

Housing, Homelessness and fair Work Committee

10.00am, Tuesday, 3 December 2024

High-Rise Fire Safety Improvement Programme

Executive/routine
Wards

Routine
All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee:
 - 1.1.1 Notes the motion brought by Councillor Meagher at Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee on [1 October 2024](#) on the Grenfell Inquiry Report;
 - 1.1.2 Notes the ongoing work undertaken since the Grenfell tragedy to improve fire safety across all of the Council's multi-storey blocks and the closer working relationship the Council is currently establishing with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to ensure the upmost protection for residents in these blocks; and
 - 1.1.3 Discharges the motion set out in 1.1.1 with the submission of this report.

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High-Rise Fire Safety Improvement Programme

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 A motion was agreed at Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee on [1 October 2024](#) requesting a report to be brought back to Committee in one cycle providing assurance on the fire safety measures the Council have in place, in conjunction with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and sets out a communication plan with tenants and residents on the planned works.
- 2.2 The following report highlights the range of investigations, reports and works undertaken since the Grenfell tragedy to assess and mitigate fire safety risks across the Council's high-rise estate.
- 2.3 The report details the current contract the Council has in place addressing all communal and internal fire safety interventions required across the entire high-rise residential estate.
- 2.4 The report addresses the existing procedures currently in place between the Council and SFRS around fire safety within high-rise blocks and planned enhancements underway to further improve this partnership.
- 2.5 Finally, the report highlights additional processes and controls that will be created as part of the Housing and Homelessness organisation review that will sit within the new High-Rise Management and Investment structure to support fire safety within multi-storey blocks and support ongoing partnership working with SFRS.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council has an operational estate of approximately 20,000 homes, with approximately 3,000 sitting within a multi-storey setting. This represents around 15% of Council homes. 97% of homes in multi-storey blocks sit within a full Council or majority ownership tenure. The Council currently has 50 multi-storey sites within the wider housing estate (some of these sites contain more than one multi-storey block).
- 3.2 Following the Grenfell tragedy, a range of inspections and reviews of fire safety arrangements across the Council's multi-storey blocks were undertaken between 2016-2018. This included the following:

- 3.3 Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) were undertaken for each set of identical 'sister' blocks with localised interventions and repairs immediately following on from the immediate risks outlined in the FRA's. These interventions included immediate repairs to door closers, localised fire compartmentation repairs, render repairs and management/housekeeping interventions.
- 3.4 A full material review was requested by the Scottish Government to understand the construction methods and materials used across the high-rise estate and the risks posed by them. This was carried out and concluded directly after Grenfell.
- 3.5 Following on from this exercise and the main findings from the FRA's, a risk-based assessment was concluded which incorporated all multi-storey blocks. This assessment led to a range of fire safety interventions been concluded across the following blocks between 2019-2023:
- 3.6 Moredun multi-storey blocks - Automatic Opening Vents replacement and upgrade, removal of all High-Pressure Laminate Panels (HPLs) and fire compartmentation works linked to CCTV upgrades.
- 3.7 Kirkgate House – a range of communal fire door improvements and fire stopping in service cupboards.
- 3.8 Citadel/Persevere Court – a range of communal fire door improvements and localised fire stopping.
- 3.9 Calders blocks (Cobbinshaw, Medwin, Dunsyre Houses) – a range of communal fire door improvements and fire compartmentation works linked to CCTV upgrades.
- 3.10 In terms of partnership working between the Council and SFRS, quarterly assurance visits are conducted by SFRS to ensure compliance in relation to fire safety. These visits typically focus on communal areas within a high-rise block. SFRS provide guidance around general health and safety, maintenance, testing and management of the building. SFRS submit their findings and recommendations to the Council. All letters are filed, and actions are passed to the relevant Team Leader to re-visit and arrange any necessary remedial works. Assignment of actions are logged and tracked to completion. Monthly meetings are held within Housing to review any outstanding actions and discuss what mitigating actions are in place until the action is closed.

4. Main report

Initial interventions post Grenfell

- 4.1 Following the initial post-Grenfell reviews and inspections and first set of FRA's, officers made the decision that more in depth FRA's needed to be commissioned covering all blocks (so not just a sample of sister blocks as an example), material testing of HPL's and a more in-depth assessment of fire stopping/compartmentation within all areas of all blocks.

- 4.2 As a result, between 2020 and 2022 in depth FRA's were undertaken focusing on the communal areas of all multi-storey blocks. The core focus of these FRA's was the existing condition of flat entrance, escape stair and ancillary fire doors, the integrity of fire compartmentation lines and fire stopping breaches within these compartmentation lines. The FRA's also looked at fire safety management protocols and issues linked to fuel sources (e.g. materials and belongings stored in common areas of buildings which is prohibited). The FRA's also covered the testing of localised external materials for combustibility such as HPLs.
- 4.3 Following the second round of FRA's and the improvement works undertaken at Citadel/Persevere, Moredun blocks, the Calder blocks and Kirkgate, further fire safety improvements were planned across an additional 9 blocks (Moredun multies, Hawkhill/Nisbet and Northview).
- 4.4 The proposed fire safety improvement works to the additional nine blocks were spread across two separate procurement exercises. These tenders encountered a range of challenges, most notably difficulty in getting tenders awarded and mobilised due to a number of contractors not being able to provide the correct certification for the specified fire doors and tenders having to be reissued. The Council also did not have suitable in-house procurement frameworks for this type of specialist works which led to further delays. As a result, two large tender packages were cancelled covering fire improvement works to nine multi-storey blocks mainly due to ongoing fire door certification issues.

