



Title of meeting: Cabinet Member for Housing Decision meeting

Date of meeting: 10 October 2017

Subject: Fire Safety within the Private Housing market for high rise building

Report by: James Hill, Interim Director of Property & Housing

Wards affected: All

Key decision: No

Full Council decision: No

1. Requested by

A report on Fire Safety at Local Authority Housing Blocks of Flats was requested by the Cabinet Member for Housing.

2. Purpose of report

To provide an update on the current work being undertaken to provide assistance to property owners in the private housing market concerning fire safety in high rise buildings.

3. Recommendations

That the Cabinet Member for Housing:

- 3.1 notes the work being undertaken with properties owners and the support being provided by the Private Sector Housing Team.**

4. Background

- 4.1** Following the recent tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in North Kensington, Portsmouth City Council's Private Sector Housing Team (PSHT) have taken a lead role in assisting freeholders of buildings that have failed the BRE cladding test and then taking this assistance further with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service in planning and implementing a program of inspections to all high rise residential buildings in the city.
- 4.2** This is a precautionary program to reassure everyone that their buildings are safe and our intention is to work with freeholders using a positive, proactive approach wherever possible to ensure they are providing safe, secure and suitable accommodation.

- 4.3 The initial list consisted of 96 properties, which had been identified to be 6 or more stories or greater than 18 meters in height. The number of properties to inspect has risen to 109 as further properties are being identified.

5. Legal Responsibilities.

- 5.1 The Housing Act 2004, places a duty on any local authority to ensure that housing within its area is free from any significant risks to the occupants or visitors of the building.
- 5.2 Part of the assessment of any building, fire safety is taken into account and this includes when considering high rise building the flats and the common areas.
- 5.3 Therefore, using this area of legislation the Private Sector Housing Team, can if justified request that works are completed by the leaseholder of the flat to improve fire safety measures and also the freeholder of the building to improve fire safety within the common areas.
- 5.4 Following the introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, this is the main legislation that the fire service can use in dealing with fire issues.
- 5.5 The lead enforcement for fire safety is a dual area between Private Sector Housing and the fire authority. The agreed protocol is that PSHT are the lead in enforcement within the flats and the fire service within the common areas.

6. Assisting the private market.

- 6.1 The PSHT have with the help of other departments have tried to identify all buildings that fall under the criteria set by the DCLG for high rise. This work will continue and we foresee further inspections being undertaken over the forth coming months.
- 6.2 The DCLG have provided local authorities with written information to be passed to private freeholder and property managers concerning the testing of any cladding and also the provision of advice to them. These documents have been sent to all interested parties, that we know of and this has resulted in at least one private freeholder sending off a cladding sample to the BRE.
- 6.3 The private housing market has taken the situation regarding fire safety within high rise blocks quite seriously and we are finding that information has been provided directly to residents in terms of what to do in case of fire and also the freeholders have either obtained or instructed a third party to undertake a fire risk assessment.

7. Private Sector High Rise Blocks

- 7.1 The DCLG testing process for Local Authority Housing blocks is available for all private sector owners of high rise properties where they have an ACM cladding system.

7.2 The Private Sector Housing team have encouraged building owners to use the testing facility and the returns made by the Local Authority to the DCLG have included details of blocks where ACM cladding systems have been used.

7.3 In any case where a private sector housing block has an ACM cladding system the building owner is responsible for any measures required to ensure the building are safe for occupation. Joint inspections with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services, the private sector housing team and the building owner establish what fire safety measures are in place, and any remedial action all of which informs whether residents can remain in occupation.

8. Finding from the Joint Inspections with HFRS.

8.1 We are still progressing well with the inspections, and 80% of the initial proposed inspections have been completed and the current plan is to complete all the inspection by the end of September.

8.2 The results of the inspections are shared with the building owners and it is their responsibility to rectify any issues found.

8.3 To date the building owners are responding well to the inspections and no closures/evacuations have been needed

8.4 From speaking with the residents, managing agents and freeholders we have received very positive feedback regarding the project and certainly the residents we have spoken to have stated they do feel safer living within their high rise buildings following the visits.

Signed by:

James Hill, Interim Director of Property and Housing.

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

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Signed by:
Councillor Jennie Brent
Cabinet Member for Housing

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Not applicable

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
N/A	