

SCRUTINY INITIATION DOCUMENT (SID) – DRAFT

Review: Fire Safety in Council Housing

Scrutiny Review Committee: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Director leading the review: Simon Kwong, Director of Property Services

Lead officers: Damian Dempsey, Group Leader – Quantity Surveyors
Stuart Fuller, Construction, Fire and Gas Safety Manager

Overall aim: To review if the fire safety features of the council's housing stock and associated arrangements are sufficient

Objectives of the review:

- To evaluate how fire risks in council properties are identified, assessed, and responded to.
- To review if the council's capital programme includes all of the fire safety works it should; and to understand the feasibility of fitting alarm systems, sprinklers and fire escapes to council housing.
- To review the Housing Service's emergency response arrangements in the event of a major fire; including evacuation and re-homing plans, and ongoing support arrangements.
- To assess how the council ensures that its housing stock is compliant with fire safety regulations, London Fire Brigade advice and best practice guidance.
- To identify if there are adequate communications channels for residents to report fire safety concerns to the council, and to assess how these are responded to; and to consider the fire safety advice provided to residents.
- To review if there are sufficient capital resources to complete any required fire safety improvements to the council's housing stock.
- To review if there are sufficient revenue resources to ensure that the council's housing stock remains compliant with fire regulations, building control and health and safety standards, and that any fire risks are proactively managed.
- To evaluate how the council works with Partners and TMOs to ensure that council-owned properties which are not directly managed are compliant with fire safety regulations.
- To review how fire safety is considered at the design stage of refurbishment works and new developments, and to review how decisions are made on matters which affect fire safety.

How is the review to be carried out:

Scope of the review

The review will focus on:

1. Fire risks

- How risks are reported
- How risks are assessed and responded to
- Risk assessments and how risks are managed
- The resources available to proactively manage risks

2. The Capital Programme

- The fire safety works already carried out to council properties
- What fire safety works are scheduled to be carried out
- What fire safety features are not included in the capital programme and why
- How fire safety is considered when planning capital works
- How capital works are monitored to ensure that they are being carried out to the agreed specification
- How decisions are made which affect fire safety
- The resources for fire safety improvements

3. Emergency response arrangements

- Evacuation and re-housing plans
- How emergency plans are triggered and what these entail

4. Working with others

- The council's responsibilities in regards to PFI and TMO properties
- How the council works with Partners and TMOs on fire safety matters
- Partnership work with the London Fire Brigade
- How residents can raise fire safety concerns to the council
- How fire safety concerns are responded to
- The responsibilities of tenants and the responsibilities of leaseholders
- How fire risks and advice is communicated to residents

5. Compliance

- Compliance with fire safety, health and safety, and building control regulations
- Compliance with advice and guidance from the London Fire Brigade and others

Types of evidence

- Evidence from officers
- Evidence from the London Fire Brigade
- Evidence from independent experts on fire safety matters
- Feedback from residents
- Documentary evidence
- Scrutiny visit or other sessions as required

Additional information:

The review will not include a detailed scrutiny of the fire safety of particular housing blocks, as this is already being reviewed by the council's Housing Service in partnership with the London Fire Brigade.

The review will be carried out at the same time as the Grenfell Tower inquiry. The review will not directly consider the issues raised during the inquiry, but the inquiry is of significant interest to the Housing Scrutiny Committee and the implications arising from the inquiry's conclusions will be reported to the Committee in due course.

In carrying out the review the committee will consider equalities implications and resident impacts identified by witnesses. The Executive is required to have due regard to these, and any other relevant implications, when responding to the review recommendations.

Programme

Key output:	To be submitted to Committee on:
1. Scrutiny Initiation Document	17 July 2017
2. Draft Recommendations	16 November 2017
3. Final Report	11 December 2017