Current holistic approach to fire safety upgrades in multi-storey blocks

- 4.5 As a result of the limitations of the Council's in-house frameworks and fire door certification issues highlighted above and the general length of time these and previous individual tender exercises were taking (which in many cases was exceeding nine months). It was decided that a more holistic long-term approach was required working with specialist fire safety contractors via larger national frameworks. This would allow the Council to partner with a specialist fire safety contractor over the longer term to work through each multi-storey block and ensure that all communal and flat entrance fire doors were upgraded and that all internal and communal fire compartmentation and fire stopping works were addressed. The scope for each block would be based on the original fire strategy and minimum fire compartmentation times for floors and walls etc.
- 4.6 The Council has now contracted with Harmony Fire to undertake full communal and internal fire safety upgrades across all multi-storey blocks focusing on fire door upgrades, and reinstatement of all fire compartmentation lines and fire stopping where required. The first blocks targeted for install will be Greendykes and Wauchope House with works planned to start at Greendykes House in November 2024.
- 4.7 In 2024/25 two further fire safety improvement programmes were taken forward whilst the larger fire safety improvement contract was being procured. The first focussed on the removal of HPLs across six multi-storey blocks. The second

programme focussed on the replacement of 60 min flat entrance doors across 9 multi-storey blocks (Drovers Bank, Midcairn, Kilncroft Houses, Northview Court, Kirkgate House, Wauchope/Greendykes House and Citadel/Persevere Court).

- 4.8 These two programmes used specialist contractors for the first time, one from a national Framework and the other via an open tender invitation. Both procurement exercises ran smoothly, were concluded in a much timelier fashion and encountered no fire certification issues. Both contracts are continuing to progress well on site and are on time, within budget and with no quality issues arising.
- 4.9 As part of the Council's drive to ensure all multi-storey blocks meet full fire safety compliance all existing electrical infrastructure in multi-storey blocks will be reviewed for replacement. The main focus will be on the landlord electrical supply that runs through the communal areas of each block. Much of this infrastructure will now be life expired and will need replacement and rationalisation. Along with the re-design work, additional fire safety enhancements will also be reviewed including back-up generator provision, evacuation alert systems and a review of smoke control and automatic opening vents. The design commission for this piece of work will focus on concept design to get an accurate construction value before moving into detailed design. This will be procured from the multi-disciplinary lot of the Council's Professional Services Framework and is scheduled to commence in early 2025 for an initial period of nine months.
- 4.10 To help aid the above design commission landlord Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICR's) have been commissioned via an existing ad-hoc electrical contract. The current EICR programme is working its way through the first 12 blocks and will address any category 1 and 2 risks encountered. The final EICR reports will then feed into the wider electrical replacement programme design commission.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Partnership Working

- 4.11 In addition to the quarterly meetings between the Council and SFRS. Council Officers now meet SFRS Senior Leaders on a bi-monthly basis. The function of these additional meetings is to maintain and build on positive and constructive partnership working, to share intelligence including what is working well and where challenges exist and what actions are required to address these collectively. This forum is also used to explore new pilot projects that can potentially be rolled out, including one currently underway at the three blocks at the Calders as highlighted in section 3.9.
- 4.12 As part of the remit of the new High-Rise Management and Investment service area within Housing, the establishment of more stringent access controls on third party contractors accessing and working in high-rise blocks will be progressed. Once in place, a single point of contact for reviewing all documentation from third party contractors and post installation checks to ensure no fire stopping or compartmentation lines have been affected will be in place, including training and support of Property Managers, Concierge Team Leaders and Concierge staff. This process will take some time to establish as the Housing and Homelessness

Organisational review is implemented. Ultimately, once established this process will ensure advanced controls are in place to control access to blocks and ensure fire safety interventions are protected from any interference.

