

SUBJECT: FIRE SAFETY UPDATE

DIRECTORATE: HOUSING AND INVESTMENT

REPORT AUTHOR: MARTIN KERRIGAN (FIRE SAFETY ASSURANCE MANAGER)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Performance Scrutiny Committee on City of Lincoln Council's (CoLC's) current position regarding Fire Safety to the Housing stock including High Rise Tower Blocks, Supported Housing Schemes and Low Risk blocks only.

2. Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP) Consultation

- 2.1 The Safety Assurance Team have been working on the quarterly return for the Regulator of Social Housing (ROSH) and collating other data for ROSH, along with ensuring to accommodate Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue with the recent fire safety audits.

LTP have been consulted (sent the report) and any comments received will be presented in the Performance Scrutiny Committee meeting.

3. Background

- 3.1 The main legislation in terms of fire in England is 'The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005', that puts a duty on the responsible person to undertake fire risk assessments and to ensure general fire precautions are undertaken.
- 3.2 In addition, following the fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017 various new pieces of legislation came into force including 'The Fire Safety Act 2021', 'The Fire Safety (England) Regulation 2022' and 'The Building Safety Act 2022', with additional requirements for the responsible person (COLC) to undertake regarding fire safety.

4. Progress to Compliance

- 4.1 The position of Technical Officer (Fire Safety) within the Safety Assurance team is still vacant after numerous unsuccessful attempts at recruiting to the post. However, from January 2025, the existing Technical Support Officer will be acting up into the role for 12 months. Expressions of interest amongst the Housing Repair Service (HRS) workforce have also been sent out to see if additional training in both Asbestos and Fire would provide further resilience within the area.

The vacated Technical Officer Support post is currently being advertised for a 12-month fixed term contract.

- 4.2 A fire risk assessor was previously engaged to undertake Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) of low-rise (general needs) properties to reduce the backlog of premises

with no FRA. This piece of work is now complete, and all the Housing stock (High Rise, Supported Housing Schemes and Low-Rise blocks) have a current FRA.

- 4.3 The table below shows an update of the current position regarding the Fire Risk Assessments.

Percentage with current FRA	
1. Tower Blocks	100.0
Sheltered Housing Schemes	
Percentage with current FRA	
2. Supported/ Sheltered Housing Schemes	100.0
Low Rise Blocks	
Area	Percentage with current FRA
3. Ermine East	100.0
4. Ermine West	100.0
5. St Giles	100.0
6. Burton Road and Newport	100.0
7. City Centre	100.0
8. Tower and Stamp End	100.0
9. Birchwood	100.0
10. Hartsholme	100.0
11. Boultham	100.0
12. Bracebridge	100.0
Total Low Rise	100.0%

- 4.4 Actions from the FRA are currently being monitored in a monthly meeting and actioned as appropriate.
- 4.5 All three tower blocks were registered with the building safety regulator prior to the deadline date for registering existing occupied higher-risk buildings which was 30/09/2023.
- 4.6 The work to produce the building safety case report is in progress with the report for Trent View in the final stages, and the reports for the other two high rise blocks planned to be completed by the end of the year.

The Building Safety Regulator (BSR) can call for the Building Safety Case Reports any time from 01 April 2024 at which point the Council will then have 28 days to submit the report.

No contact has been received from the BSR to date.

- 4.7 Fire Safety Audits by Lincolnshire Fire and Rescue were completed in November 2024 at the three high rise tower blocks. The outcome was positive, and they were all found to be broadly compliant.

The observations made by the Fire Service are being picked up by the Safety Assurance Team and will be monitored in the monthly meetings where the FRA actions are monitored.

- 4.8 Fire Safety Roadshows were completed in April 2024 at the three high rise blocks in order to engage with residents giving them fire safety information and to listen to any of concerns raised. Further Fire Safety Roadshows will be scheduled for 2025.
- 4.9 Fire Safety Audits were completed by the Safety Assurance Team across the Supported Housing schemes between August and October 2024. They were broadly compliant with reassurance that the building checks such as weekly fire alarm testing are being carried out and recorded by the on-site RO's and ROSS's within the Supported Housing Team.

The observations and action plan are being picked up by the Safety Assurance Team and will be monitored in the monthly meetings where the FRA actions are monitored.

- 4.10 The DHI Compliance report was completed and presented to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee in August 2024, this gave an update as to the COLC's position regarding building safety compliance in housing, the compliance report is going to be repeated for future/ ongoing performance monitoring.
- 4.11 Inspection of fire doors continues to ensure compliance with the Fire Safety (England) Regulations. From the regulations there is a requirement for the communal fire doors within the high-rise blocks to be inspected on a quarterly basis and flat front doors to be inspected on an annual basis by best endeavours. The inspections are being undertaken with communal doors next due for inspection in November 2024 and flat front doors next planned to be inspected in February 2025 with letters being sent out to residents for access.

Inspections are being undertaken at the supported housing schemes with quarterly inspections of the communal fire doors however no flat front doors have been inspected as part of the programme in 2024, these have been planned in to be inspected in February 2025 with the high rise flat front doors.

Inspections of the low-rise communal fire doors have commenced; however, high rise and supported housing schemes have continued to take a higher priority, and progress is slower than expected.

- 4.12 As part of the resident engagement strategy a subgroup to the LTP has been created to form a fire safety/ building safety group. The group meets regularly, and a representative attended the fire safety audits to one of the supported housing schemes. More recently the group reviewed and inputted their comments to some fire safety information that is planned to be sent out to the tenants within the next few months.

5. Strategic Priorities

5.1 Let's deliver quality housing

The programme to undertake Fire Risk Assessment to all properties as necessary is ongoing and although the properties without a Fire Risk Assessment is currently at zero this is to be monitored moving forward and any FRA's to be reviewed/undertaken as and when required.

Simplify the recording and monitoring of actions arising from the fire risk assessment process.

6. Organisational Impacts

6.1 Finance

Existing budgets are already in place for all planned preventative maintenance and statutory testing including any repairs arising.

Any remedial works or improvement works to be costed as and when identified, with costs being funded from existing resources within existing revenue budgets or the capital programme.

6.2 Legal Implications including Procurement Rules

Any works or agency appointment to be made in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

6.3 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

The Public Sector Equality Duty means that the Council must consider all individuals when carrying out their day-to-day work, in shaping policy, delivering services and in relation to their own employees.

It requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

6.4 Human Resources

COLC policies and procedures to be followed in relation to staffing and recruitment etc.

6.5 Land, Property and Accommodation

None.

6.6 Significant Community Impact &/or Environmental Impact

None.

6.7 Corporate Health and Safety implications

None.

7. Risk Implications

7.1 None compliance with legislation.

8. Recommendation

8.1 Members are asked to note the update on fire safety arrangements in the Council's Housing stock.

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules (call-in and urgency) apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? None.

List of Background Papers: None.

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