

EAST SUSSEX FIRE AUTHORITY

Panel: Scrutiny and Audit Panel

Date 30 January 2020

Title of Report Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report

By Assistant Chief Fire Officer Mark Andrews

Lead Officers Group Manager Andrew Gausden/George O'Reilly

Background Papers Fire Authority 08 December 2017, Grenfell Tower Incident Response and Impact.

Appendices None

Implications

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

PURPOSE OF REPORT This report provides background information to the Panel on the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI) Phase 1 Report¹ along with an outline of the corresponding action plan for East Sussex Fire and Rescue to the recommendations within that report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY The Grenfell Tower Fire continues to have a significant impact on the friends and family of those who sadly lost their lives, the local community, and fire and rescue services across the country.

In the weeks and months that followed the fire a wide range of complex issues have unfolded including issues with the building safety standards and the fire service operational response. Crucially the National Fire Chiefs Council along with

¹The Rt Hon Sir Martin Moore-Bick, Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report (<https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/phase-1-report>), 30 October 2019

colleagues within the London Fire Brigade have played a key role in the coordination of the national fire service response to these issues to ensure that lessons are learnt and such an incident will never be repeated.

In October 2019 The Grenfell Tower Phase 1 Report was published. This report outlines the response to the recommendations contained in that report by East Sussex Fire and Rescue (ESFRS).

The report also highlights other work at National Fire Chiefs Council (NFFC) and Government level to address these issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel

- a) Note the report and,
 - b) Direct officers to continue with the ESFRS Grenfell Action plan in order to effectively respond to the GTI Phase 1 recommendations.
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1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Grenfell Tower fire broke out on 14 June 2017 at the 25-storey block of social housing flats in North Kensington. The block originally contained 120 flats over 20 floors, with the ground and first three levels assigned to non-residential properties. Between 2012 and 2016 Grenfell Tower was refurbished. An additional nine flats were added within levels one to three, bringing the total number of residential units to 129. Refurbishment work also included the installation of an external rain screen cladding system and works to the gas supply within the building. 71 people lost their lives on the night of the fire with a further fatality on 29 January 2018.
- 1.2 The then Prime Minister, Rt Hon Theresa May MP, announced on 15 June 2017 a public inquiry into the fire at Grenfell Tower. The Grenfell Tower Inquiry is examining the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire. Sir Martin Moore-Bick was appointed as the Chairman of the inquiry on 28 June 2017 and the inquiry was formally set up on 15 August 2017. The Terms of Reference were set by the then Prime Minister following a public consultation led by the Chairman. The inquiry has published a list of issues on which its investigations will focus, although it has said this may be revised during the course of the investigation.
- 1.3 The list of issues that the inquiry is investigating has been separated into two phases. Phase 1 focuses on the factual narrative of the events on the night of 14 June 2017. Hearings for Phase 1 began on 21 May 2018 and concluded on 12 December 2018. The Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 Report was published on 30 October 2019². Phase 2 of the Inquiry is focusing on the remainder of the list of issues and hearings are expected to begin in early 2020, following which the final report will be written and subsequently published.
- 1.4 The report is divided into six parts and makes 46 recommendations for change in relation to 12 matters where The Inquiry identifies steps which need to be taken to improve fire safety, including the response of fire and rescue services to major disasters, including fires in high-rise residential buildings :
- 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;
 - The arrangements made by fire and rescue services to discharge its duties under section 7(2)(d) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004;
 - 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;

² The Rt Hon Sir Martin Moore-Bick, Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report (<https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/phase-1-report>), 30 October 2019.

- The regular inspection and testing of lifts designed for use by firefighters;
- Communication between the fire and rescue services control room and the incident commander;
- The way in which fire and rescue services handle emergency calls;
- The fire and rescue services command and control procedures and use of 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 bridgehead;
- The communication equipment available to the fire and rescue service for use by crews deployed in firefighting and rescue operations in high-rise buildings;
- The evacuation of high-rise residential buildings, including the provision of equipment enabling firefighters to send an evacuation signal to the whole or a selected part of the building;
- The provision of fire safety information to residents of high-rise residential buildings and the marking of floor levels in lobbies and staircase landings;
- The inspection of fire doors and self-closing devices;
- Aspects of co-operation between the emergency services.

