

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	CSC/21/5
MEETING	COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	2 NOVEMBER 2021
SUBJECT OF REPORT	PROGRESS REGARDING OUTCOMES FROM THE GRENFELL TOWER FIRE INQUIRY
LEAD OFFICER	ACFO PETER BOND, DIRECTOR OF SERVICE DELIVERY
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This report will assist the Committee to understand the actions the Service has taken to respond to recommendations and legislation change following the Grenfell Tower Fire in 2017.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	N/A
EQUALITY RISKS AND BENEFITS ANALYSIS	N/A
APPENDICES	Appendix A – Recommendations Grenfell Tower Inquiry Appendix B – Service Progress against recommendations of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry
BACKGROUND PAPERS	N/A

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This report will assist the Community Safety Committee (CSC) to understand the actions of the Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service (“the Service”) following the Grenfell Tower fire on 14th June 2017 and the progress to date against the recommendations of the subsequent inquiry to ensure the safety of residents who live in high rise blocks of flats.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. In the early hours of Wednesday 14 June 2017, London Fire Brigade responded to a fire in flat 16 Grenfell Tower, a high rise residential building in North Kensington, West London.
- 2.2. It is not unusual even within Devon and Somerset, for fire services to be called to a flat fire in a high rise building. This call initially was not out of the ordinary.
- 2.3. High rise residential buildings are designed to contain fire within the confines of the flat where the fire originates. In the case of Grenfell Tower, multiple failures of fire safety precautions occurred. The most catastrophic being the addition of a cladding system on the outside of the building consisting of aluminium composite material. The material for the insulation within the cladding was highly flammable.
- 2.4. The fire in flat 16 was extinguished, however the fire had already spread into the cladding and was rapidly spreading on the outside of the building. Within 20 minutes the fire had reached the top floor and continued to spread around the rest of the building, the spread within the building was accelerated by other fire safety deficiencies, ultimately claiming the lives of 72 people.

3. RESPONSE BY GOVERNMENT FOLLOWING THE GRENFELL TOWER FIRE

- 3.1. Following the fire, the Government instigated a number of inquiries and reviews. The independent expert advisory panel, chaired by Sir Ken Knight, was formed to advise the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on immediate measures needed to ensure building safety and to help identify buildings of concern and other building safety issues.

4. IMMEDIATE ACTIONS BY THE SERVICE FOLLOWING THE GRENFELL TOWER FIRE

- 4.1. The Service undertook a survey of all buildings of 6 floors and above to identify if cladding was present and to carry out a Fire Safety Audit if any issues were identified reporting back to Government the results.
- 4.2. Three residential towers within Plymouth were identified with flammable Aluminium Composite Material cladding that didn't adequately resist the spread of fire to the standard required by Building Regulations.

- 4.3. Additional measures required by the Department for Communities and Local Government were put in place by the landlord to ensure the safety of the residents and the Service increased its pre-determined attendance to these buildings.
- 4.4. The remediation work for these towers is now complete.
- 4.5. Further surveys were carried out of Schools and health care buildings to identify cladding as required by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

5. INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF BUILDING REGULATIONS AND FIRE SAFETY

- 5.1. The Government commissioned an independent review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety by Dame Judith Hackett. This review made recommendations for a sufficiently robust regulatory system for the future in order that residents would feel the buildings they live in are safe. The report was published in 2018 with a Government response in April 2020 which set out the Government plan for bringing the biggest change to building safety for a generation.

6. FIRE SAFETY LEGISLATION – THE FIRE SAFETY ACT 2021 AND THE FIRE SAFETY BILL

- 6.1. The Fire Safety Act 2021 came into existence in April 2021. This amends the existing Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 with the intention of improving fire safety in multi occupancy domestic premises. Crucially the external walls of a building and the fire doors to individual flats must now form part of the requirements for a fire risk assessment. This requirement is not dependent upon the height of the building.
- 6.2. Further legislation is planned in the form of the Building Safety Bill and is expected to be enacted by 2023. It will provide greater accountability and responsibility for fire and structural safety issues throughout the lifetime of a building with a stricter regulatory regime specific for high rise buildings. In general terms these are buildings of 18 metres (approximately 6 floors or more).
- 6.3. There will be a new building safety regulator to oversee a more stringent regime during the planning, design, construction and occupancy stages. These stages will have gateways or 'check points' where evidence will be required that the relevant standard has been met before passing to the next stage, for example from planning to design and then construction.
- 6.4. Other parts of the Bill will include the ability for residents to be able to raise building safety concerns directly with the owners and building safety managers of buildings and if not listened to they can raise concerns with the Building Safety Regulator.

