

**COUNCIL REPORT**

**6<sup>th</sup> September 2017**

**Response to Grenfell Tower incident**

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1 The purpose of this report is to update Council on the actions that are being taken in response to the Grenfell Tower incident in Kensington and Chelsea on the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017. This report represents the start of a process and further updates will be brought before Council as appropriate

**THE RESPONSE**

- 2 Council will recall that on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017 fire destroyed the Grenfell Tower residential high rise block killing at least 80 people. The scale of the incident and the nature of the tragedy has called into question the nature of and manner in which the building was clad, failings in the fire safety of the building, and the Council's response into the aftermath of the incident. As a consequence of the events an independent public inquiry has been organised to seek the answers to a number of the questions raised.
3. At its meeting of 28th June 2017 the Council agreed to establish a Fire Safety Task and Finish Group, the purpose of which was to scrutinise the collective response in Middlesbrough to the incident. The group comprised of members and officers from Middlesbrough Council, and representatives from Cleveland Fire Brigade, Thirteen Group, and Coast and Country. The group met for its first meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

**Actions taken by the Council and its partners in response to the incident**

4. As part of the work to date the following actions have been completed.

The Cleveland Fire Service has:

- provided public re-assurance regarding fire safety in purpose built flats – through local media and dealing with requests for advice;
- reinforced information on websites, social media platforms, FAQ, leaflet drops;
- worked in partnership with Housing Authority/Associations and Providers to deal with all aspects of the situation;

- site specific information has been updated by operational crews who have also conducted familiarity visits;
  - operational plans and business continuity arrangements have been reviewed
  - provided support in undertaking assessments and testing of cladding; and
  - carried out visits to purpose built high rise flats, on a risk based approach that have included
    - providing offers of general home safety checks for occupants;
    - carrying out additional operational familiarisation visits for local fire fighters; and
    - considering the need for new fire safety inspections or assurance of those recently carried out.
5. Thirteen have confirmed that they have inspected all relevant premises in Middlesbrough, including conducting an appraisal on fire alarm systems. None of their buildings in Middlesbrough are fitted with the cladding materials used on Grenfell Tower. In addition the use of sprinkler/suppression systems is being explored. A report is to be taken before the Board of the Thirteen Group to consider the options available. Thirteen have also been visiting tenants within their high rise buildings and providing fire safety information and answering any concerns from residents. All fire risk assessments are in place for the high rise buildings, assessments are carried out on an annual basis. Concierge teams undertake daily floor checks and report any fire safety related defects as priority.
6. As part of the risk assessment undertaken by the Council in response to the incident it is also proposed to review the Homelessness Strategy to address/consider how mass homelessness will be addressed following such an incident.

### **Actions to be undertaken arising out of the Task and Finish Group**

7. Actions to date have largely focused on high rise residential tower blocks. Middlesbrough does have a number of other tall structures within the town, and the safety of the occupiers and users of these buildings is of equal importance to the Council. As part of this officers of the Council have been undertaking a review of all buildings in Middlesbrough over four stories, regardless of their use. Once all such buildings have been identified the intention is to then seek to establish for each:
- external materials
  - use
  - owner; and
  - date(including review date) of fire risk assessment.
8. Part of independent inquiry into the Grenfell Tower incident is to examine the Council response in the recovery stage following the incident. The Emergency Management Response Team is also to consider how best to prepare for dealing

with the aftermath of such an incident. It is proposed that this be the focus of a future emergency training event.

9. The group will continue to monitor and assess the situation and further guidance and outputs from the Government to assess the implications of these for Middlesbrough, and propose an appropriate response as necessary.

### **External wall insulation on terraced houses**

10. In addition to the above actions a number of enquiries have been received, by all parties, from residents concerned about the safety of the external wall insulation that has been applied to a number of older terraced properties to make them more energy efficient. Members will recall that a significant number of properties particularly within the Gresham, North Ormesby and University areas of the town had such treatment applied to them.
11. The Council has assurances from two of the schemes involved Go Warm, and British Gas that the system and products are safe and represents a low fire risk. This has been confirmed by Cleveland Fire Service. Regardless of this where residents are concerned about risks officers from the Council will discuss these concerns with them and seek to address and resolve any issues.

### **AUTHOR**

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