



Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

A Borough to be proud of

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND DECISION MAKING

SCRUTINY COMMISSION 10 AUGUST 2017

WARDS AFFECTED: ALL WARDS

FIRE SAFETY MANAGEMENT IN COUNCIL DWELLINGS.

Report of Director Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update members on HBBC's approach to fire safety and risk management. More specifically the report will focus on the Council's;
- General needs Housing stock
 - Sheltered Housing accommodation
 - Hostel accommodation
 - Tenancy support
 - Other Council owned buildings
- 1.2 To highlight to Members the arrangements in place for each type of property and the work that is done with regard to tenant engagement.

2. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 2.1 At the recent Scrutiny meeting on 15 June 2017 in response to the Grenfell Tower fire in London, it was requested that a report was written to detail our approach to managing fire risk and safety within our properties.
- 2.2 The HCA have also written to all registered service providers to remind them of their responsibilities under the regulators Home Standard.

3. IMMEDIATE ACTION FOLLOWING GRENFELL TOWER FIRE

- 3.1 DCLG instructed that all social landlords reviewed their Housing stock with regard to the installation of cladding and if the material used was the same ACM (Aluminium composite material) that was used on the Grenfell Tower. They instructed that any property exceeding 6 Storeys or 18meters in height must be detailed in the review and sent back to them by the following day.

3.2 HBBC review was completed and returned within the deadline, detailing that we had no homes above 6 storeys or 18meters in height, furthermore none of its properties have been clad with the ACM material.

4. COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK

4.1 Under Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, we have a legal duty to ensure that all of our shared usage areas meet standards for fire prevention, detection and management in the event of a fire. To meet this requirement we have robust procedures in place including Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) for all sheltered housing schemes and blocks of flats with communal areas.

4.2 Whilst day to day fire safety is everybody's responsibility, including that of our tenants, our management team take the lead in managing fire safety within our tenants' homes. We have a team of officers who have different responsibilities with regard to fire prevention and safety;

- *Fire Manager (Principal Safety, Health and Resilience Officer)*
The Principal Safety, Health and Resilience Officer has overall strategic and management responsibility of fire precautions for HBBC properties including its social housing stock. This overarching responsibility is to ensure that satisfactory policies, procedures, training and competence checks are in place.
- *Fire Officer (Housing Assets & Support Teams Manager)*
The Fire Officer is responsible for day to day management of the Council flats, community houses and sheltered housing schemes. It is the duty of The Fire Officer to put into place and maintain required fire precautions as detailed in the FRAs and other fire related Approved Code of Practices (ACOPs).
- *Scheme Managers* at the sheltered housing schemes are responsible for day to day operations of fire precautions and conducting required checks detailed in the FRAs.
- *The Servicing Contracts Supervisor* - is responsible for the maintenance of fire detection within our council houses and bungalows.

4.3 The Council operates a three year cycle for Fire Risk Assessments.

- Year 0 – Fire Risk Assessment is created by Fire Manager;
- Year 1 – Fire Officer check take necessary actions and sign off*;
- Year 2 – Fire Officer check take necessary actions and sign off*;
- Year 3 – New Fire Risk Assessment created by Fire Manager.

***If significant changes do occur in year 1 and 2 then the Fire Manager must be informed, who will then ascertain whether a new Fire Risk Assessment needs to be completed**

The Fire Officer ensures that highlighted risks are either eliminated in the first instance or mitigated to an acceptable level. The Fire Officer may accept the risk, due to the fact that no further precautions can reasonably be put in to place. If the risk is accepted then the Fire Officer must put in writing the details that led to their decision. It must then be signed off, dated and kept with the FRA.

The FRAs for all of our housing stock are current and the actions to remove or reduce the risks are recorded and completed on a risk priority basis.

- 4.4 In April this year we introduced Pre Preventative Maintenance checks to complement our FRAs and ACOP through the 'In-house' repairs team. These are monthly checks that are carried out by our working supervisors for sheltered schemes and shared usage areas which include;
- checking the correct fit of communal fire doors and operation of door closers;
 - adequate and correct positioning of fire signage including
 - fire doors
 - escape routes and
 - no smoking areas;
 - checking the operation of emergency lighting and back up supplies (discharges on a 6 monthly basis)
- 4.5 Specific arrangements are in place for the Council's general needs Housing stock with regard to fire safety and detection. These include;
- the tenants' requirement to fit a battery smoke alarm in their home where a mains powered alarm does not exist. They are responsible for checking it is operable regularly and replacement of the batteries when necessary
 - the annual servicing of gas, solid fuel and oil heating systems, at which times the correct operation of smoke and heat detectors are now checked
 - carbon monoxide alarms are also fitted and checked annually, to detect and therefore reduce the risk of escape of unburnt gases, at properties with back boilers until they are replaced with modern combi boilers
 - we are in the first year of a four year programme to renew old solid fuelled boilers with modern ASHP (Air Source Heat Pump) systems
 - we undertake annual servicing of ASHPs heating systems and the same checks on smoke/heat detectors are completed at that time
 - A cyclical 5 year programme for the testing of all dwellings' electrical systems is in place and detectors are tested/upgraded as part of this programme. Where it is found that a property still has battery smoke detection (which is the minimum acceptable standard) an upgrade to fit electric detectors is undertaken.
- 4.6 Special arrangements are in place for the Council's sheltered housing schemes which are two storeys high and operate a stay put policy. We have completed an extensive programme of compartmentalisation in the shared roof spaces, minimising the potential for travel of fire between flats through roof voids. This work was completed in 2016 following the previous FRAs. Other arrangements include;
- routine visual checks of fire safety equipment and signage within the building by Sheltered Scheme staff
 - tenants provided with fire safety information when moving into their new home
 - individual risk assessments are completed for each tenant and appropriate measures put in place to support their own needs including Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) which are reviewed annually or as circumstances/health changes copies of these are kept within the firebox at the schemes so that they are instantly available for the Fire Service in the event of a fire
 - service contracts are in place to carry out annual servicing and repairs to fire safety equipment;

