

RESPONSE TO GRENFELL TOWER DISASTER

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To advise the Scrutiny Committee of the Council's response to the Grenfell Tower disaster in regard to the fire safety management of buildings managed or owned by the Council.
- 1.2 This report sets out actions taken by the Council since the disaster to mitigate the risk of any similar disaster occurring and demonstrate compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The Council fully accepts its duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The Corporate Health and Safety Policy 2017 outlines those duties and arrangements.

2 For decision

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| 2.1 That members of the Scrutiny Committee note the contents of the report. |
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3 Supporting information

- 3.1 Safety checks following Grenfell Tower Fire, The Department for Communities and Local Government, – 22nd June 2017 (Appendix A)
- 3.2 Statement issued by Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust (Appendix B)
- 3.3 **Background**
- 3.4 The Grenfell Tower fire started on 14 June 2017 in a 24 storey, 67m high tower block in North Kensington, West London. It resulted in at least 79 fatalities and 70 injuries. The tower is owned by Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council and managed by Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation on behalf of the council.
- 3.5 Grenfell Tower underwent major renovation, which was completed in 2016 and as part of the project, the concrete structure received new aluminium composite rainscreen, in part to improve the insulation and appearance of the building.
- 3.6 A residents organisation, Grenfell Action Group, expressed significant safety concerns prior to the fire, with criticism levelled against the council for fire safety and building maintenance failures. Also, the escape path was limited to a single staircase.
- 3.7 All local authorities and registered providers received a request from the DCLG on 18 June 2017 asking them to identify whether any panels used in new build or refurbishment residential buildings (over 18 meters tall) are a particular type of cladding made of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM), similar to that used at Grenfell Tower. If any buildings were found to have ACM cladding, then samples needed to be tested.
- 3.8 **Actions Taken**
- 3.9 A Grenfell Response Board has been set up to discuss any Government guidance issued as a direct result of the disaster and to examine existing risk profiles of all Council managed and owned properties.
- 3.10 The Board consists of the following members;

Andrew Small - Director and Chair Person

Will Rysdale -Assistant Director – Community Fulfilment

Teresa Lane -Assistant Director – Commercial Property and Regeneration

Joanne Crosby - Corporate Health and Safety Manager

Adam Heeley - Building Control and Access Manager

Martin Roberts - Property Officer

- 3.11 The first meeting was held on 3 July and was chaired by Andrew Grant. Subsequent meetings have been held and are schedule to continue on a regular basis.
- 3.12 All Fire Safety Risk Assessments and Fire Safety Management Plans for properties managed by the Council were reviewed by the Corporate Health and Safety Manager. This is in addition to statutory annual reviews already undertaken.
- 3.13 Fire Safety Management Plans and Fire Safety Risk Assessments were obtained from Tenants of commercial properties owned by the Council but self-managed for review.
- 3.14 **Findings**
- 3.15 The only residential property owned by the Council is Griffin Place, which provides emergency accommodation for the homeless. This property is managed by Bromford Housing Association.
- 3.16 This building does not contain ACM type cladding, is less than 18 meters tall and it has recently been confirmed that it meets the relevant fire regulations.
- 3.17 The Council does not hold any social housing stock. We are working with local Registered Providers (RP's/housing associations) to identify residential tower blocks that they own and/or manage in the District which contains ACM cladding. RP's have been offered to deal with any properties that are identified with any significant fire risk.
- 3.18 Friars House, Aylesbury. This building is over 18 meters tall and is fitted with ACM type cladding. We are working closely with Moreland Estate Management, the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust (VAHT), Bucks Fire and Rescue and DCLG to ensure the safety of residents.
- 3.19 Moreland Estate Management have been informed to independently assess fire systems within the building and the automatically controlled vents on each floor and understand these are sufficient to limit and prevent a fire from spreading. Despite this we will continue to working with all parties to ensure that the most up-to-date advice and guidance is followed.
- 3.20 VAHT own and manage Walton Court and Silverdale Close in Aylesbury Vale, both of which are clad in a cement based fibre board which is non-combustible. See Appendix B
- 3.21 There have been various investigations of other buildings across the Vale (not limited to residential properties) and this includes the portfolio of buildings that AVDC owns/has an interest in and recommendations made as to what actions we may need to take, if any.
- 3.22 There were concerns over the materials used in the cladding of the building occupied by University Campus Aylesbury Vale but subsequent information

from the developers and the Fire Service have confirmed that the cladding complies fully with the current requirements of the Building Regulations and the fire safety procedures and practices are all satisfactory

- 3.23 We have also prioritised the safety and inspections of our Community Centres and office locations, reviewing all of their relevant fire risk assessments and safety management plans, including those managed by the current tenants.
- 3.24 There has also been a meeting chaired by Will Rysdale with members of the Aylesbury Vale Community Safety Partnership including Thames Valley Police, Bucks Fire & Rescue, Bucks CC and the CCG. This group has spoke about the findings so far and has agreed to review the longer term response plan should such a tragedy happen within the Vale. Several Freedom of Information requests have been received and responded to.
- 3.25 The Grenfell fire inquest has now started and it is likely that new guidance from their findings will be produced. Our Building Control team are monitoring any new legislation and guidance that is published.
- 3.26 Potential problems may arise in the private sector as there is more pressure from central government to check private buildings to make sure they are safe and have taken the correct precautions.

4 Resource implications

- 4.1 Officer time has been spent responding to and researching various questions and FOI requests. At this stage we can not provide further information as to whether there will be other financial implications (if any).

Contact Officer

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