

	<h2>Housing Committee</h2> <h3>23 October 2017</h3>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Title</b></p>	<p><b>Fire Safety – progress update</b></p>
<p><b>Report of</b></p>	<p>Deputy Chief Executive</p>
<p><b>Wards</b></p>	<p>All</p>
<p><b>Status</b></p>	<p>Public</p>
<p><b>Urgent</b></p>	<p>No</p>
<p><b>Key</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p><b>Enclosures</b></p>	<p>Appendix 1: Fire safety and the Council’s response to the Grenfell Tower Tragedy Appendix 2: Housing Commissioning Plan Update</p>
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## Summary

This report sets out progress in addressing housing related fire safety issues in the borough following the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017, including a review of fire safety measures carried out by Barnet Homes of the Council’s own high rise council homes, and proposals for measures to ensure best practice in fire safety.

## Recommendations

1. That the Committee note the contents of this report and appendix 1, and in particular that cladding on three tower blocks at Granville Road has now been removed
2. That the Committee agrees that, subject to agreement by Policy and Resources Committee on 5<sup>th</sup> December, an additional £7.5 million is allocated from the Council’s Housing Revenue Account to meet the cost of high priority fire safety improvements identified by Barnet Homes.
3. That the Committee agrees to the implementation of additional desirable fire safety improvements, which will be deferred pending the outcome of the independent review of the building regulations and fire safety recently

**commissioned by the Government and expected to be completed by Spring 2018. An update on these works will be tabled to the June 2018 housing committee.**

- 4. That the Committee review and approve the addendum to the Housing Committee Commissioning Plan for 2017/18 (Appendix 2) which has been updated to take account of the impact of the Grenfell Tower fire.**

## **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 As reported to Housing Committee in June, following the Grenfell Tower fire, the Council and Barnet Homes take fire safety extremely seriously. Details of the extensive measures that are in place to ensure that our homes comply with fire safety regulations were provided, along with actions that the Council were taking to provide reassurance to residents that their homes are safe. As confirmed to the committee previously, all Barnet Homes blocks have fully up to date Fire Risk Assessments in place.
- 1.2 The committee also agreed that Barnet Homes should be instructed to carry out a review of fire safety measures in the Council's high rise blocks to identify any measures that are required to move beyond legislative compliance to deliver best practice in fire safety including the consideration of sprinkler systems, improved fire and smoke alarm systems and other measures.
- 1.3 Barnet Homes have now completed their review details of which are set out in appendix 1.
- 1.4 In summary, the review has identified an estimated £9.2m worth of additional work that should be considered as high priority works outside of that required through the normal Fire Risk Assessment process, plus a further £16.5m of work that could be considered as moving to best practice in fire safety, including the installation of sprinkler systems in blocks which are 30 metres or higher.
- 1.5 Cladding at Granville Road has now been removed and Barnet Homes are working on a solution for a replacement system, with a view to installing this next year. The total cost of the cladding removal and replacement is expected to be £8.2m. It is recommended that residents are compensated for the additional costs of heating their homes over the coming winter.
- 1.6 It is recommended that Barnet Homes are instructed to continue with plans for replacement cladding at Granville Road and commence high priority works to other blocks as soon as possible, with the implementation of other desirable works to be undertaken once the outcome of the independent review of fire safety and building regulations, expected in spring 2018, is known.
- 1.7 As requested at the Housing Committee in June, officers have updated the addendum to the Housing Committee Commissioning Plan to reflect the impact of the Grenfell Tower fire, and this is attached at appendix 1 as a tracked changes document. The addendum makes reference to the importance that the Council attaches to fire safety and includes new indicators relating to fire risk assessments.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.2 These recommendations ensure that high priority work to improve fire safety proceeds as quickly as possible, whilst minimising the risk of carrying out additional work that does not comply with the findings of the review of fire safety and building regulations review.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

- 3.2 The Council could decide to proceed with the full package of works identified by Barnet Homes, but this would carry the risk of installing measures that may be deemed to be non-compliant in the near future.

## **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.2 Barnet Homes will proceed as soon as practical with high priority works identified in their review of fire safety measures at an estimated cost of £9.2m million.
- 4.3 Barnet Homes will identify a solution for recladding blocks at Granville Road with the aim of completing works by winter 2018 with the total works costing around £8.2m including the removal costs.
- 4.4 Following the outcome of the independent review of fire safety and building control regulations, a further report will be brought to the Housing Committee with proposals for additional enhancements for fire safety measures, including sprinklers and fire detection systems.