2. ESFRS RESPONSE TO GRENFELL

- 2.1 In the immediate weeks after the Grenfell Fire ESFRS commenced a series of joint inspections with our local authority housing colleagues in order to check the fire safety arrangements and ensure the operational risk information was up to date. The inspections also confirmed that there was no ACM cladding³ present on any high rise residential buildings in East Sussex or Brighton and Hove.
- 2.2 Alongside the physical inspections the ESFRS communications team acted as a central point for logging incoming and outgoing corporate communications, as well as keeping track of the inspections being carried out by the different teams to ensure all MHCLG and NFCC returns were completed.
- 2.3 Communication and reassurance were important aspects of this immediate plan and officers worked with local authorities and other stakeholders to ensure there was a

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/aluminium-composite-material-cladding>

joint approach, supported by the use of existing networks and established communication channels e.g. website, social media and email to provide reassurance and advice.

- 2.4 Officers have also created two guides for Councillors to explain what they should look out for during estate visits, and questions they should put to housing managers and wardens. (Specifically the Councillor guide on fire safety for use during council meetings and Councillor guide on fire safety for use during estates visits).

3. NFCC RESPONSE TO THE GRENFELL TOWER PHASE 1 REPORT

- 3.1 The report was published on the 30 October 2019 which has prompted NFCC to coordinate the fire national response. Part of this process has involved a high level analysis of the recommendations by the NFCC Central Programme Office followed by a questionnaire to each FRS to determine what local actions are being taken in response to each of the recommendations.
- 3.2 The NFCC analysis of the recommendations has been collated into a Strategic Improvement Model (SIM) which breaks down each recommendation in various sections and then provides an initial strategic level solution, an owner and any reference to ongoing or planned activity.
- 3.3 This process will allow the NFCC to provide a national picture of fire service activity to present to Government and other stakeholders whilst also coordinating, tracking and managing the wider fire service improvements.
- 3.4 In support of this work and to ensure a focus on the wider implications on building safety and the Hackitt Review⁴ NFCC has also established a Building Safety Programme Team. This team is established from a range of FRSs around the country, each with their own area of expertise in order to provide technical advice to Government on the Hackitt Review recommendations. The team work collaboratively with stakeholders to contribute to a range of working groups and forums to achieve this whilst also addressing other areas of concern since the Grenfell Tower fire such as:
- Large Panel System (LPS) buildings.
 - External Wall Insulation (EWI) systems with either a render or brick-slip finish.
 - External wall systems with non-ACM cladding systems (including High Pressure Laminate).
 - Spandrel Panels (also including window panels and infill panels).

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-hackitt-review>

- Composite (GRP) fire doors (Manse Masterdor).

ESFRS officers are involved in many of these working groups as FRS representatives ensuring the latest information and guidance can be interpreted and fed into local housing colleagues to mitigate any risk to local residents.

