

**Report of Matt West, Service Director, Housing Property Services**

<b>Meeting of:</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Ward(s):</b>
Housing Scrutiny Committee	06 <sup>th</sup> December 2021	All

<b>Delete as appropriate</b>	<b>Exempt</b>	<b>Non-exempt</b>

**SUBJECT: Housing Fire Safety – Progress Update**
**1 Regulatory Requirements**

- 1.1 This Report outlines the progress improving fire safety within the borough.
- 1.2 Since the last update to Housing Scrutiny Committee, the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase One report has been published, along with the government response to the fire safety consultation.
- 1.3 Amendments to the Building Regulations and Approved Document B (Fire Safety) impose new standards for the external wall construction of a ‘relevant building’ or those of 18m or more in height.
- 1.4 The Fire Safety Act 2021 (FSA) received Royal Assent in April 2021 and is likely to be effective from **October 2022**.
- 1.5 The implementation of the FSA amends the scope of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO). These amendments, along with new secondary legislation, will impose new duties on the Council as landlord. These are broadly set out in 1.6
- 1.6
  - External wall construction included in scope of RRFSO and Fire Risk Assessment (FRA)
  - Doors between dwellings and common parts explicitly ‘in scope’
  - Requirement to inspect flat front entrance doors annually in blocks 11m+
  - Requirement to inspect communal fire doors quarterly
  - Wayfinding signage to be installed in properties 11m+
  - Premises Information Boxes (PIBs) required in buildings 18m or 7 storey+

- Flat layout drawings and Evacuation Plans to be included in PIBs
  - Reporting of defects in fire-fighting lifts >24hrs to FRS
- 1.7 The proposals for the introduction of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (or PEEP's) are not included in the new draft regulations at this time. There has been no further guidance or timescale for PEEP's since the public consultation exercise by the Home Office in July 2021.
- 1.8 The Building Safety Bill (BSB) will create a new building safety regulator within the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). It is currently envisaged that the BSB will receive Royal Assent in March 2022, with implementation of the new legislative requirements most likely to be from April 2023.
- 1.9 The Building Safety Bill introduces a range of new duties for buildings in scope (currently those of 18m/7 storeys+) in relation to both fire and structural safety.
- 1.10 The Homes and Neighbourhoods department is currently programming implementation of all of these potential new duties and the likely impacts on processes, resources and future service delivery.
- 1.11 A further update will be provided to the Committee on the impacts of the Building Safety Bill once it receives Royal Assent and the full range of implications is clear
- 1.12 The new Planning Gateway 1 is already effective for buildings of 18m or 7 storey+, which has implications for new developments including the council's own. The key requirement is to submit a 'fire statement' as part of the planning application, in order to demonstrate that fire safety has been considered at the earliest stage of the construction process.

## **2 Planning for new duties**

- 2.1 The Council monitors fire safety developments, guidance and regulation for tall buildings through the following meetings:
- London Councils Housing Directors fire safety meetings (quarterly) – a group of Housing Directors from councils across London, at which there are representatives from MHCLG, LGA, LFB and Home Office.
  - Building Safety Bill (BSB) transition group which meets on a 6 weekly basis
  - Tall buildings fire safety meetings (every 2 months) – representatives across the council chaired by the Service Director - Housing Property Services – the group oversees the council's duty as landlord and its regulatory function for safety in housing in Islington in relation to tall buildings. It includes residential environmental health and building control.
  - Homes and Estates Safety Board (quarterly) – our independently chaired Partnership Board, including the London Fire Brigade.
  - London Fire Brigade (LFB) liaison meetings (quarterly) - we work closely with the LFB to take advice and guidance
  - The Adult Safeguarding Board has considered the issue of evacuation of vulnerable residents in the event of a fire

- 2.2 Local Council fire safety networking group with Hackney, Haringey, Barnet and Enfield to discuss common issues and approaches.

### 3. Investing in Fire Safety

- 3.1 The council has reviewed its investment plans and refocused them to ensure there are sufficient resources in its building safety programme, ensuring all key aspects of building safety are being addressed within our five-year programme.

Building safety investment represents around 20% of our 2021/22 investment programme.

Our updated 5-year investment programme will see £115m invested in building safety - note that investment rates are set to accelerate over the next few years now that new partnering contracts are in place:

Area of Work	Investment commitment	Spent during 2020/21 and 2021/22
Fire safety works to tall blocks	£50m	£4.0m
Interlinked fire alarms and emergency lighting works in street properties and mansion blocks	£14m	£0.6m
Installation of wet rising mains	£4m	£0.4m
Communal doors and bin storage areas	£24m	£3.6m
Front door programme	£17m	£3.5m
Electrical testing programme	£6m	£2.6m
<b>Total</b>	<b>£115m</b>	<b>£14.7m</b>

- 3.2 Committed resource for Tall Blocks has increased to ensure that the safety measures for these buildings meet and continue to meet expected standards. These investment sums will continue to be reviewed, as guidance to landlords is developed as a result of the Fire Safety Act 2021 and the forthcoming Building Safety Act. We are working with our contractors on site to ensure works are scope in line with the needs of each property.
- 3.3 Investment in our interlinked fire detection programme may need to increase, as complementary fire safety works identified as part of the pilot phases, will be built into the scoping of the remaining programme. Spend within this programme is expected to increase in the coming months.

