

Subject:	Health & Safety Update	
Date of Meeting:	13 November 2019	
Report of:	Executive Director for Housing, Neighbourhoods & Communities	
Contact Officer:	Glyn Huelin	
	Name:	Geofrey Gage Tel: 01273 293306
		Grant Ritchie
	Email:	glyn.huelin@brighton-hove.gov.uk
		geofrey.gage@brighton-hove.gov.uk
		grant.ritchie@brighton-hove.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	All Wards	

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT**

- 1.1 This report updates Housing Committee on health and safety in key areas for council housing stock. It includes updates on fire doors, large panel system built blocks and other items identified by central government.
- 1.2 The council is committed to providing safe homes and has worked to keep residents well informed around safety and the work that the council is doing in this important area.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That the Housing Committee note the contents of this report.
- 2.2 That the Housing Committee note that any recommendations arising from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and / or the Pankhurst Avenue fire investigation, to improve the health and safety and fire safety of our homes, will be brought forward to a future Committee.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 As part of the council's Housing Asset Strategy there is a clear focus on 'Providing Safe Homes'. Regular updates have been provided to Area Panels and Housing Committee updating on work in this area including sprinklers, fire doors and fire safety.

- 3.2 The council is continuing to follow post Grenfell government guidance and this report updates on a number of areas that relate to health and safety and fire safety across housing. These include:
- Large Panel System buildings
 - Fire doors
 - Panels and balconies
 - Sprinkler systems
 - “Building a Safer Future”
- 3.3 A multi-agency Housing Fire, Health and Safety Board, which includes East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, several council departments, and related agencies, has been in place for several years to ensure effective use of these resources, good governance and a ‘joined-up’ approach. The board continues to meet on a monthly basis and also reviews compliance across key housing areas.
- 3.4 Large Panel Systems**
- 3.5 Earlier this year, the council carried out structural surveys on eight ‘large panel system’ tower blocks. These surveys were conducted by specialist structural engineers and found that there are no structural issues with any of the buildings. The report also stated that the buildings are generally in good structural condition. The reports identified some repairs to be carried out in 2019 which have been programmed in for completion before the end of this year as advised by the consultants who carried out the surveys.
- 3.6 The blocks surveyed were:
- Dudeney Lodge
 - Nettleton Court
 - St James House
 - Kingfisher Court
 - Heron Court
 - Swallow Court
 - Falcon Court
 - Kestrel Court
- 3.7 The reports identified some minor cracks in service riser ducts. Work has begun to rectify these and further inspection has shown many to be hairline cracks in the plasterwork which need no further action. Any repairs necessary to fix these cracks are expected to be completed by the end of October.
- 3.8 The reports also identified some issues with loose concrete on St James House. These areas have been made safe and the council has identified the further work that needs be done. A further inspection of St James House to look at any further repairs that may be required is underway and rectification work is planned for the next financial year.
- 3.9 The council has written to residents of the blocks about the survey results and published the reports online at <https://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2019/large-panel-system-building-survey-results>.
- 3.10 The council is also reviewing other recommendations and planning for further surveys to be undertaken in 2020/21 in line with the report recommendations.

This would include following guidance in relation to undertaking a full structural assessment of the blocks including intrusive investigations.

3.11 The council is reviewing procedures around future tests and introducing processes for five and ten year inspections to these blocks as required.

3.12 Fire doors

3.13 The council has worked closely with both Central Government and East Sussex Fire & Rescue Services in managing the safety of fire doors across our housing stock.

3.14 In 2018 Central Government identified that a number of door suppliers failed to meet the expected performance standards required of fire doors. This included Masterdor fire doors. There are approximately 2,000 Masterdor doors in the council owned housing stock across the city.

3.15 IG Doors, the council's current door supplier is not one of the suppliers whose doors failed. Health & Safety officers are continuing to work with IG Doors to review certification for their doors.

3.16 The advice from government and National Fire Chiefs Council is that the additional risk is low. Additional fire risk assessments have been carried out on high-rise buildings and have specifically looked at the impact of fire doors.

3.17 The council is now looking at replacement programmes for doors, including fire doors, and will be procuring new contracts for doors as part of the planned maintenance contracts that will commence in 2020.

3.18 Panels and balconies

3.19 Central Government have issued advice notes to local authorities on both balconies and panels on external walls.

3.20 The advice note on balconies indicates that balconies should not be made of combustible materials and also identifies that residents should be informed about the risks of storing any combustible materials on balconies.

3.21 As a result of this advice the council will be updating the "Fire safety in flats" information leaflet in conjunction with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service and updating all residents through the "Homing In" magazine.

3.22 The advice note on "Spandrel panels (including window panels and infill panels)" relates to panels that are part of the external wall of buildings. This note advises building owners to check the materials used in the panels.

