

## **Briefing paper for: Scrutiny Management Panel**

From:

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At a meeting of Full Council on 21 March 2017, the Notice of Motion set out below (that was proposed by Councillor Steve Pitt and Seconded by Councillor Gerald Vernon-Jackson) was referred to Scrutiny Management Panel for consideration.

### **Notice of Motion - Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service**

"This Council welcomes Hampshire Fire Service's adoption of changes proposed by the Fire Brigades Union, to the pre-determined attendance (PDA) procedures for tall building fires in Portsmouth.

The previous policy, implemented following last year's Hampshire Risk Review, meant that Southsea's Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) was not on the PDA for tall buildings fires. As a result, there were occasions when Portsmouth was dependent on Southampton's ALP to provide cover, whilst Southsea's remained at the fire station.

At the time of the Risk Review, this Council was warned that such an issue would arise but decided to ignore the FBU's concerns.

In order to provide a solution, the FBU proposed crewing changes to their management, which have now been fully implemented, enabling Southsea's ALP to be deployed in almost all circumstances.

The council wishes to thank the FBU for its sensible and pragmatic approach to solving the problem, and regrets that it did not listen to the city's FBU representatives, when they brought a deputation to Full Council last year.

The council recognises that the solution of 'triple-jumping' a crew onto the ALP is not ideal and thanks the FBU for proposing changes to its established working practices, which have enabled this to be possible, in order to better guarantee their safety and the safety of the people of Portsmouth.

Finally, this council wishes to thank Hampshire Fire Service management for agreeing to make the changes proposed by the FBU and for working constructively with them to implement the new policy."

### **Property and Housing Directorate and Emergency Planning Response**

To assist the Scrutiny Management Panel with its deliberations and report back to Full Council, the following information is presented.

## **Portsmouth City's 'High Rise' Stock Profile**

The city of Portsmouth remains one of the most densely populated cities outside London but is a relatively 'flat' city. The recent high rise developments in and around Gun wharf Quays are providing residential units for the private ownership/rent, Portsmouth University has built and refurbished high rise student accommodation around the City Centre and the Local Authority owned high rise accommodation were predominantly built in the 1960's.

### **Stock Profile Local Authority Owned Stock**

The local authority remains a significant social housing landlord with a retained stock of approximately 14,809 units of housing located around the city and approximately a third of the stock located within the Havant Borough Council boundary.

Focussing on flats, the City Council owns

- 1,096 blocks of flats
  - 40 are blocks of flats which would be deemed to be 'high rise'
    - 27 are blocks of flats between 6 - 9 storey's (exceed 18 metres)
    - 13 are 'tower blocks' which are 10 storey's and above (exceed 30 metres), the highest of the tower blocks are 24 storeys high (approx. 75 Meters)
  - The other 1,056 blocks of flats are low rise blocks of five storeys and below (Less than approx. 18 Metres)

All the high rise blocks of flats are located within the Portsmouth area

See Appendix A for a list of the 40 blocks of flats

### **Private Sector**

Throughout the City there are privately owned blocks of flats some new build and others arising from refurbished buildings, for example:

- No.1 Gunwharf Quays - 28 storeys
- Unite Student Halls of Residence, Greetham Street - 25 storeys
- VIVID (housing association) flats Southdown View, Hilsea - 6 storeys

### **Approach to Fire Safety (Local Authority High Rise Flats)**

All our high rise blocks are built with 'compartmentation.' This is designed to contain the fire in the flat or area it has started and minimises spread throughout the building.

All flats in high rise and tower blocks have safety measures which include hard wire smoke detectors in all dwellings. Some blocks have within the communal areas have active fire safety measures to assist in the event of a fire including partial communal alarm systems, dry risers, emergency lighting or Automatic Opening Vents (AOVs) that activate communal windows to open in the event of a fire and enable smoke to disperse.

The routes to enable the fire service to deal with a fire are protected and those routes are also designed to provide a safe means of escape if an evacuation is necessary.

Each flat property entrance door is a fire door designed to contain a fire for at least 30 minutes, providing 1 hour fire protection to other properties if a fire starts in a property. The doors in the communal corridors and stairwells are also fire doors designed to contain a fire for at least 30 mins. The combination of these fire safety measures provides time to enable the fire to be contained and fought by the fire service and prevent fire spread.

The local authority undertakes fire risk assessments and has a policy to review fire risk assessments every three years. All the high rise blocks of flats have fire risk assessments in place.

### Partnership Working

The local authority housing team has always enjoyed a strong partnership with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services (HFRS).

HFRS is the enforcing authority for the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Property and Housing regularly meet with HFRS at least twice a year to discuss its fire strategy and progress of plans to undertake FRAs or associated work.

PCC meetings with HFRS are also an opportunity to discuss current fire safety guidance, learning from fires in Portsmouth and the rest of the country, this close working relationship will continue.

There are other informal meetings with HFRS to discuss any operational issues including familiarisation with our high rise blocks of flats.

The services work together to hold community events and running practice fire exercises in high rise buildings.

The services also undertake joint partnership inspections to review fire safety measures.

### Construction (High rise flats)

All Local Authority purpose built blocks of flats were constructed in compliance with the building and fire safety regulations appropriate at the time of construction. As

such the properties will contain fire safety measures providing fire separation and containment with protected fire escape routes.

Property and housing blocks have had occasional instances of fires within flats over the past few years, in every instance the fire has been contained within the property where the fire commenced, all other neighbouring residents have not been impacted whilst the fire service fights the fire.