## 4. Building Safety Programme

4.1 The Councils building safety programmes continue, focusing on several key areas which include;

- Flat front entrance door (FED) replacements;
- Communal area upgrades and improvements;
- Wet rising/falling mains (WRM);
- Interlinked detection and warning in converted street properties

### 4.2 FED Programme

The council has an ongoing programme to replace FED that do not meet current fire safety standards or comply with relevant guidance. The FED replacement programme was paused due to national concerns around composite, glass reinforced plastic (GRP) doors, following testing carried out on behalf of MHCLG

Due to the continued concerns relating to GRP doors and ability of these to pass the relevant testing standard, the Council recommenced its FED programme replacement programme using timber door sets in November 2019.

Since November 2019, the Council has installed 2882 FED door sets. Of this total, 1838 were replacements for original Masterdor installations.

There are currently 1136 programmed FED replacements outstanding, which are due to be completed by September 2022.

### 4.3 Communal Area Works

A programme of fire safety improvements to the communal areas of the Council's high-rise residential buildings (HRRB's) commenced in 2020. The primary focus of this work is communal fire doors replacements and fire-stopping improvements, including hard to access areas such as penetrations in service riser ducts and intake cupboards/rooms etc.

These upgrade works are now completed at the following blocks;

Bath Court	Docura House	Lillingston House	Rahere House
Beckford House	Emberton Court	McIndoe Court	Redwood Court
Braithwaite House	Galway House	Newland Court	Saltdene
Brunswick Court	Gambier House	Noll House	Sapperton Court
Citizen House	Grayson House	Orkney House	Selkirk Houes
Clifton Court	Guernsey House	Park View	Talbot House
Cluse Court	Haliday House	Parker Court	Threadgold House
Coltash Court	Hind House	Parmoor Court	Turnpike House
Conrad House	Iberia House	Paterson Court	Woodstock House
Cotswold Court	Ilford House	Peregrine House	Wycliff Court
Daren Court	Jersey House	Perth House	
Didbin House	Kestrel House	Pollard Close	

4.4 Upgrade works are currently (at the time of this report) in progress at the following blocks;

Ashby House	Cooper Hse	Grimthorpe House	Patrick Coman House
Aubert Court	Farriers House	John Kennedy Court	President House
Baring Court	Gastigny House	Macclesfield Hse	Shire House
Cedar Court	Godfrey House	Michael Cliffe House	

Imminent upgrade works;

Earnshaw House	Frearson House	Langdon Court	Stelfox House
Eric Fletcher Court	Hurst House	Moorgreen Hse	Tompion Hse
Foxcroft	Jessop Court	Rotherfield Court	

Originally due to complete in March 2022, due to supply chain issues and the Covid 19 pandemic, the completion of the communal works programme is likely to be June 2022.

#### 4.5 **Interlinked Detection and Warning Programme**

The programme to install interlinked smoke/heat detection and warning systems in the Council's directly managed and Partners street properties is now underway and gaining momentum.

The interlinked alarm installations compensate for inadequate compartmentation between the dwellings and provide the earliest possible warning of fire to the building occupants.

After some initial delay due to covid and confirming the scope of the project, works are now underway on site and/or with programmed installation dates at approximately 400 blocks/conversions in the North of the Borough.

Installations are being completed at a rate of approx. 20 per week, meaning the programme should be completed early in 2022.

Approximately 100 blocks/conversions are currently in the Section 20 and/or Planning process as many properties are within conservation areas etc.