7. AMENDMENT TO APPROVED DOCUMENT B (FIRE SAFETY) VOL.1 2019

- 7.1. This amendment requires a significant change for all new blocks of flats above 11 metres to now be fitted with a sprinkler system.

8. BUILDING RISK REVIEW

- 8.1. The Building Risk Review programme is a national effort led by the Government to make high rise residential buildings safer. The first phase of the programme focused on identifying those buildings with Aluminium Composite Material as described above.
- 8.2. The second phase which began in October 2020 involves the inspection of all high rise residential buildings identified by Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government that are over 18 metres high or have six or more storeys. The target is to inspect all buildings that fit the criteria by the end of December 2021. Other relevant buildings not included in the list will be inspected as part of the Risk Based Inspection Programme.
- 8.3. The Government provided fire and rescue services with a grant to resource specialist teams to undertake this work. Devon and Somerset received £60,000.
- 8.4. The Building Risk Review team within Devon and Somerset Fire Service is made up of experienced fire safety inspectors. Devon and Somerset initially had 87 buildings in scope but have identified a further 5 high risk buildings taking the total to 92. The team are on track to complete before the end of year deadline with 84 Buildings having currently been inspected. The remaining 8 are booked for inspections before the end of the year. Within the Service area we have identified a total of 163 buildings of 6 floors or more and will continue to inspect these beyond the Building Risk Review Programme.
- 8.5. The remediation work from the inspections will continue until complete and it is likely that we will see enforcement action taken with some buildings that are not compliant.
- 8.6. The Service, in addition to the requirements of the Building Risk Review, has taken the opportunity to provide risk information to our firefighters as well as prevention activity within these premises to the residents.

9. ADDITIONAL GRANT FUNDING FOR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

- 9.1. Fire and Rescue Services have received additional uplift grants to bolster Fire Protection teams to ensure they have the resource required to carry out quality inspections. The expectation is that fire services will resource these teams in the long term to carry out risk based inspection programmes and statutory fire safety work.
- 9.2. The grant for Devon and Somerset to date is £600,419. Further funding (£20,917) has been provided to support the accreditation of fire safety inspectors and a new competency framework is in place to ensure that fire safety inspectors have the skills required to carry out their duties.

- 9.3. The uplift funding has supported an increase of ten fire safety officers which will allow the Service to deliver its new Risk Based Inspection Programme targeting the highest risks within the two counties and align to the Fire Standard for Protection ensuring quality assurance and evaluation as well as improved business compliance education and equality of access to services.

10. GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

- 10.1. The Government commissioned an Inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire by the Rt. Hon Sir Martin Moore-Brick which was published in October 2019. The Inquiry was critical of the London Fire Brigade response to the fire and made crucial recommendations which are now being implemented across Fire and Rescue Services. (See appendix A for recommendations).
- 10.2. In order to support Fire and Rescue Services the Government provided an infrastructure grant to achieve the changes required to meet the recommendations set out by Sir Martin Moore-Brick. The Service received £138,216 Infrastructure fund. This fund so far has paid for escape hoods to be provided on every fire appliance within the Service. These escape hoods have already been used on numerous occasions to aid the escape from smoke filled environments reducing injuries to those being rescued. The grant is also being used to complete the Operational Risk Inspection of high rise residential buildings to ensure operational firefighters have the information required to tackle fires safely during incidents.
- 10.3. The Service has in place a Programme Board to oversee the progress against the recommendations from the inquiry. The individuals responsible for implementing the recommendations meet once a month with the Group Manager responsible for Operational Risk to update the tracker. The Programme Board consisting of the Director of Service Delivery and the Area Manager for Community Risk Management who meet once a quarter to ensure support is available for any issues that are blocking progress.
- 10.4. Progress against the recommendations is available in appendix B.

11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1. A substantial effort in terms of resource, time and dedication has been directed at high rise residential blocks of flats following the Grenfell Tower fire. The Service are adapting policies, procedures and guidance in line with legislative changes and recommendations from the Grenfell Tower inquiry. This work is ongoing and as a result we are making significant progress in addressing the fire safety concerns of residents throughout the two counties as well as improving our internal procedures and ensuring we are compliant with the latest legislation relating to high rise residential buildings.