## **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

### **5.2 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 5.2.1 This report aligns with the Corporate Plan objective to prioritise the delivery of quality services, by investing in the highest standard of fire safety measures for residents living in council properties.
- 5.2.2 The improvement of fire safety in council housing blocks and other housing tenures will also ensure the continuing health and wellbeing of residents.

### **5.3 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

- 5.3.1 An updated Housing Revenue Account Business Plan that takes account of any additional capital and revenue expenditure required to cover the cost of high priority works and the recladding of Granville Road at a total cost of £17.5 million, shows that the HRA could support this level of investment, although this

could be at the expense of funding other capital projects in the future, including the building of new homes. A budget of £10 million has already been approved as part of the current years capital programme, the additional £7.5 million will be required for 2018/19.

- 5.3.2 The Secretary of State recently announced the Government may allow Local Authorities to increase borrowing freedoms to meet the cost of fire safety measures in high rise blocks. Officers await further details on this announcement which are likely to be given in the Social Housing Green Paper due to be published next year.

## 5.4 **Social Value**

- 5.4.1 Social Value considerations will be considered in the individual investment decisions.

## 5.5 **Legal and Constitutional References**

- 1.1.1 Annex A to the Responsibility for Functions Section of the Council's Constitution (Part 15) gives the Housing Committee specific responsibility in relation to:
- the Housing Strategy (incorporating the Homelessness Strategy);
  - work with Barnet Homes, RSLs and social housing providers to ensure the optimum provision of housing and associated facilities for those who require social housing; and
  - all matters relating to the regulation of private sector housing.
- 1.1.2 Annex A to the Responsibility for Functions Section of the Council's Constitution (Part 15) also enables the Housing Committee to make recommendations to Policy and Resources Committee on issues relation to the budget for the Committee, including virements or underspends and overspends on the budget. No decisions which result in amendments to the agreed budget may be made by the Committee unless and until the amendment has been agreed by Policy and Resources Committee.
- 1.1.3 The Housing Act 2004 requires local authorities to keep the housing conditions in their area under review and to inspect the same if it considers a category 1 or 2 hazard (as defined by the Act) exists and gives powers to intervene where they consider housing conditions to be in breach of the same .
- 1.1.4 It is possible that issues of planning and building control may be applicable, however Annex A to Part 15 of the Constitution also states that if any report comes within the remit of more than one committee, to avoid the report being discussed at several committees, the report will be presented and determined at the most appropriate committee. Given the subject matter, it appears this report is best dealt with by the Housing Committee.

## 5.6 **Risk Management**

- 5.6.1 Barnet Homes have a robust approach to carrying out fire risk assessments for all council dwellings. There is, however, a risk that if action is not taken to take account of lessons learned from the Grenfell Tower tragedy that the safety of

residents could be compromised.

- 5.6.2 The Council will continue to work with the owners of other high rise residential and non-residential blocks, including Housing Associations and private owners to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities in respect of fire safety.

## 5.7 Equalities and Diversity

- 5.7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council must have due regard to the need to: a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act; b) advance equality of opportunity between those with a protected characteristic and those without; c) promote good relations between those with a protected characteristic and those without. The 'protected characteristics' referred to are: age; disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation. It also covers marriage and civil partnership with regard to eliminating discrimination.
- 5.7.2 Investment in existing council housing stock will impact positively on existing council tenants who are generally more diverse than the population of the borough as a whole.

## 5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.8.1 Residents living in high rise residential blocks owned by the Council have been written to on various occasions by Barnet Homes to provide reassurance that their homes are safe. When works are being undertaken regular updates on these works are provided and meetings held with residents. In addition fire safety information has been provided to all tenants and leaseholders.
- 5.8.2 Residents of Council homes will be consulted as part of reviews of fire safety systems in high rise council blocks.
- 5.8.3 Leaseholders will be consulted as early as possible within the fire safety review process in order to ensure their views in relation to options and recommendations have been taken into account. Leaseholders will not be expected to contribute towards the cost of the removal of the cladding and its replacement and Granville Road. In addition leaseholders will not be expected to contribute to the costs of undertaking category 1 fire safety works within the 26 high rise blocks.

## 5.8 Insight

- 5.8.1 Information about the Council's Housing stock held by Barnet Homes has been used to identify high rise residential blocks owned by the Council.
- 5.8.2 Records held in the Building Control and Planning services have been used to identify blocks in the borough which have recently been re-clad, to enable us to contact their owners.

**6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

6.2 Not applicable