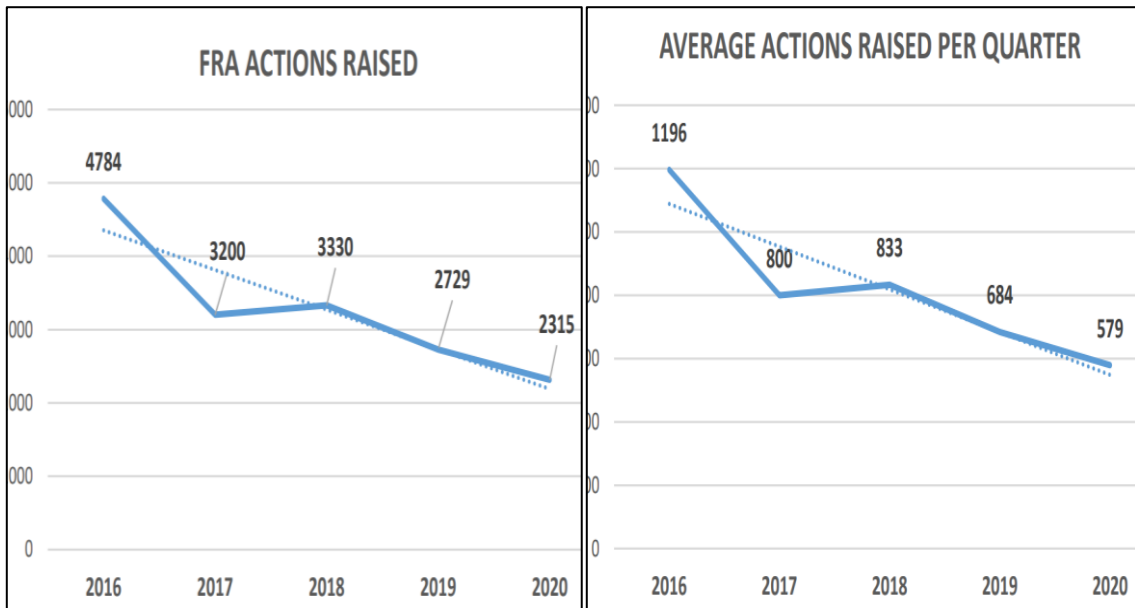
#### 4.6 **Wet Rising/Falling Mains (WRM)**

New WRM installations have now been commissioned at Michael Cliffe House and Peregrine House. As the two tallest residential buildings within the Council stock, these improvements ensure the availability of water at the highest levels of the building in the event of fire.

### 5. **Oversight of Fire Safety**

5.1 The Housing Management Team receive monthly fire safety updates in order to monitor progress.

- 5.2 Monthly reports detail all FRA activity for the preceding month, including; outcomes from FRA; summary of actions arising; monitoring of overall FRA actions outstanding; and tracking of high risk actions etc.
- 5.3 The fire safety report highlights the most commonly raised FRA actions for each month. Since its inception in March 2021, the most common action raised relates to the accumulation of combustible waste in common areas.
- 5.4 Despite remaining the most common FRA actions category, over the last 2 years and in spite of the pandemic, we have completed actions and reduced the number of actions relating to our fire safety risk assessments in communal areas.
- 5.5 We have also noted residents have acted on advice and there is an improvement in general “housekeeping” with less items stored by residents in communal areas. However, this remains an area of concern and is resource intensive to manage the issues identified.
- 5.6 The process for notifying residents about items stored in communal areas and their subsequent removal is being tightened up, which should streamline the actions involved and reduce times in removing items where this is required.
- 5.7 Since the last update and over the last 18 months, Estate Services have worked on obtaining keys to the communal doors of all our directly managed street properties. This enables unimpeded access to communal areas, allowing inspection to these areas that gives us a good indicator of any safety implications.
- 5.8 Liaising with residents whilst on site has improved relations and general understanding of the importance to keep these areas clear. The small team undertaking these inspections have managed to access 90% of 238 properties.
- 5.9 The same team are working closely with Partners to replicate this model on the properties that are due to transfer to our management in 2022.
- 5.10 The quarterly Homes and Estates Safety Board (HESB) performance monitoring report provides a detailed summary of FRA activity and status of FRA actions.
- 5.11 The statistics show a significant decrease in open actions from **7605** in March 2021 to **4924** in September 2021.
- 5.12 Statistics for the same period also show a significant decrease in longer terms upgrade/improvement works assigned to capital programme delivery/fire safety works teams from **5327** in May 2021 to **2861** in September 2021.
- 5.13 The long-term trend of actions raised during FRA over a 5-year cycle suggests the systems, processes and procedures in place are working. The reduction in FRA actions indicates fewer fire safety repairs, housekeeping, tenancy management issues and longer-term improvements required.



The number of actions raised in the calendar year 2020 arises from 339 completed FRA.

