rise blocks here, have also contacted the Council to advise of the activity they are carrying out across their provision.
- 2.12 The Council does not have a register of high rise towers in the Borough, and is not required to do so. Officers have identified 11 towers of over five storeys and are in the process of confirming ownership. Property owners will then be contacted to seek reassurance on any cladding systems and fire safety procedures, and to provide support and advice from the Council as required.

3.0 NATIONAL AND REGIONAL ACTIVITY

- 3.1 DCLG are co-ordinating activity at a national level with local authorities and housing associations. At present most activity is directed at property owners,

and the Council is maintaining dialogue with partners as set out above. Information issued by DCMG has been published on the GOV.UK website.

- 3.2 The Greater Manchester Mayor held a summit meeting with local authorities, housing providers and GMFRS on Tuesday 20th June, which was attended by the Executive Member for Strategic Planning and Housing and the Director of Growth and Regulatory Services. Following this a task force has been established, led by the City Mayor, Salford, to co-ordinate immediate activity; determine actions required in the short to medium term to reassure residents and improve fire safety; and provide a response to the public enquiry.

4. **CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 The Council will continue to work with providers locally, and with the GM task force on the post Grenfell Tower response, and will update members as appropriate.