ACFO PETE BOND
Director of Service Delivery

APPENDIX A TO REPORT CSC/21/5

Recommendations made by Sir Martin Moore-Brick in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry:-

- a) The information made available to fire and rescue services about the materials and methods of construction used in the external walls of high rise residential buildings.
- b) The arrangements made under section 7 (2) (d) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Namely risk inspections of buildings by operational crews to familiarise themselves with the layout, risks and features.
- c) The availability of plans of high rise residential buildings to local fire and rescue services and the provision of premises information boxes in high rise residential buildings.
- d) The regular testing and inspection of lifts designed for use by firefighters.
- e) Communication between the Fire Service control room and the Incident Commander at the incident.
- f) The way in which fire and rescue services handle calls.
- g) The procedures to control resources, in particular the capture of information from crews returning from deployments and the sharing of information between the control room, the incident commander and the forward control point within the building.
- h) The Communications equipment available for use by crews deployed in firefighting and rescue operations in high rise buildings.
- i) The means to evacuate high rise residential buildings, including the provision of equipment enabling firefighters to send an evacuation signal to the whole or selected part of the building.
- j) The provision of fire safety information to residents at high rise buildings and the marking of floor levels in lobbies and staircase landings.
- k) The inspection of fire doors and self-closing devices.
- l) Aspects of co-operation between emergency services.

APPENDIX B TO REPORT CSC/21/5

Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service progress against relevant recommendations in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Report.

33.10 Recommendation:-

That all fire and rescue services ensure that their personnel at all levels understand the risk of fire taking hold in the external walls of high-rise buildings and know how to recognise it when it occurs.

Response: On track. Training video delivered across Service. Quality assurance to take place to ensure fully embedded. Completion by: 31/3/2022.

33.11 Recommendation:-

That the Fire Services review, and revise as appropriate, guidance on carrying out Risk Inspections to gather information and that training is provided for Crew Manager and above to carry out risk inspections of high rise buildings.

Response: On Track. Operational Risk Inspection policy and guidance up to date. Current inspectors trained. Training package for Crew Manager and above in development. Completion date by 31/12/2021.

33.12 Recommendation:-

That the owner and manager of every high-rise residential building be required by law to provide their local fire and rescue services with up-to-date plans in both paper and electronic form of every floor of the building identifying the location of key fire safety systems.

And,

That all fire and rescue services be equipped to receive and store electronic plans and to make them available to incident commanders and control room managers.

Response: On Track. Information and Plans are collected, stored electronically and made available to crews and the Control Room for all High Rise Buildings.

33.13 Recommendation:-

That the owner and manager of every high-rise residential building be required by law to carry out regular inspections of any lifts that are designed to be used by firefighters in an emergency and to report the results of such inspections to their local fire and rescue service at monthly intervals.

And,

That the owner and manager of every high-rise residential building be required by law to carry out regular tests of the mechanism which allows firefighters to take control of the lifts and to inform their local fire and rescue service at monthly intervals that they have done so.

Response: On Track. Legislation does not currently require this of owners and managers. The Service currently provide advice and guidance regarding the Fire Safety Order whilst recognising the role of the responsible person within legislative requirements.

33.14 Recommendation:-

That Fire and Rescue Services review policies on communications between the control room and the Incident commander;

That all officers who may be expected to act as incident commanders (i.e. all those above The rank of Crew Manager) receive training directed to the specific requirements of communication with the control room;

That all Control Room Operators of Assistant Operations Manager rank (Or equivalent) and above receive training directed to the specific requirements of communication with the incident commander;

That a dedicated communication link be provided between the senior officer in the Control room and the incident commander.

Response: On Track. The review of the policy is complete and the revised policy, procedure and aide memoires have been communicated and published, appliance Mobile Data Terminals, and Flexi –Duty Officers tablets. Training packages available and being prioritised by the Academy for e-learning. Airwave radio provided to Incident commanders with ability to communicate with the Control Room. Completion Date: 31/12/2021.

33.15 Recommendation:-

- a) That the Services policies be amended to draw a clearer distinction between callers seeking advice and callers who believe they are trapped and need rescuing;

Response: Complete. Policy updated.

- b) That the Service provide regular and more effective refresher training to Control Room Operators at all levels, including supervisors;

Response: Complete. Training in place for all Control room operators and supervisors managed by the Control room partnership and recorded internally (Moodle system). Internal Maintenance of skill packages all in place.

- c) That all fire and rescue services develop policies for handling a large number of Fire Survival Guidance calls simultaneously;

Response: On track. Policies and training in place with the Control room partnership. In trim solution being developed to transfer information from the control room to the incident. Completion date: 31/3/2022.