- fire alarms
- smoke and heat detectors
- automated door closers
- automated smoke vents
- fire fighting extinguishers and equipment
- records of all tests carried out by both onsite staff and contractors are retained and available onsite and electronically. These are audited by the Fire Manager, the Fire Officer and the Fire Service during their planned and unplanned fire audits.

4.7 The Council also has a homeless accommodation hostel which is 3 storeys high. Fire detection and prevention is the same as in the sheltered schemes however there are evacuation procedures in place rather than a stay put policy. The roof spaces have received the same compartmentalisation as in the sheltered schemes. In addition to these arrangements ad hoc fire drills take place to ensure that staff and residents understand and comply with the fire evacuation procedures.

4.8 Housing's Tenancy Management and Allocations Teams play an important part in fire safety management with regard to the work that they do with Tenants and the Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS).

- When allocating a property, the Allocations Team will identify any vulnerability or disability concerns for example a hearing or sight impairment.
- Subsequent tenancy management and support will consider where these identified vulnerabilities require further support.
- This support includes a new tenancy visit which takes into account existing fire protection within the home and if there are any risks that the tenant's lifestyle may present, for example smoking within the home. If risks are identified, a referral is made to LFRS for follow up advice and support.
- The Tenancy Management team will also, routinely, refer existing tenants to LFRS for support and advice, if risks and hazards are identified during general visits.
- All of the Tenancy Management team are qualified in the *Housing Health and Safety Rating System* to ensure that they are able to readily risk assess for fire, and other housing hazards.
- The Tenancy Management team receive annual fire protection training from LFRS to ensure that their skill levels are appropriately maintained.
- If a tenant is found to be in breach of their tenancy agreement by failing to comply with Health and Safety requirements, the Council will look to pursue legal measures to ensure compliance; such as an injunction.

5 COUNCIL COMMERCIAL AND OFFICES

5.1 The Council has a number of 'non housing' commercial buildings and offices. The Council's Asset Management Team has determined which were fitted with cladding panels and their composition. The investigation was non-invasive and information on the cladding was from the building's Operation and Maintenance manuals or confirmation from the original supply and fitting contractors. The buildings checked were:

- The Hinckley Hub
- The Atkins Building
- The Jubilee Building
- Block C within the Crescent Development
- Other Commercial Sites

There are only two blocks that have exterior cladding which are The Hinckley Hub and Block C in The Crescent. Neither of these buildings are fitted with the non compliant ACMs.

- Hinckley Hub/Jubilee/Atkins:
 - has an up to date fire risk assessment in place
 - has a construction Fire Strategy in place to prevent the spread of fire and smoke and to aid escape
 - has detection and alarm apparatus in place with regular service and testing
 - evacuation plan is in place and practice emergency evacuations are conducted
 - fire extinguishers at various locations can be used by trained staff to aid escape
- Block C The Crescent:
 - has an up to date fire risk assessment in place
 - Fire arrangements are managed by the appointed managing agent (Savills Commercial Property Management)

The occupiers or tenants of commercial properties are responsible for their own fire safety arrangements.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [IB]

6.1 None.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [AR]

7.1 The body of this report sets out the Council's legal obligations in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

7.2 This report sets out how the Council discharges these legal obligations. Any failure to comply with these legal obligations can result in a formal prosecution brought against the Council in its capacity as a landlord.

8. CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Actions detailed within the report specifically support two key objectives;

- Make our neighbourhoods safer
- Improve the quality of existing homes

9. CONSULTATION

9.1 Consultation has taken place with;

- Housing Repairs Investment Manager
- Housing Assets & Support Teams Manager
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Tenancy Manager

- Housing Options Manager
- Principal Safety, Health and Resilience Officer
- Council's Asset Management Team

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 It is the Council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.
- 8.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.
- 8.3 The significant risks associated with this report were identified from within the extensive suite of individual Fire Risk Assessments for each of the properties as detailed in 3.3 above.

9. KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY – EQUALITY AND RURAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The managements of Fire risks and safety detailed within this report affect all demographics and communities within the borough.

10. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:
- Community Safety implications
 - Environmental implications
 - Asset Management implications
 - Data Protection implications

Background papers: None

Contact Officer: Sharon Stacey 01455 255636
Executive Member: Councillor C Boothby