

CABINET

14th March 2012

Report of the Quality of Life Portfolio Holder

High-Rise Fire Safety – Landlord Services

EXEMPT INFORMATION

Not applicable

PURPOSE

- To set out the Council's response to latest guidance commissioned by the DCLG ensuring fire safety in high-rise and flatted accommodation, attached at annex one.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet are recommended to:-

- Support the actions taken so far to ensure the continued fire safety for residents of the high-rise and other flatted accommodation as set out in the action plan at annex two.
- Note that un-planned expenditure of approximately £135k has been met from existing HRA repairs budgets. The financial fore-cast at this stage is still predicting an under spend on the repairs budget.
- Approve the use of contingency (up to a maximum of £100K) to meet this unplanned expenditure should there be a risk of an overspend as the final accounts are prepared, and full and final invoices are received at year end for the required works.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Together with the Fire Service, a work shop was held to assess the impact of the guidance. This coupled with a series of small fires in the basements at the high rise flats, resulted in the following work being recommended to mitigate and deter fire risks. The Fire Officer instructed that the basement areas in all blocks were shut until these works were completed.

BREAKDOWN OF COST PER MAJOR ELEMENT (repair / upgrade)

Description of Works	Estimated Cost
Basement compartmentation / doors	£26,657.86
External louver grills to basement ventilation	£24,422.48
Additional ventilation grills to stairs	£5,913.60
Intumescent grills to bathroom and kitchens	£32,563.20
Smoke detector system	£21,000.00
TOTAL	£110,557.06

The above works have ensured that the:-

- Basements in all blocks can be opened and access can be fully monitored to avoid unauthorised entry
- To ensure that the basement areas comply with the latest good practice guidance
- To ensure that the ventilation on the stairs and in the kitchens and bathrooms is fit for purpose and mitigates the risk of fires spreading more quickly than they otherwise would.

COST PER BLOCK (repair / upgrade)

Description of Works	Estimated Cost
Strode House	£19,711.99
Weymouth House	£20,793.26
Harcourt House	£12,820.86
Stanhope House	£12,820.86
Peel House	£22,366.09
Townsend House	£22,044.00
TOTAL	£110,557.06

COST PER BLOCK (fob access / upgrade)

Description of Works	Estimated Cost
Strode House	£5,000.00
Weymouth House	£4,000.00
Harcourt House	£4,000.00
Stanhope House	£4,000.00
Peel House	£4,000.00
Townsend House	£4,000.00
TOTAL	£25,000.00

Total estimated cost of works is £110,557.06 plus £25,000.00

Total £135,557.06

It is anticipated that the costs estimated will be fully realised. These costs have been met from existing budgets. There has been no reduction in the repairs service as a result of these works as efficiencies have been achieved elsewhere. Members will know that the repairs budget is £4.4million and the year to date spend at the end of January 2012 was £3.6million, given the level of budget this is indicative of the robust and comprehensive financial management and budget monitoring in strict adherence of financial regulations.

As at period 10 the financial fore-cast on the repairs budget showed an under-spend of £16K. However, on the basis that this work does represent un-planned expenditure, and the full and final costs of works can not be assessed until year end, Cabinet are recommended to allow contingency to be used, up to a maximum of £100K, if necessary and at the discretion of the Director of Resources.

LEGAL/RISK IMPLICATION

A requirement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 is to have a fire risk assessment in place. The council fully complies with this and this risk assessment has been updated to reflect the latest guidance and the fire officer's recommendations.

Cabinet will be aware of the high profile press coverage of fires in flatted accommodation in the London Borough of Southwark in 2009. The Guidance is in part, in response to this and helps organisations assess risk and develop best practice to respond to fire hazards. Tamworth has responded quickly to this guidance and feels that the approach taken is proportionate to the risks faced.

Failure to provide adequate fire safety measures is an offence if the failure places one or more persons at risk of death and/or serious injury. There are 358 properties in the 6 high rise blocks

with over 500 residents, the majority of which are over 55years old and 10% assessed as vulnerable.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The investment in the high rise is part of the Council's commitment as a landlord to maintaining sustainable and balanced communities. Complying with fire safety is the key to ensuring the safety of residents is maximised in the event of a fire.

SUMMARY GUIDANCE

The Fire Guidance is attached at Annex one.

The guidance in this document has been subject to an extensive consultation exercise. The final content has received input from representative groups from the housing sector As well as the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Chief Fire Officers' Association.

This document is a guide to ensuring adequate fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats, regardless of age. Practical advice is offered on how to assess the risk from fire and how to manage fire safety in such buildings. The document also includes case studies based on the commonly found issues in blocks of flats, with suggested fire safety solutions.

This guide does not introduce new standards or regulations, but builds on existing good practice and guidance currently in place. The Council already meets its statutory obligations in relation to the Fire Safety Order (2005) and Housing Act 2004 in relation to the Housing Health and Safety Rating system.

This document does not set prescriptive standards. Its aim is to provide guidance and recommendations for use when assessing the adequacy of existing fire safety provisions in purpose-built blocks of flats. Each of the separate sections have been discussed with the fire officer and captured in the risk assessment and action plan going forward.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING & ACTION PLANNING

Following the workshop in September 2011, key actions were identified and captured in the action log shown at annex two.

This is being developed in to a detailed SMART action plan and will be monitored via the Landlord Health & Safety Group, of which the Fire Service and Corporate Health & Safety Colleagues are a part.

The above action plan will be audited by an external assessor and further recommendations made to Cabinet as necessary during the course of 2012/13.

The Tenant Consultative Group have been consulted and informed of the ongoing work at the High Rise. There has been some inevitable disruption to residents whilst basements have been closed to facilitate the works. This has been managed by holding an open meeting, updating of patch councillors, as well as delivering weekly fact sheets to keep residents updated. All the basements are now open, although there is still controlled access whilst the final works are completed to the fob and door entry system. This has been unavoidable given the scale of the work.

REPORT AUTHOR

Please contact Rob Barnes or Tina Mustafa on ext.467 for further information