

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 14th March 2018
Report of: Director of Growth and Regulatory Services

Report Title

Fire Safety in High Rise Tower Blocks - Update

Summary

The report provides a further update on the current position in Trafford in relation to fire safety in high rise housing 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:

Name: Richard Roe

Extension: 4265

Background Papers: N/A

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Further to the reports to Scrutiny Committee in July and September 2017 this report seeks to provide Members with a further update on related developments both locally and nationally.

2. CURRENT POSITION - TRAFFORD

- 2.1 As previously reported all five of the Trafford Housing Trust (THT) blocks with aluminium composite material (ACM) external cladding have been visited and audited by Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS). The ACM cladding on all of these buildings is of a type that will need replacement or other remedial treatment in order to reduce the risk of fire. The ACM cladding on the THT blocks accounts for approximately 15% of the total surface area.
- 2.2 The interim fire safety measures that were put in place by THT, reported in July, are still in operation to protect the residents of the flats until replacement or remedial measures are completed. THT has been implementing a wider safety review of all its blocks. This has included reviewing all compartmentalisation of blocks in communal areas and flats, undertaking Fire Risk Assessment level 4s across all blocks and installing fire alarms in all communal areas. The works to the tower blocks is anticipated to be completed by autumn 2018, subject to the availability of the replacement panels.
- 2.3 The high rise block owned by Irwell Valley Housing Association does not have ACM panelling. GMFRS have confirmed that following inspection and tests no remedial work will be required on this block.
- 2.4 The last report highlighted a privately owned high rise development within Trafford fitted with ACM cladding. The building was inspected by GMFRS and Trafford Building Control. The developer has now removed all of the ACM cladding from the building and replaced it with an approved safe material.
- 2.5 The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have now established a second database for privately owned high rise dwellings to provide a national record of buildings with ACM cladding and the necessary interim and remedial measures required to make them safe. Apart from the building mentioned in para 2.4 there is only one more privately owned high rise building in the borough that is currently being investigated to establish what remedial measures are required.
- 2.6 Officers from Trafford Council have regularly attended all meetings of the AGMA High Rise Taskforce to ensure that all current developments are subject to appropriate action by the Council.

3.0 NATIONAL ACTIVITY

3.1 The following list is a summary of recent national activity relating to high-rise fire safety:

- The Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety, Chaired by Dame Judith Hackitt produced an interim report “Building a Safer Future” in December 2017 [Link to Interim Report](#). The report details the initial findings of the review and identifies the direction of travel for the remaining work. The final report will be produced in spring 2018.
- The Government has not changed its position that there will be no new funding for Social Landlords or Councils to address replacement of ACM cladding.
- The government has established a Building Safety Programme with the aim of ensuring high-rise residential buildings are safe, and residents feel safe in them.
- The ACM screening and large-scale tests that took place were the first phase of work to find other buildings of concern following the Grenfell Tower fire. Where buildings have been identified as having ACM, the Government is working closely with building owners to ensure those buildings are made safe. The government is confident that all social housing blocks over 18m with ACM have now been identified, and the government has been encouraging private sector landlords to urgently send their samples for testing so private sector ACM blocks can be identified.
- The government has also asked local housing authorities to ensure that all (social and private sector) residential blocks over 18m in their local areas with ACM have been identified and that any necessary remedial action is being taken, and is working with those local authorities, FRS and others to support and monitor this.
- Following the large-scale national tests, the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) is, with other fire safety experts, reviewing the advice on the interim fire safety measures and developing guidance on waking watch and common fire alarms. This guidance is due to be published shortly.
- A press release from the homelessness charity Shelter, issued in February 2018, reported that only 4% of social housing, with unsafe ACM cladding, had had it removed. It also reported that 42% of social housing buildings that use similar cladding to that used at Grenfell have not started work on replacing it.

4. **CONCLUSION**

- 4.1 Although significant progress has now been made on identifying dangerous ACM cladding, there is still much work to be done to establish and agree suitable remedial measures and replacement materials for buildings across the country. The cost of interim measures and replacement of ACM materials is putting significant financial pressures on social and private landlords. The Council will continue to work with the GM Task Force and local housing providers to maintain public safety and we will continue to update members as appropriate.