

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

GRENFELL TOWER FIRE – UPDATE ON THE LOCAL RESPONSE

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on action taken locally following the Grenfell Tower fire.
- 1.2 Cabinet received a report on 18 July 2017 setting out the local response following the Grenfell Tower fire that occurred on 14 June 2017. This report provides a further update.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Cabinet received a report in July 2017 on the local response to the Grenfell Tower fire. The report provided information available at that time on the contributory causes of the fire, including the presence of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding and the casualties involved. Locally, it noted that there are four residential tower blocks in North Lincolnshire. Ongo Homes operate all of the buildings in question with none fitted with ACM cladding.
- 2.2 In November 2017 the Metropolitan Police, in agreement with Westminster Coroner concluded that there had been 71 fatalities, including a stillborn baby, resulting from the Grenfell Tower tragedy. As such, the incident ranks as the deadliest structural fire in the United Kingdom since the start of the twentieth century, when detailed records began. Occupants of 23 of the 129 flats lost their lives. In total, 223 people escaped the building.
- 2.3 More than 250 London Fire Brigade firefighters and 70 fire engines were involved from stations across London in efforts to control the fire. Over 100 London Ambulance Service crews and at least 20 ambulances attended, joined by the specialist Hazardous Area Response Team. The Metropolitan Police Service and London's Air Ambulance also contributed to the rescue effort.
- 2.4 A public inquiry into the fire was quickly ordered by the Prime Minister, with the immediate priority “to establish the facts of what happened at Grenfell Tower in order to take the necessary action to prevent a similar

tragedy from happening again." On 15 August 2017, the terms of reference of the Inquiry were announced. The first hearing opened on 14 September 2017 and publication of an interim report is expected by Easter 2018. The inquiry will explore a list of 13 key issues linked mainly to the construction of the building, fire safety management arrangements, the cause of the fire and the response of the emergency services.

2.5 In the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, the council has continued to receive requests from Government departments for information on local buildings, with significance placed on the following issues:

- The presence of ACM cladding panels.
- The importance of Fire Risk Assessments that specifically take account of a building's cladding.
- Elevated risk associated with buildings above 18 metres or four to six storeys in height.
- Elevated risk associated with buildings that have a residential use.

The council does not operate any buildings that fall into the high risk categories highlighted in these requests and as such has submitted nil returns. Ongo Homes have submitted information as required relating to the four residential tower blocks located in North Lincolnshire.

2.6 Quickly following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, Ongo Homes stated their intention to retrospectively install sprinkler systems in all of their tower blocks. In December 2017, they announced that work was due to start in January 2018 as part of an £800,000 investment. The project will see sprinklers fitted in each individual flat as well as in all communal areas. The whole project is expected to take 18 weeks to complete.

2.7 The Governance and Standards Scrutiny Panel has continued to review the local situation following the Grenfell Tower fire. Further to inviting representatives of Ongo Homes and the Humberside Fire and Rescue Service to attend their meeting on 29 June 2017, they asked council officers to attend a further meeting of the panel on 19 October 2017 to update on actions taken in connection with council buildings. The focus was on the various actions highlighted in the previous report received by Cabinet in July 2017 (see below), with the following situation confirmed:

2.7.1 On-site inspections of all buildings with cladding panels to confirm the findings of the desktop review.

Inspections were undertaken of all council buildings including schools where cladding panels were highlighted. This included taking physical samples as required. The inspections confirmed that there were no Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) panels similar to those installed at Grenfell found at any of the Councils buildings.

2.7.2 A review of all Fire Risk Assessments to ensure that one is in place for every council building, that it is current (taking account of the building's cladding) and there are no unresolved fire safety issues.

A working group of officers reviewed the position with regard to Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs). This confirmed that FRAs are in place across all council buildings. However, a copy of the assessments were not kept centrally and were being carried out using slightly different templates. A standard FRA template is now being adopted going forward as FRAs are updated,, to ensure a consistency of approach. A copy of all FRA's will be held centrally.

2.7.3 A reminder to all council staff, in particular service and building managers, about the importance of good fire safety practise including guidance on how to raise any concerns that might arise.

An internal communication to raise awareness on fire safety was issued in August 2017.

2.8 An independent review of building regulations is currently underway in light of the fire, due to concerns with the regulations and their implementation and enforcement. The terms of reference for the review were published by the Department for Communities and Local Government in August 2017. Dame Judith Hackitt, a former Chair of the Health and Safety Executive is leading this review and will report to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Home Secretary. A final report is due in spring 2018. An interim report published on 18 December 2017 describes the current building regulatory system as "not fit for purpose". The Chair has stated that the next phase of the review will focus on "overhauling the regulations in quite a significant way" and will examine in detail issues such as sprinklers, cladding, alarm systems and escape routes associated with high-rise buildings. Council officers will consider the outcomes of the review when published and any changes to our Building Control arrangements that are required as a result.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Cabinet is asked to note the information set out in this report and support the positive action taken locally by both the council and Ongo Homes following the Grenfell Tower fire.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 Following the tragic events at the Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017, both the council and Ongo Homes took positive action to respond to requests for information from Government departments and agencies. Ongo Homes took immediate steps to reassure their tenants and have

put in hand works in their four residential tower blocks to install fire sprinkler systems.

- 4.2 The action taken by the council will ensure that our approach to managing fire risks in our operational buildings continues to remain robust and relevant in the light of the emerging issues arising from the Grenfell Tower fire. As such, both our customers and employees can be confident that risks continue to be effectively managed and our procedures for responding to a fire incident continue to remain fit for purpose.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 Not applicable at this stage.

6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

- 6.1 Not applicable at this stage.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

- 7.1 Specialist officers from across the council contributed towards developing the council response to the Grenfell Tower fire.

- 7.2 The Senior Leadership Team of Executive Directors and Directors support the approach adopted by the council.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That Cabinet notes the information set out in this report and continues to support the positive action taken locally by the council and both Ongo Homes and the Fire and Rescue Service following the Grenfell Tower fire.

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

- Report to Cabinet of 18 July 2017, titled; "Grenfell Tower Fire – Local Response"