4. ESFRS RESPONSE TO THE GRENFELL TOWER PHASE 1 REPORT

- 4.1 In responding to the NFCC questionnaire ESFRS has laid out its response to the Phase 1 report. Much of the work had been anticipated through the various work streams and support groups that officers have been involved in and broadly breaks down into operational, business fire safety and fire control issues. In order to effectively coordinate an ESFRS response at a local level officers have produced an action plan (Grenfell Action Plan) which is being managed and monitored through the Operational Policy Team.
- 4.2 The ESFRS action plan covers all of the issues in the NFCC SIM document and most of the matters are for note only. Where actions are required these have been allocated to individual officers or teams and have been rated in terms of priority areas to ensure timely completion of the new work such as new Fire Survival Guidance or a revised Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) process. This action plan is now being monitored through the operational assurance programme to ensure timely progress and sign off.
- 4.3 Many of the issues in the Phase 1 report can only be effectively addressed at National level. Firstly at NFCC level as part of the National Operational Guidance (NOG) or Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Principles (JESIP) where revised guidance and policies are being considered for higher risk residential buildings (HRRBs). Other matters require Government input as part of National policy change particularly to building standards and building policy for high rise residential buildings. An example of this is the recommendation that government new national guidelines for carrying out either partial or total evacuations of HRRBs. It was also confirmed in the December 2019 Queen's Speech that legislation to improve building and fire safety will form part of the Government's legislative programme (the Fire Safety Bill).
- 4.4 Other work that officers are involved that link directly to Grenfell and the action plan include:
- Refresher training to operational crews on the hazards and policies for tackling a HRRB fire.
 - Refresher training on gathering risk information by crews for tactical plans at HRRBs.
 - Introduction of operational business fire safety audits by firefighters.
 - Communication and information for building owners and operators regarding their responsibilities following the Phase 1 report.

- Fire Control refresher training on HRRBs and a new fire survival guidance policy.

5. LOOKING AHEAD TO PHASE 2 AND OTHER WORK

- 5.1 In Phase 2 the Inquiry will seek to address the various questions set out in the List of Issues which appears on its Grenfell Tower Fire website, such as the design and construction of the Tower, the modifications and changes, building materials, inspections and maintenance, management and crucially issues around the residents and the residents 'voice'. Phase 2 will also pick up some issues arising out of Phase 1 and further analysis of the response of the emergency services both during the fire and the civic response and recovery in the aftermath of the tragedy.
- 5.2 It has also been identified over recent months that a series of significant fires in buildings using modern methods of construction (including timber frame) which have resulted in unusual and rapid external fire spread involving external elements of the building construction, including balconies, green roofs and walls, and cladding systems. Whilst there has been no single cause identified, the speed and spread of fire gives cause for concern. An example of one of these fires is the Pankhurst Avenue Fire in Brighton in 2019.
- 5.3 These failures are of particular concern where the building evacuation strategies include "stay put" or "progressive evacuation", or high levels of resident vulnerability as found in specialised housing. These incidents involving buildings of all heights, continue to impact resident's confidence in the safety of their homes and additionally the safety of responding firefighters.
- 5.4 Learning from these incidents is being gathered by the NFCC and fed into the National Operational Learning (NOL) which informs the maintenance process for the National Operational Guidance (NOG) products and ultimately drives change and improvement at local FSS level. It has recently been identified that protection should be considered a vital element of NOG going forward and therefore protection will benefit from the current processes by expanding the remit of NOL all of which is captured within the SIM process.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The aftermath of Grenfell Tower Fire has generated many complex fire safety, building construction and operational fire service issues that needed to be resolved.
- 6.2 ESFRS took a proactive approach with an immediate response in 2017 to inspections of HRRBs, public engagement communication and close working with Housing Authorities to reassure the public and address any immediate building safety issues in high rise buildings.

- 6.3 Officers have taken a proactive role in supporting NFCC working groups in order to glean early information and address emerging trends in regards to building safety, fire protection or operational response to HRRBs.
- 6.4 The Grenfell Tower Phase 1 report released in October 2019 identified a number of recommendations many of which related directly to the FRS. These recommendations have been scrutinised by the NFCC and developed into a Strategic Improvement Model (SIM) to assist in the delivery and monitoring of this work.
- 6.5 ESFRS officers have also scrutinised the recommendations and the SIM report in order to develop a local action plan to ensure all the relevant actions are implemented in ESFRS policy and procedures.
- 6.6 The Grenfell Tower Phase 2 Inquiry will now commence which will produce further recommendations relevant to the FRS. There will also be a new Fire safety Bill both of which may place additional expectations on the FRS.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 That the panel note the report and ,
- 7.2 Direct officers to continue with the ESFRS Grenfell Action plan in order to effectively respond to the GTI Phase 1 recommendations.