3.23 The council is reviewing information and carrying out tests to panels in council housing stock. This will identify the materials used in any panels. Should any panels need to be removed and replaced then this work will be carried out as part of the housing capital investment programme.

3.24 Sprinkler systems

- 3.25 The council has engaged extensively with residents as part of proposals to install sprinkler systems at St James House and Essex Place. Both projects are jointly funded with East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service.
- 3.26 The council is currently in Section 20 consultation with leaseholders on these works. The proposal and technical specification has been amended following the last consultation process undertaken with residents at the beginning of the year.
- 3.27 Subject to the outcome of formal consultation with leaseholders works are anticipated to commence on site early in 2020.

3.28 “Building a Safer Future”

- 3.29 “Building a Safer Future” is the name of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) programme to improve safety and minimise the risk of fire in high rise buildings.
- 3.30 MHCLG have been consulting stakeholders and their proposals represent a significant change to fire safety in residential premises. The aim is to provide a regulatory framework which applies over the whole life time of the building including, pre planning stage, construction, occupation and the continued management of the building for its lifetime. The proposals will include all residential buildings over 18m in height.
- 3.31 Proposals include the formation of a Building Safety Regulator that would oversee both new construction and the occupation of existing premises in addition to the roles of Building Control, Fire Authorities and local Environmental Health.
- 3.32 In addition, the proposals involve:

“Creating a new ‘accountable person’ role who will be the dutyholder responsible for making sure that building fire and structural safety risks are reduced as much as reasonably practicable when people are living in the building.

Dutyholders will create a ‘safety case’ which contains all the important information about a building that shows how the dutyholders are managing any fire or structural risks on an ongoing basis.”

- 3.33 Finally, the proposals include a commitment to ensure residents are at the heart of the new regulatory system with the accountable person having specific duties to residents of high rise buildings.
- 3.34 Full details of the proposals are published on the MHCLG website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/building-a-safer-future-proposals-for-reform-of-the-building-safety-regulatory-system>
- 3.35 The Fire, Health & Safety Board has received regular updates on the programme and further reports will be presented to Housing Committee in line with the implementation of any new regulatory framework by MHCLG.

3.36 Grenfell Tower Inquiry, Phase 1 Report

3.37 Committee will be aware that the first phase of the public inquiry into the Grenfell fire reported on the 30th October 2019. The report contains a number of recommendations over a range of issues. A number of these recommendations link in with the proposals that were consulted on by MHCLG “Building a Safer Future” (3.28 above). The council will work with colleagues from East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service and across the council to consider the impact of the recommendations on council housing stock and bring forward proposals to a future Committee.

3.38 Pankhurst Avenue fire

3.39 Committee will be aware of the recent fire at a residential block of flats in Pankhurst Avenue. This fire is currently the subject of an investigation by East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service, therefore it would be premature to draw conclusions at this stage. Once the information is available officers will consider the outcomes and identify how they may impact council housing stock. Any proposals arising from the investigation requiring member consideration will be brought forward to a future Committee.

4. ANALYSIS & CONSIDERATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

4.1 No alternative options have been considered for this report.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

5.1 A multi-agency Housing Fire, Health and Safety Board, which includes East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service, several council departments, and related agencies, has been in place for several years to ensure effective use of these resources, good governance and a ‘joined-up’ approach. The board continue to meet on a monthly basis and also reviews compliance across key housing areas.

5.2 Regular updates are also provided to residents through the Housing Area Panels. A health and safety update was provided at Area Panels in October 2019 in line with this report.

5.3 As detailed in this report engagement has been undertaken in line with proposed sprinkler installations in the city.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The council is committed to providing safe homes and has worked to keep residents well informed around safety and the work that the council is doing in this important area.

6.2 The council continues to work closely with partners and agencies to ensure a robust approach to fire safety and health and safety is in place.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

Financial Implications:

- 7.1 The costs of health and safety measures outlined in this report will continue to be prioritised and included within the 30 year Business Plan for the HRA and annually within the HRA Capital Programme which is reported to Housing Committee in January each year.

Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks

Date: 21/10/19

Legal Implications:

- 7.2 Section 11 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 imposes an ongoing obligation on the council as landlord to keep in repair the structure and exterior of housing accommodation. Further duties in relation to fire safety are imposed on the council as the responsible person under Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. The measures outlined in the report demonstrate that the council's compliance with and awareness of those obligations.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley

Date: 23/10/19

Equalities Implications:

- 7.3 There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report. The council's major and planned works programmes and budget proposals are subject to equalities impact assessment.

Sustainability Implications:

- 7.4 There are no sustainability implications arising directly from this report other than those already considered as part of the wider HRA Asset Management Strategy previously reported to Committee.

Any Other Significant Implications:

- 7.5 None other than those outlined in the report or the wider HRA Asset Management Strategy previously reported to Committee.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None.

Documents in Members' Rooms

None.

Background Documents

None.