- 4.13 On 4 September 2024 (the date the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Report: Phase 2 was published) the Council hosted a round table event at the National Museum of Scotland at which Dame Judith Hackitt was a guest speaker with other Local Authorities across Scotland and the north of England to discuss the Council's high-rise investment plan and the planned fire improvement works across the estate to help facilitate a conversation and understanding on roles and responsibilities and action plans.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 Detailed communication and engagement with tenants and residents in high-rise blocks is planned for early 2025 to raise awareness of the planned works to enhance fire safety in blocks and set out the individual responsibilities of tenants and residents to protect themselves and their neighbours. This will be done in conjunction with SRFS.
- 5.2 The current fire improvement programmes will conclude in Q4 2024/25, this includes the current 60 mins flat entrance door contract covering nine blocks and the HPL replacement contract covering six blocks.
- 5.3 The wider fire improvement contract with Harmony Fire Ltd will commence in November 2024 starting with interventions across Greendykes and Wauchope House. These two blocks were prioritised as this will coincide with the flat entrance door contract concluding which will provide a significant cost saving as the existing site compound can continue to be utilised. The remaining blocks will have their original fire strategies reviewed to determine the prioritisation list. Initial communications were issued to all private owners except those in minority blocks (where a vote will be required to progress with survey work) outlining the proposed set of interventions and next steps.
- 5.4 The electrical review and upgrade design commission is due to be awarded in December/January 2024. This initial stage of design to RIBA Stage 2 will last approximately nine months. Following this initial design stage the wider detailed design commission will be awarded later in 2025. Alongside the early design works the EICR and remedial works will continue across all multi-storey blocks and likely to be finalised in 2025.
- 5.5 The integrated partnership working with SFRS will continue. The role and remit of this working group will be fully established once the Housing review concludes in 2025 and the various roles within the new High-Rise Team structure have been filled.
- 5.6 Two new senior roles have been developed and added to the High-Rise Management and Investment structure. These are Property Managers and these

officers will have oversight and control of all blocks in their respective areas, including fire safety, block inspections and control of access into the blocks. These posts will be recruited to early in 2025.

- 5.7 A range of important roles that will feed into fire safety arrangements across high rise blocks will start to be established as the Housing review nears conclusion. This will include those responsible for managing access and setting up new protocols around access for third party contractors into multi-storey blocks, engaging with SFRS in terms of quarterly inspections and tenants with specific needs, and overall management of fire safety reviews and inspections.
- 5.8 Following commencement of the wider fire safety improvement contract a range of maintenance training and awareness sessions will be established for Housing staff. This will include Block Managers and Concierge staff, Property Managers, Surveyors and Construction Project Managers.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The main fire safety upgrade programme referenced under item 4.6 with Harmony Fire is now awarded with a total contract value of approx. £61m.
- 6.2 The electrical review and upgrade design commission is out to tender with an approx. value of £0.40m. This design commission will help to determine the actual cost of this upgrade programme across the high-rise estate.
- 6.3 All of the above costs and future costs relating to fire safety upgrades have been forecast into the latest 10-year HRA Budget.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 The fire compliance interventions will have little to no impact on wider equality and poverty issues. The interventions will though ensure that all Council multi-storey blocks meet the Scottish Governments Practical fire safety - existing high rise domestic buildings: guidance (updated March 2021). Ensuring that the safety of residents meets the most stringent guidance.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

- 8.1 In terms of the Council's statutory duties relating to climate emissions and biodiversity the various construction activities linked to fire safety improvements will have almost no impact on emissions or biodiversity. The core impact will be linked to emissions generated through the manufacturing process, supply of materials to site and installation. Where the Council can influence working practices to reduce carbon emissions such as on-site construction activities, a range of initiatives have been committed to by Harmony Fire Ltd as part of the contract conditions.

- 8.2 This includes monthly waste audits, recycling of old door sets, the use of hybrid/electric fleet vehicles (which now represents 85% of their current fleet) and the use of Eco welfare units. These Eco units have improved insulation levels and use solar panels to reduce energy consumption and are fitted with waterless urinals.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

- 9.1 In terms of compliance, this programme of works will ensure all Council multi-storey blocks meet the Scottish Government's updated guidance on practical fire safety in existing high-rise buildings. The guidance follows best practice with common sense solutions to reach fire safety compliance. The guidance is advisory, not Legislation, the Council is not legally bound to comply with the guidance. However, the guidance does provide recommendations to bridge gaps in current fire safety Legislation. The guidance focusses on fire safety in communal areas and building design aspects with a view to enhance overall safety for tenants and residents. Whilst the guidance is not legally binding, there is Legislation in place requiring landlords to ensure that fire doors and the building's fire compartmentation is properly maintained. The FRA's carried out to date and the review of the original fire strategies for the high-rise blocks has confirmed that the works proposed are required in order to provide these minimum levels of practical fire safety to the residents.
- 9.2 For the wider fire improvement works contract a core project team is now set up and meets monthly to review progress against the core programme objectives and to also manage a risk register for the project. This will ensure the programme remains on track and within budget and that any other issues are raised and managed accordingly at those meetings.
- 9.3 In terms of governance linked to the wider fire improvement works contract a monthly update report will be brought to the Capital Delivery Group this will include an update on the risk register and progress against the agreed budget for the financial year. Any significant issues or risks that need to be escalated from the core project team meetings will be referred to the Capital Delivery Group for review and action.
- 9.4 The new High-Rise Management and Investment Service provides a Construction Project Management resource which will support SFRS quarterly visits, yearly or bi yearly Fire Risk Assessments and co-ordinating access for third party contractors.
- 9.5 This risk has been added to the High-Rise Management and Investment risk register.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 Fire Safety Upgrades Multi-Storey Blocks – Award of Contract – Finance and Resources Committee – [25 June 2024](#).

10.2 Grenfell Tower Inquiry - [Phase 2 report](#).

11. Appendices

None.