



Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee 14th September 2017

Report of: Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Service

Subject: **Tower Blocks Update – Fire Safety on Council High Rise Residential Blocks**

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Summary:

Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny and Policy Development Committee on 6th July 2017 received an update on actions by Sheffield Council following Grenfell Tower fire. This item for information is a progress update on subsequent actions by Sheffield Council in regard Fire Safety on Council High Rise Residential Blocks.

Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	X
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:
Note the Report

Background Papers: None

Category of Report: OPEN

Progress Update to Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee – Fire Safety on Council High Rise Residential Blocks

September 2017

General

- There are 24 council owned blocks over six storeys in the city, 3 are brick clad and 21 have rain screen cladding.
- During July all tower blocks had a full new Fire Risk Assessment undertaken and remedial works will be completed by the end of September by the insourced repairs service.
- Consultation on installing sprinklers and closing bin chutes will commence in the Autumn.

Hanover

- One block Hanover failed the initial Building Research Establishment (BRE) cladding test (June 2017).
- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue inspected the block and agreed residents could remain in occupation as long as fire wardens remained in place until cladding was removed.
- Residents were offered temporary rehousing but only one resident has taken up this offer.
- Approval was given to commence removal of the cladding at the end June and by 15th September 2017 all the cladding and insulation will be removed.
- In late July 2017 the government requested that BRE undertake full cladding system tests and Hanover tower block failed this test. Nationally all blocks with the same system material composition as Hanover failed the test.
- The government reinforced the message to landlords to take mitigating action to keep residents safe. 24/7 security remains in place on Hanover but will end once the cladding removal is complete.
- The Hanover Tenants and Residents Association (TARA) were advised of the test result within 24 hrs of the result being notified to Sheffield City Council (SCC).
- Housing Officers continue to attend weekly surgeries at the TARA office.
- On 11th September 2017 Housing Officers will attend the first meeting with the TARA project group to discuss the next steps
- An initial discussion has taken place with Planning Officers regarding replacement cladding designs
- Cladding work is unlikely to commence until Spring 2018.

Other Blocks with Rain screen Cladding

- 21 other tower blocks with aluminium cladding were sampled by Sheffield University and these tests confirmed that the cladding did not contain any composite material and so no further action has been necessary

- To reassure residents we also had the insulation material tested and this proved to be safe.
- Mid August we wrote to all residents and they were advised of the test results.

Non Council Residential Blocks

- Sheffield has been notified by Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that 4 blocks in the city that submitted cladding samples also failed the cladding system tests.
- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service have inspected these blocks and have confirmed to SCC that these building owners are taking action to mitigate the risk of fire on these blocks.
- Housing officers are continuing to build a database of high rise blocks in the city. Responses have been received from 25% of building owners.

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue

- South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (SYFRS) inspected all out tower blocks during June / July
- These inspections did not identify any serious weaknesses of approach
- Sheffield Council has responded to a letter from the Fire Service that asked Sheffield to consider some changes / improvement work to further protect residents
- SYFRS have accepted Sheffield Councils plan of action to change ventilation on three tower blocks and to review its inspection regime. Work is well underway to address these issues.
- The Stay Put policy is still applicable taking into account the fire precaution measures we have on our blocks. In some parts of the country changes have been made but SYFRS are satisfied that Sheffield can continue its approach to Stay Put given the previous investment work that has been undertaken.

National Developments

- Sheffield has written to DCLG and made an initial request for funding to re-clad Hanover tower block.
- Sheffield has participated in regular discussions with the Building Safety Team (DCLG) and other local authorities and are pressing for urgent clarity on what cladding systems can be safely used on high rise blocks. Guidance has been promised later this month.
- Sheffield and others are also seeking clarity from government on whether additional resources will be forthcoming to allow local authorities to proactively inspect high rise properties on a planned basis using the powers under the Housing Act 2004.
- The government have commissioned a full enquiry into the Grenfell Fire and also a review of Building Regulations relating to fire safety
- The initial findings of the Grenfell fire are expected by Christmas.
- The Building Regulations review is expected to report in Spring 2018.

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