

REPORT TO: Safer Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 21 November 2017

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Enterprise, Community and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Community Safety

SUBJECT: Response to Grenfell Tower Tragedy

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of the actions and activities the Council has undertaken following the tragic events that took place in Kensington and Chelsea with the Grenfell Tower Fire.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) the Board notes and supports the actions and activities undertaken; and**
- (2) seeks any further reassurances it requires in relation to fire safety.**

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Following the tragic events that took place at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017 in Kensington and Chelsea, the immediate and understandable focus was on the type of cladding used on residential tower blocks greater than 18m tall. The Council was required, as also were all Registered Social Landlords, to send various returns to Government in relation to buildings in their ownership. The Council provided all information requested within the timescales set. As the Council does not own any housing stock, most returns were therefore nil returns.

3.2 There are no residential blocks of 18m tall in the Borough, however, the Council Building Control Team offered support to both Halton Housing Trust (the owners of Churchill Mansions in Runcorn) and also to the Management Company who look after The Deck in Runcorn. Following a review with the owners of those buildings, it was concluded that the high rise accommodation in Halton is considered low risk in relation to the external envelope of the building. However, two recommendations were made to the building owners:

- review all fire risk assessments and action any recommendations from those assessments; and
 - retreat any timber above 18m as advised, or with any suitable treatment giving class 0 surface spread of flame (this relates specifically to The Deck).
- 3.3 The only other ‘high rise’ building in the Borough, although clearly not residential, is the Municipal Building in Widnes and whilst it does have aluminium cladding panels to the podium, this is extruded aluminium and not aluminium composite material (ACM) that was used in the Grenfell Tower.
- 3.4 So from the initial and immediate response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, it was clear that Halton did not have any similar high rise buildings to Grenfell Tower; the multi storey buildings that do exist in the Borough have been reassessed with the landlords and considered low risk, albeit with the recommendations being made above.
- 3.5 Whilst there are no similar buildings to Grenfell Tower in Halton, the Council carried out further activities to ensure, as far as possible, that public buildings within the Borough are safe. It is important to say that the Council already has in place established procedures to ensure the safety of its buildings and those who work, occupy or visit them. Health and Safety has a high profile within the Council and regular reports are made to Elected Members and the Council’s Management Team.
- 3.6 Detailed below are actions the Council has undertaken since the Grenfell Fire:
- The Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) to the main corporate buildings and schools have been updated. All will then have a FRA less than 12 months old.
 - An online survey in respect of the school buildings the Council has responsibility for issued by the Education and Skills Funding Agency has been completed. The survey focused on the use of cladding on schools with residential accommodation and those buildings of four storeys or more, so there are no major concerns in respect of any schools. The most recently completed high schools, Wade Deacon and The Grange have been checked and it has been confirmed that neither of them have any such cladding.
 - The Health and Safety Team has conducted Fire Management audits of all Council Buildings. This took account of local procedures including testing and maintenance of fire equipment, general housekeeping fire drills and training which are fundamental in fire management. The majority of actions have now been

completed, but procedures are in place to follow up any incomplete actions.

- Based on the results of the audits the Health and Safety Team has updated the Fire Management Policy, which has subsequently been approved by Management Team. The Policy includes the requirement to maintain a Fire Precautions Log Book at Council buildings. This is designed to provide a consistent approach to fire management and will be updated by local Building Managers.
- All Fire Marshalls and related staff are now required to undergo annual Fire training. Also there is refresher training taking place for Evacuation Chair officers and also Fire Wardens and building managers who have additional duties on the activation of the alarm to check the panel and zone to establish if it is fire.
- The Quality Assurance Team within Social Care undertook a review of Fire safety processes in Registered Care Homes in Halton. The review was in addition to the questions routinely asked within annual review processes for residential homes and monitored during visits requiring a home walk around.
- Care Homes were asked to confirm that:
 - ❖ Fire Risk assessments have been completed and are current, tried and tested.
 - ❖ Staff have accessible information and training, and that fire drills have been undertaken.
 - ❖ Premises and equipment is maintained by a competent person.
 - ❖ Any action identified action is addressed.
- Most services have stated that there was no further action needed to be taken after Grenfell. Where issues have been raised they will be followed up by the Quality Assurance Team.
- The Council has been working for some time now with Registered Social Landlords in relation to having contingency plans and business continuity plans should an incident take place in for example, extra care premises, which require the speedy and safe evacuation of the residents of such buildings. This work was initiated by the Council but has now been taken further with training and awareness events taking place with appropriate partners across the Liverpool City Region.
- Discussions have also taken place between the Portfolio Holder for Community Safety and Strategic Director with representatives from the Cheshire Fire Service to review the liaison arrangements that already exist between the Fire Service and the local authorities in Cheshire and to identify any improvements to those arrangements required following the Grenfell Tragedy.

- 3.7 Fire Safety has, and will remain, an important issue for the Council. Tragedies such as Grenfell Tower give further impetus to ensuring that buildings are safe. It is felt that the steps the Council has taken since Grenfell will further enhance the safety of people using its buildings.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 As a result of the Grenfell Fire the Council has revised and updated its Fire Management Policy. This has been issued to all Building Managers.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Fire Safety and Health and Safety have always had a high profile and focus within the organisation and will continue to be monitored and reviewed through the Council's usual processes.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**
- 6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**
- 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**
- 6.4 **A Safer Halton**
- 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Having safe buildings to operate within is important for all of the Council's services

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 As mentioned in the body of the report all Council buildings have Fire Risk Assessments that have been undertaken within the last 12 months.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 As part of the Fire Risk Assessment process procedures for those individuals with mobility issues are taken into consideration. Evacuation Chair training is undertaken throughout the Council's estate, where it is necessary.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

- 9.1 None.