

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Meeting	Policy & Resources Panel
Date	11 November 2021
Title of Report	Widening of the Joint Funding of Sprinklers to a Community Safety Intervention Fund
By	Deputy Assistant Commissioner Steve Norman
Lead Officer	Assistant Director for Safer Communities

Background Papers	Joint Funded Sprinkler Projects Progress Report July 2020
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Appendices	None
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Implications

CORPORATE RISK		LEGAL	
ENVIRONMENTAL		POLICY	
FINANCIAL	✓	POLITICAL	
HEALTH & SAFETY		OTHER (please specify)	
HUMAN RESOURCES		CORE BRIEF	
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT		✓	

PURPOSE OF REPORT	To recommend a widening of the scope of the Joint Funded Sprinkler Project to a Community Safety Intervention Fund.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	In 2013, the Fire Authority agreed to set aside funding to support a sprinkler project to assist key partners to retrofit sprinklers in their high-risk premises through joint funding contribution.
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The original fund amounted to a total of £750,000 over a period of four years of allocation. Currently £112,000 has been spent on successful projects and £347,000 has been allocated to potential projects. This leaves £291,000 unallocated and furthermore ESFRS have had verbal confirmation that projects totalling £347,000 are now not going ahead. This means £638,000 is available to pursue other types of intervention for community safety and risk reduction.

Recommendations from Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry have offered a number of additional ways in which residents (particularly vulnerable residents) of high-rise buildings and firefighters fighting fires in high-rise buildings can be made safer.

It is therefore proposed that the scope of the joint funded sprinkler project be widened to a more general community safety intervention fund whereby bids can be submitted for funding to support the installation of equipment to reduce fire risk and encourage innovation in fire risk reduction.

RECOMMENDATION

That Policy and Resources Panel agree to widen the scope of the Joint Funded Sprinkler Project to a Community Safety Intervention Fund.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2013, the Fire Authority agreed to set aside funding to support a sprinkler project to assist key partners to retrofit sprinklers in their high-risk premises through joint funding contribution and, in particular, to reduce risk to vulnerable residents and firefighters as well as altering negative perceptions of sprinkler retro-fitting and encouraging partners to include sprinkler installation in future developments.
- 1.2 As a result, projects have been completed with key partners such as East Sussex County Council (ESCC), Brighton & Hove City Council (B&HCC) and Amicus Horizon (AH), resulting in greater protection for very vulnerable people. The detail of these projects can be viewed in the previous update report to ESFRS SLT paper (Joint Funded Sprinkler Projects Progress Report July 2020).
- 1.3 For a number of reasons including complications around match funding, tendering processes, resident concerns and Covid factors, monies allocated to projects has not been spent and, in addition, a balance of funds remains unallocated.
- 1.4 Recommendations from Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Fire Inquiry have offered a number of additional ways in which residents (particularly vulnerable residents) of high-rise buildings and firefighters fighting fires in high-rise buildings can be made safer. In addition, it is likely that some of these measures will help renew the confidence of residents in the safety of high-rise living. These measures include Evacuation Alert Systems, Premises Information Boxes and Emergency Response Packs etc. In addition, telecare systems, higher standards of domestic detection and some more innovative technical solutions to protect vulnerable people could be brought into the scope of this fund to reduce risk in a greater range of building types benefitting a greater range of people at risk from fire.
- 1.5 Currently there is no legislation requiring these additional measures (although regulations requiring some elements are in draft form) and we recognise that

without legislation organisations may be discouraged from their installation and possibly limit joint funding options.

- 1.6 It is proposed therefore that the scope of the joint funded sprinkler project be widened to a more general community safety intervention fund whereby bids can be submitted for funding to support the installation of equipment to reduce fire risk and encourage innovation in fire risk reduction.

2. FINANCE

- 2.1 The original fund amounted to a total of £750,000 over a period of four years of allocation. Currently £112,000 has been spent on successful projects and £347,000 has been allocated to potential projects. This leaves £291,000 unallocated and available for reducing risk through a wider range of equipment options. In addition, ESFRS have had verbal confirmation that the projects the £347,000 has been allocated to are now not going ahead. This means £638,000 is available to pursue other types of intervention for community safety and risk reduction.
- 2.2 It is understood that match funding and resident engagement may have contributed to difficulty in spending the fund. Whilst match funding is favoured, smaller funding bids could be considered for payment in full although it is important to note that there will also be administrative costs associated with this option.

3. EXPECTED IMPLEMENTATION

- 3.1 If the Panel agree to support the widening of the scope of this fund a detailed methodology will be produced to ensure bids for funding support the reduction of fire risk to residents and in particular those people with mobility, sensory and cognitive impairment.
- 3.2 Bid assessment criteria will include prioritising bids that meet the objectives of the original fund plus bids that meet Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations through existing and innovative solutions as well as bids that aimed at providing a platform or driver for policy changes such as raising smoke alarm coverage standards for vulnerable people.
- 3.3 Bids supported by match funding will, where appropriate, be prioritised in order to optimise the utility of the fund but for small bids we would consider funding in full to reduce bureaucracy and encourage bids that reduce risk for individual vulnerable people.

4. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The Equality Impact Assessment follows the original funding considerations but widens the positive safety impact on vulnerable people in the wider built environment. It also encourages applications for funding smaller and innovative risk reduction solutions to protect individuals with specific needs outlined in personal fire risk assessments as well as larger risk reduction measures.

- 4.2 There are several elements of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations that refer to the protection of vulnerable people through Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs). This fund may enable individuals with mobility, cognitive and sensory impairments to be better protected in their homes and also wider building solutions such as premises information boxes and evacuation alert systems to be installed.
- 4.3 Completed projects will also provide evidence of cost effective, model solutions to encourage organisations such as housing providers to adopt risk reduction measures as future policy through having a cost base to project future budgets from.

5. **SUMMARY**

The current balance of £291,000 unallocated and a further £347,000 of allocated but unspent funds is not achieving any risk reduction. Widening the scope and reducing the bureaucracy involved in allocation of the funds to projects will allow the Service and the Fire Authority to provide support to responsible persons to implement findings from the Grenfell Inquiry and make both residents and Firefighters safer whilst continuing to enable the original purpose and objectives of the project.