Some blocks of flats have had cladding installed as part of refurbishment schemes; Property and Housing Service. Two blocks of flats (Horatia House and Leamington House) have an Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) Cladding System. This has been tested and failed the current test. A joint partnership inspection assessed the measures in place and concluded the residents could remain in residence as the cladding is removed.

### **Stay Put Policy**

In common with all landlords of purpose built blocks of flats we advise residents

If there is a fire in your flat you should;

- Leave and evacuate the property
- Close all doors behind you
- Use the stairs and never use the lift when evacuating the building as the fire may cause a power failure trapping you inside
- Get out and stay out, never assume that someone else has phoned the fire service so call 999.

If the fire is elsewhere in the block you should;

- Close your doors and windows
- Stay put unless advised by the fire service or your property begins to become affected by the fire,
- If the fire service needs to fully evacuate the building they will knock door to door.
- Your tower block has designed to delay the spread of fire, so you will be safe in your home

HFRS endorsed this approach at a public meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2017 confirming that the measures in place enable them to tackle fire and also to control and manage evacuation if that proves necessary.

### **Smoke Detectors**

All Property and housing dwellings, including those of leaseholders, will be fitted with at least one mains operated smoke detector with a battery back-up on each dwelling floor level as appropriate which will be replaced in accordance with manufacturer's instructions by the expiry date.

This approach complements the 'stay put policy' and avoids unnecessary and uncontrolled evacuation.

### **Grenfell Tower Tragedy**

The Grenfell Tower tragedy has brought into sharp focus fire safety measures in high rise residential blocks both in the private and public sector.

During the weeks that followed the tragedy, the City Council's approach to fire safety has been tested, as has the emergency response arrangements; at one point the Senior Management Team, the Emergency Response Centre and a Rest Centre was activated to consider the potential evacuation of two tower blocks that have ACM cladding systems. Whilst that proved unnecessary, the council's Emergency Response Plan was activated and its associated procedures put in place, including engaging in a multi-agency teleconference with the Local Resilience Forum, to ensure partner agencies were informed and prepared should the situation have changed.

The investigations at Grenfell Tower are not complete and undoubtedly there will continue to be learning that all landlords can take from the tragedy.

We will continue to build on our current working arrangements to enhance and improve them and our partnership arrangements are well positioned to respond.

### **Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services**

A coherent fire safety approach relies on three key elements:

1. The landlords measures to ensure the
  - a. property meets the required standards for fire safety
  - b. the work with their tenants/occupiers to ensure they understand their responsibilities in how they use the property and understand the approach to dealing with fires
2. The occupiers responsibilities for their own safety and use of the property
3. The Fire services ability to respond to the fire quickly and with the right equipment

All are underpinned with the strong partnership approach between the key services and agencies.

Whilst it is for the HFRS to understand the levels of resourcing and equipment they need to provide an effective response in the City to any incident of fire, our fire safety approach for the local authority high rise blocks (and particularly the stay put policy) depends on their ability to respond quickly and with the right equipment.

Appendix A

List of the 40 High Rise Blocks of Flats

<b>Number of Storeys</b>	<b>Block Name</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>CROWN COURT (1-24)</b> <b>CROWN COURT (41-58)</b> <b>HAWTHORN CRESCENT (475-545 ODDS)</b> <b>KING ALBERT COURT (1-30)</b> <b>LORDS COURT (1-18)</b> <b>PERTH HOUSE (1-34)</b> <b>ROSLYN HOUSE (1-54)</b> <b>WESTMINSTER PLACE (1-78)</b> <b>WIMPOLE COURT (25-42)</b> <b>ILLUSTRIOUS HOUSE (1-16)</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>BLACKWOOD HOUSE (1-26)</b> <b>ESTELLA ROAD (BLOCK E 1-35)</b> <b>ESTELLA ROAD (BLOCK F 36-63)</b> <b>ESTELLA ROAD (BLOCK G 64-105)</b> <b>ESTELLA ROAD (BLOCK H 106-133)</b> <b>ESTELLA ROAD (BLOCK I 134-161)</b> <b>ESTELLA ROAD (BLOCK J 162-189)</b>

**GRAFTON STREET (BLOCK A 2-70  
EVENS)**

**GRAFTON STREET (BLOCK B 72-  
126 EVENS)**

**GRAFTON STREET (BLOCK C 128-  
182 EVENS)**

**GRAFTON STREET (BLOCK D 184-  
238 EVENS)**

**GROSVENOR HOUSE (1-54)**

**WINGFIELD STREET (1-71 ODDS)**

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**8 BRISBANE HOUSE (1-30)**

**DARWIN HOUSE (1-45)**

**GRENVILLE HOUSE (1-30)**

**OMEGA HOUSE (1-80)**

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**11 WILMCOTE HOUSE (1-113)**

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**12 COPPERFIELD HOUSE (1-88)**

**PICKWICK HOUSE (1-88)**

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**18 BARKIS HOUSE (1-136)**

**EDGBASTON HOUSE (1-136)**

**HANDSWORTH HOUSE (1-153)**

**HORATIA HOUSE (1-136)**

**LEAMINGTON HOUSE (1-136)**

**NICKLEBY HOUSE (1-136)**

**TIPTON HOUSE (1-136)**

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**20 MILL GATE HOUSE (1-76)**

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**21 SARAH ROBINSON HOUSE (1-120)**

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**24 LADYWOOD HOUSE (1-136)**