- d) That electronic systems be developed to record Fire Survival Guidance information in the control room and display it simultaneously at the bridgehead and in any command units;

Response: On track. London Fire Survival Application being developed. Interim solution being developed with partners in Dorset and Wiltshire and Hampshire as part of the Network Fire Control Partnership. Completion date: Interim solution by 31/3/2022.

- e) That policies be developed for managing a transition from “stay put” to “get out”;

Response: Complete. Immediate building evacuation policy and training complete within Control and guidance produced for operational crews, currently being progressed for roll out. Completion date: By 31/3/2022.

- f) That control room staff receive training directed specifically to handling such a change of advice and conveying it effectively to callers.

Response: On track. An interim solution is in place whilst the long term technical solution is sourced. Control staff have trained and undertaken an exercise with the Control Partnership for a change from ‘stay put’ to ‘get out’.

33.16 Recommendation:-

That steps be taken to investigate methods by which assisting control-rooms can obtain access to the information available to the host control room.

Response: On track. The long term solution would use Multi Agency Incident Transfer technology. However in the short term the use of National Talk Groups between control-rooms.

33.17 Recommendation:-

That the Ambulance Service, Police Force review their protocols and policies to ensure that their operators can identify Fire Survival Guidance calls (as defined by the London Fire Brigade) and pass them to the Fire Service as soon as possible.

Response: Complete. There are dedicated telephone lines between Control rooms and also dedicated Talk Groups for inter-agency communication.

33.18 Recommendations:-

That Services develop policies and training to ensure better control of deployments and the use of resources;

And,

That Services develop policies and training to ensure that better information is obtained from crews returning from deployments and that the information is recorded in a form that enables it to be made available immediately to the incident commander (and thereafter to the command units and the control room).

Response: On track. The Service has a Command and Control system with the ability to pass and record information between crews, the Incident Commander, Command Units and the Control Room. Crews returning from deployments are able to brief and record information. Review of Command support fleet replacement will allow a technical solution through Command software. Completion date: 04/2023.

33.19 Recommendation:-

That Services develop a communication system to enable, direct communication between the control room and the incident commander and improve the means of communication between the incident commander and the bridgehead.

Response: Complete. The Service has communications in place using the current Incident Command system.

33.20 Recommendation:-

That services investigate the use of modern communication techniques to provide a direct line of communication between the control room and the bridgehead, allowing information to be transmitted directly between the control room and the bridgehead and providing an integrated system of recording Fire Survival Guidance information and the results of deployments.

Response: On track: The Service has communications in place using the current Incident Command System and is developing interim Fire Survival guidance procedures with our Network Fire Control Partners. Further development of the Fire Survival Guidance Application being developed by London Fire Brigade and the Incident Command Software as part of the Incident Command project will enable an electronic solution. Interim solution completion date: 31/12/21. Technical Solutions Completion date: 04/2023.

33.21 Recommendation:-

That Services urgently take steps to obtain equipment that enables firefighters wearing helmets and breathing apparatus to communicate with the bridgehead effectively, including when operating in high-rise buildings;

And,

That urgent steps be taken to ensure that the command support system is fully operative on all command units and that crews are trained in its use.

Response: Complete. The Service has Breathing Apparatus communications and a Command support system in place with training and maintenance of skills.

33.22 Recommendation:-

- a) That the government develop national guidelines for carrying out partial or total evacuations of high-rise residential buildings, such guidelines to include the means of protecting fire exit routes and procedures for evacuating persons who are unable to use the stairs in an emergency, or who may require assistance (such as disabled people, older people and young children);

Response: On track. Guidance being developed.

- b) That fire and rescue services develop policies for partial and total evacuation of high-rise residential buildings and training to support them;

Response: On track. The current high rise policy allows for the evacuation of High Rise Buildings. The Network Fire Control Partnership has developed new high rise procedures in line with National Operational Guidance which will be introduced across the Service with training packages and exercise plans to embed the new procedures.

- c) That the owner and manager of every high-rise residential building be required by law to draw up and keep under regular review evacuation plans, copies of which are to be provided in electronic and paper form to their local fire and rescue service and placed in an information box on the premises;

Response: On track. Dependent upon legislation. This was not addressed under the Fire Safety Act. Now awaiting the contents of the Building Safety Bill due in March 2022. The Building Risk Review Team continue to promote the potential impacts to Responsible persons but currently not enforceable. Plans are acquired during an Operational Risk visit which is available to crews electronically.

- d) That all high-rise residential buildings (both those already in existence and those built in the future) be equipped with facilities for use by the fire and rescue services enabling them to send an evacuation signal to the whole or a selected part of the building by means of sounders or similar devices;

- e) **Response:** On track. Dependent upon legislation. This was not addressed under the Fire Safety Act. Now awaiting the contents of the Building Safety Bill due in March 2022. Advice given by Building Risk Review Teams to responsible persons.

