

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

12 JULY 2017

**REPORT OF PLACE
SELECT COMMITTEE**

CABINET DECISION

Lead Cabinet Member – Regeneration and Housing – Councillor Nigel Cooke

**SCRUTINY REVIEW OF FIRE SAFETY OF HIGH RISE RESIDENTIAL BUILDINGS
(TASK & FINISH)**

1. Summary

The attached report presents the outcomes of the Place Select Committee's task and finish review of Fire Safety of High Rise Residential Buildings.

2. Recommendations

- 1) Ensure the Committee receives further updates from key partner agencies around the stated ongoing investigations of high rise residential buildings across the Borough.
- 2) Committee recommends to Cabinet that the Government is strongly lobbied to improve and strengthen building control mechanisms in relation to fire safety.
- 3) All key partner agencies to consider the outcomes from Thirteen Group's commissioned independent inquiry around the presence of Class 3 combustible cladding at Kennedy Gardens, and act where necessary.
- 4) Landlords to ensure the maintenance and upkeep of fire risk assessments, including that the building itself meets fire risk assessment standards, and that the responsibility of tenants in maintaining robust fire safety measures and timely reporting of any areas of concern to their landlord is reinforced.
- 5) Committee recommends the installation of sprinkler/misting systems in all high rise residential buildings across Stockton-on-Tees.
- 6) The Council writes to all landlords of high rise residential buildings in Stockton-on-Tees to ensure compliance with fire regulations, which takes into account vulnerable occupants, information on which is regularly updated.
- 7) Consideration to be given by all key partner agencies on the outcomes from the Government's public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower, or any related, fire once available.

3. Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

The report presents the findings of the scrutiny review that took place following the urgent initiation of a task and finish group in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire in North Kensington, West London, on the 14th June 2017.

4. Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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SUMMARY

The attached report presents the outcomes of the Place Select Committee's task and finish review of Fire Safety of High Rise Residential Buildings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) Ensure the Committee receives further updates from key partner agencies around the stated ongoing investigations of high rise residential buildings across the Borough.
- 2) Committee recommends to Cabinet that the Government is strongly lobbied to improve and strengthen building control mechanisms in relation to fire safety.
- 3) All key partner agencies to consider the outcomes from Thirteen Group's commissioned independent inquiry around the presence of Class 3 combustible cladding at Kennedy Gardens, and act where necessary.
- 4) Landlords to ensure the maintenance and upkeep of fire risk assessments, including that the building itself meets fire risk assessment standards, and that the responsibility of tenants in maintaining robust fire safety measures and timely reporting of any areas of concern to their landlord is reinforced.
- 5) Committee recommends the installation of sprinkler/misting systems in all high rise residential buildings across Stockton-on-Tees.
- 6) The Council writes to all landlords of high rise residential buildings in Stockton-on-Tees to ensure compliance with fire regulations, which takes into account vulnerable occupants, information on which is regularly updated.
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DETAIL

1. On the 14th June 2017, a major fire broke out at Grenfell Tower, a 24-storey 220-foot (70-metre) high tower block of public housing flats in North Kensington, west London, resulting in a high number of casualties and severe damage to the building. The cause of the fire is

suspected to be a faulty fridge-freezer in a fourth floor flat, and the speed at which the fire spread is believed to have been aided by the buildings recently added exterior cladding (part of a 2016 refurbishment).

2. The scale of this tragedy has led the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to request that fire safety checks are urgently carried out on all tower blocks, and for Local Authorities and Housing Associations to ensure that appropriate safety and response measures are in place. Crucially, there is an immediate need to provide residents within such buildings with the appropriate reassurances.
3. The aim of this urgent task and finish review was to:
 - Establish the residential buildings in question, and identify any areas of concern in terms of fire risk, particularly around the type of cladding used on Grenfell Tower.
 - Review if robust fire risk assessments have been/are in place, and understand what these assessments entail.
 - Consider the safety advice given to residents who live in tower blocks.
 - Provide reassurance to residents, Ward Councillors and the DCLG.
4. In order to inform the review, evidence has been taken from key partner agencies, including:
 - Local Authority
 - Thirteen Group
 - Cleveland Fire Brigade
 - Kennedy Gardens Residents Association

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

5. This review has a potential impact on fire safety policies around vulnerable people who reside in high rise residential buildings across the Borough.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6. Financial implications are yet to be fully determined pending the outcome of the Government's public inquiry following the Grenfell Tower fire.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7. Legal implications are yet to be fully determined pending the outcome of the Government's public inquiry following the Grenfell Tower fire.

RISK ASSESSMENT

8. This review forms part of a wider assessment of the risks around fire safety in high rise residential buildings in Stockton-on-Tees.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

9. The review supports the following Council policy principles:

- Protecting the vulnerable through targeted intervention (in relation to people who are subject to or at risk of harm and people whose circumstances make them vulnerable)
- Developing strong and healthy communities (in relation to providing mainstream services that are available where needed)

The review also contributes to the following Council Plan 2017-2020 key objectives:

Environment and Housing

- Housing: Influence and work in partnership with developers and registered social landlords to deliver affordable housing provision of a high standard and quality.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

10. There are no direct implications in the report.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

11. The Committee have received evidence as set out in the final report of the Place Select Committee.

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Education related?: No

Background Papers: None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors: n/a

Property: Yes – see attached report