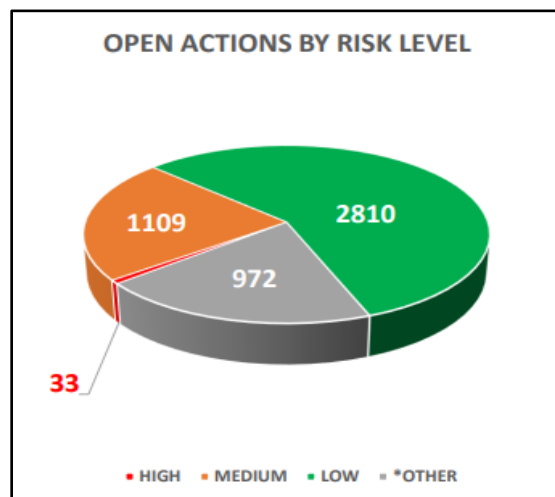
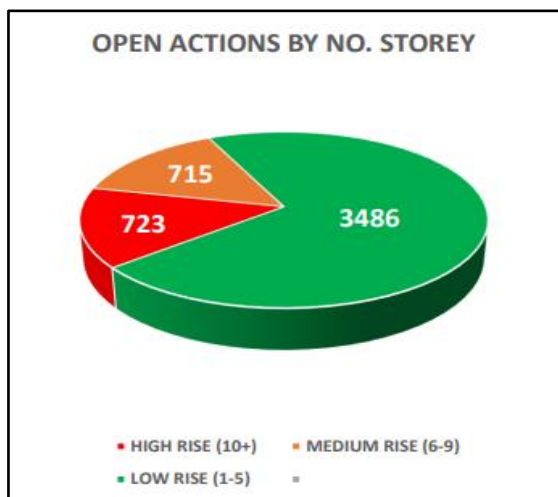
To end September in 2021 the number of FRA completed stands at 698 and a total of 2052 actions raised. This equates to an average of 684 per quarter, but is based on an increase in FRA output of over 50% to date.

Comparing the average number of actions raised per FRA suggests the downward trend in actions raised continues. In 2020 the average number of actions raised per FRA was 6.9 and in 2021 it has reduced significantly to 2.9 per FRA.

5.14 Analysis of open FRA actions shows that over 70% of open FRA actions are in low rise properties of 1-5 storeys,

Approximately 57% of actions are in the low risk category, which tend to be longer-term improvements or upgrades to current standards, rather than repairs of existing fire safety measures.

For example, the sub-division of a roof space to current Building Regulation requirements is only likely to be deliverable when the roof is replaced at the end of its life cycle. Many such improvements will already be incorporated into the capital work schemes outlined in Section 4 of this report,



Only around 0.7% of open actions are in the high risk category and these typically include issues such as liquid petroleum gas (LPG) cylinders being discovered, or a significant accumulation of combustible materials etc.

The highest risk issues are often dealt with from site, rather than waiting for completion of the FRA report.

- 5.15 The Fire Safety Forum also meets on a quarterly basis, to discuss operational aspects of FRA actions, common themes and proactive fire safety management

## 6. Employee Training and Development

- 6.1 Since the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017, Council staff at various levels within the Homes and Neighbourhoods Directorate have undertaken a range of fire safety learning and development.
- 6.2 Within Homes and Community Safety, the majority of Estate Services staff attended the Fire Safety in Purpose Built Blocks of Flats course in late 2018.
- 6.3 In addition, in early 2019 approximately 30 members of the estate services team undertook the Fire Protection Association (FPA) CO5 – Applied Fire Risk Assessment course (5 days).
- 6.4 In respect of the wider staff group, as part of their ongoing training package the Council's caretaking have receive periodic toolbox talks in relation to fire safety, including general fire safety awareness and working with flammable liquids etc.
- 6.5 As the staff group who may be the first point of contact on site for the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS), the Council's Concierge teams have also received fire safety training. This package includes general fire safety awareness and fire marshal/warden courses. Procedures for accessing vulnerable resident information are also reiterate during staff 121 meetings.
- 6.6 A large group of staff across both Housing Property Service (HPS) and New Build also complete the Fire Safety in Purpose Built Blocks of Flats training in the period following the Grenfell fire.



- 6.7 In addition, 12 members of predominantly Housing Property Services staff have also now completed a Level 5 Fire Engineering Design course over a period of 18 months from July 2019. .
- 6.8 Following some delays due to the Covid 19 pandemic and a large-scale recruitment programme, further staff development is due to commence in February 2022.
- 6.9 The Capital Programme Delivery team will undertake Principal Designer training, to help fulfil their role under the Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015, including design control. Whilst not strictly fire safety related, construction work has the ability to affect both positively or negatively on the safety of Council residents and it is important to manage construction work effectively.
- 6.10 An increased level of fire safety competence, as well as safety management in relation to construction work, will have long lasting benefits for residents.

## **7. Enforcement Action**

- 7.1 In common with many other local authorities and landlords in London, the Council has experience an increase in enforcement activity from London Fire Brigade (LFB).
- 7.2 An Enforcement Notice was served on the Council in respect of Godfrey House in June 2021, following a routine post-fire inspection by LFB.
- 7.3. The Council is currently addressing the issues highlighted in the notice and will aim to comply with all recommendations by the end of the calendar year 2021.
- 7.4 The only previous Enforcement Notice received by the Council related to Galway House and Grayson House, dates back to February 2016.
- 7.5 The Council has reviewed its processes for tracking actions arising from enforcement action and ensuring notifications is provided to Ward Councillors.

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