- f) That the owner and manager of every high-rise residential building be required by law to prepare personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) for all residents whose ability to self-evacuate may be compromised (such as persons with reduced mobility or cognition);

- g) **Response:** On track. Dependent upon legislation. This was not addressed under the Fire Safety Act. Now awaiting the contents of the Building Safety Bill due in March 2022. Advice given by Building Risk Review Teams to responsible persons.

- h) That the owner and manager of every high-rise residential building be required by law to include up-to-date information about persons with reduced mobility and their associated Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans in the premises information box;

Response: On track. Dependent upon legislation. This was not addressed under the Fire Safety Act. Now awaiting the contents of the Building Safety Bill due in March 2022. Advice given by Building Risk Review Teams to responsible persons.

- i) That all fire and rescue services be equipped with smoke hoods to assist in the evacuation of occupants through smoke-filled exit routes.

Response: Complete. The Service has escape hoods on all front line appliances and a tactical plan for high rise residential buildings.

33.27 Recommendation:-

That in all high rise buildings floor numbers be clearly marked on each landing within the stairways and in a prominent place in all lobbies in such a way as to be visible both in normal conditions and in low lighting or smoky conditions.

Response: On track. This is in place for new buildings under the requirements of approved Document B. However there is currently no legislation in place for retrospectively requiring the markings. The Building Risk Review Team advice landlords and managers of high rise residential buildings. The Building Safety Bill due in March 2022 may address this.

33.28 Recommendation:-

That the owner and manager of every residential building containing separate dwellings (whether or not it is a high-rise building) be required by law to provide fire safety instructions (including instructions for evacuation) in a form that the occupants of the building can reasonably be expected to understand, taking into account the nature of the building and their knowledge of the occupants.

Response: Not currently in legislation.

33.29 Recommendation:-

That the owner and manager of every residential building containing separate dwellings (whether or not they are high-rise buildings) carry out an urgent inspection of all fire doors to ensure that they comply with applicable legislative standards;

And,

That the owner and manager of every residential building containing separate dwellings (whether or not they are high-rise buildings) be required by law to carry out checks at not less than three-monthly intervals to ensure that all fire doors are fitted with effective self-closing devices in working order.

Response: On track. There is a requirement under the new Fire Safety Act 2021 that fire doors on means of escape form part of the risk assessment. Further clarity is expected within the Fire Safety Bill.

33.30 Recommendation:-

That all those who have responsibility in whatever capacity for the condition of the entrance doors to individual flats in high-rise residential buildings, whose external walls incorporate unsafe cladding, be required by law to ensure that such doors comply with current standards.

Response: On track. There is a requirement under the new Fire Safety Act 2021 that fire doors on means of escape form part of the risk assessment. Further clarity is expected within the Fire Safety Bill.

33.31 Recommendation:-

That the Joint Doctrine be amended to make it clear:

- a) That each emergency service must communicate the declaration of a Major Incident to all other Category 1 Responders as soon as possible;
- b) That on the declaration of a Major Incident clear lines of communication must be established as soon as possible between the control rooms of the individual emergency services;
- c) That a single point of contact should be designated within each control room to facilitate such communication;
- d) That a "METHANE" message should be sent as soon as possible by the emergency service declaring a Major Incident. METHANE stands for: Major Incident; Exact Location; Type of Incident; Hazards present or suspected; Access routes that are safe to use; Number, type, and severity of casualties; Emergency Services present or required.

Response: Complete.

33.32 Recommendation:-

That steps be taken to investigate the compatibility of the Fire Service systems with those of the Police and the Ambulance Service with a view to enabling all three emergency services' systems to read each other's messages.

Response: This will require a technical solution through Multi Agency Incident Transfer software.

33.33 Recommendation:-

That steps be taken to ensure that the airborne datalink system on every National Police Air Service helicopter observing an incident which involves one of the other emergency services defaults to the National Emergency Service user encryption.

Response: Technical solution currently not available. The Service continues to explore options with the Police.

33.34 Recommendation:-

That the Fire Service, the Police, the Ambulance Service and the London local authorities all investigate ways of improving the collection of information about survivors and making it available more rapidly to those wishing to make contact with them.

Response: The plans sit with the Local Resilience Forum accessed through Resilience Direct and are managed by the Police. Officers receive Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme training (JESIP) and Local authority provide mass casualty centres. The Local Resilience Forum provides exercises for Major Incident Training.