

	<h2>Housing Committee</h2> <h3>14 Jan 2019</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>Councillor Gabriel Rozenberg</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 fire disaster</p>
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<h2>Summary</h2>
<p>This report provides an overview of progress with the council’s response to the Grenfell Tower fire disaster, including replacement of cladding on council tower blocks at Granville Road, and improvements to fire safety in other council blocks.</p> <p>In addition, the council has completed a review of private sector tower blocks in the borough and identified those with cladding, and sought information from owners in respect of action that they are taken to address this.</p>

<h2>Officers Recommendations</h2>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. That the committee notes the progress to date with high priority fire safety works including the positive progress in completion of replacing the cladding at Granville Road.</li> <li>2. That the committee agrees a revised programme of fire safety works for council dwellings as set out in Appendix 1, to include:</li> </ol>

- Installation of sprinkler systems in high rise blocks with 10 or more floors and more than one stairwell
- Installation of sprinklers to sheltered housing blocks and hostels
- Replacement of composite fire doors
- Works to low and medium rise blocks

3. That the Committee agrees that, subject to approval by Policy and Resources Committee, an additional £16.9m is allocated from the council's Housing Revenue Account to meet the full cost of the revised programme in 2. Above. This is in addition to the amount of £30m previously agreed, bringing the total amount to £51.9m, noting that £5m of the total will be in the form of government grant for the recladding of Granville Road High Rise Blocks.

4. That the Committee agrees that as set out in paragraph 1.4 of the report, where a leaseholder is not required to agree to the installation of a sprinkler and interlinked alarm system in their flat under the terms of their lease, that the installation will be offered at nil cost, with no requirement to pay annual maintenance charges for the first five years following installation. After five years the annual maintenance charges would be phased in over five years in 20% increments.

## 1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Reports have previously been made to Housing Committee setting out the council's approach to ensuring the safety of residents following the Grenfell Tower fire disaster in June last year.
- 1.2 The Housing Committee has previously agreed that £30m should be invested in meeting the costs of removal and replacement of cladding on towers at Granville Road and a programme of high priority and desirable fire safety improvements to other council tower blocks, and this report provides information about progress with these works.
- 1.3 The Housing Committee in June 2017 also agreed that Barnet Homes should be instructed to develop fire safety works for low and medium rise council dwellings and provide the Housing Committee with costed proposals, which are now set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.4 Approximately 50% of leaseholders in stock affected by fire safety improvements would not be required to accept installation or meet the cost of sprinkler systems under the terms of their lease. The overall fire safety of council buildings will be improved if these leaseholders agree to the installation of sprinklers in their property, and it is proposed that these leaseholders are offered the installation free of charge. In addition, it is proposed that for these leaseholders, no ongoing maintenance is charged for 5 years, following which maintenance charges would be phased in over 5 years in 20% increments. More information about this proposal is included in appendix 1.
- 1.5 The Government has announced further measures to tackle unsafe cladding in the private sector.

## 2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The council needs to ensure the safety of residents living in Barnet, and the Housing Committee has previously agreed to develop a fire safety programme that meets best practice in relation to council housing.

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

- 3.1 The council could continue to rely on statutory regimes to ensure residents' safety, however it is considered that a more proactive approach is needed.
- 3.1 The council could decide not to proceed with the full package of works identified by Barnet Homes, however this would be inconsistent with the commitment made by the Housing Committee to move towards best practice in relation to fire safety in the residential housing stock. It would also be inconsistent with the independent review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety published in May 2018 which seeks to move towards an outcomes driven focus on fire safety, rather than one of minimum compliance levels with statutory obligations.

### **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 Barnet Homes will continue to progress a programme of works to improve fire safety as set out in Appendix 1 and develop proposals for a programme of fire safety works for low and medium rise council flats.
- 4.2 Officers will liaise with the Government on dealing with unsafe cladding in the private sector.

### **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

#### **5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

- 5.1.1 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.
- 5.1.2 The improvement of fire safety in council housing blocks and other housing tenures will also ensure the continuing health and wellbeing of residents.

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

- 5.2.1 The full programme of fire safety works recommended in this report is £51.9m, which includes £30m of works previously agreed by Housing Committee subject to the approval of the Policy and Resources Committee in June 2018.
- 5.2.2 The Government announced that it will fully fund the cost of replacement of ACM cladding on council and housing association properties that has failed fire safety tests. The council has now received confirmation that it will receive £5m towards the cost of re-cladding 3 tower blocks at Granville Road, meaning that the net cost of the full programme of works is anticipated to be £46.9m.

5.2.3 Following completion of works, ongoing maintenance costs associated with the additional fire safety measures are expected to be in the region of £675k per annum, some of which will be recoverable in the form of service charges.

5.2.4 The HRA Business Plan has been reviewed and is able to accommodate this additional expenditure on the fire safety programme. The programme will be funded mainly from the Major Repairs Allowance and borrowing where required

### **5.3 Social Value**

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

### **5.4 Legal and Constitutional References**

5.4.1 The council's Constitution Article 7.5 Responsibility for Functions, states that the Housing Committee is responsible for housing matters including housing strategy, homelessness, social housing and housing grants, commissioning of environmental health functions for private sector housing

5.4.2 The council's Constitution Article 7 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.

5.4.3 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.

### **5.5 Risk Management**

5.5.1 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 fire disaster that the safety of residents could be compromised.

5.5.2 The council will continue to work with the Government and 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.

5.5.3 The council has undertaken a review of its approach to fire safety and ACM cladding to ensure compliance with the Secretary of State direction issued in May 2018 and the ongoing safety of residents.

### **5.6 Equalities and Diversity**

5.6.1 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.

5.6.2 Investment in existing council housing stock will impact positively on existing council tenants who are generally more diverse than the wider population of the borough.

## **5.7 Corporate Parenting**

5.7.1 The council assigns the highest priority for council housing to care leavers and foster carers (if they require a larger property to foster more children) through its Housing Allocation Scheme. Care leavers are placed into suitable accommodation when leaving care to allow a successful transition to independent living whilst also developing their skills by providing the right support to help them maintain their tenancies.

## **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. 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. When works are being undertaken regular updates on these works are provided and meetings held with residents.

5.8.3 Leaseholders will be consulted as early as possible within the fire safety review process to ensure their views in relation to options and recommendations have been considered. Leaseholders will not be expected to contribute towards the cost of the removal of the cladding and its replacement at 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.

## **5.9 Insight**

5.9.1 Information about the council's housing stock held by Barnet Homes has been used to identify high rise residential blocks owned by the council.

5.9.2 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 contact with their owners.

## **6. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 6.1 Housing Committee 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018 – Item 8 – Fire Safety Update  
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=699&MId=9486&Ver=4>
- 6.2 Housing Committee 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2017 – Item 9 – Fire Safety Update -  
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=699&MId=9237&Ver=4>
- 6.3 Housing Committee 26<sup>th</sup> June 2017 – Item 7 – Response to Grenfell Tower Fire  
<http://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=699&MId=9236&Ver=4>

