

**To: Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board**

**On: 22 May 2018**

---

**Report by: Director of Development & Housing Services**

---

**Heading: High Rise Blocks – further update**

---

**1. Summary**

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the ongoing investment in our high rise blocks and on the range of measures that have been taken and are in place to ensure the safety of residents living in high rise properties across Renfrewshire.
- 

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked:
- (i) to note the ongoing investment in our high rise blocks and the measures that have been taken following the fire at Grenfell Tower to ensure that effective fire safety management practices are in place at the 14 high rise blocks owned and managed by Renfrewshire Council.
- 

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Renfrewshire Council owns and manages fourteen high rise blocks of flats – thirteen in Paisley and one in Johnstone, providing homes to 1,132 tenants and residents. The council has 1,001 properties within the blocks which represents over 8% of the council's total housing stock. Accordingly, high rise properties play an important role in the provision of housing and the council has committed significant amounts of investment in recent years to ensure they are maintained in a good condition and are sustainable and attractive to both current and future residents.

- 3.2 The council's high rise blocks remain popular with residents and our waiting list demonstrates a continuing demand for this property type. Many residents in our high rise properties are elderly and the council has responded to their particular needs by incorporating internal improvement works to meet amenity standards in five blocks (four at Calside and one in Gallowhill), as well as investing in the provision of social spaces for residents' use at both Rowan Court and Glencairn Court.
- 3.2 Nine of the fourteen high rise blocks have been re-clad in the last five years which has improved the energy efficiency of these blocks, as well as enhancing the aesthetic appearance. The five remaining blocks were re-clad between 18 and 25 years ago and as the cladding on these blocks is approaching the end of its lifecycle, preparations are underway to commence a programme of replacing this cladding with a modern energy efficient insulation system of the same nature as that used in the recently clad buildings.
- 3.3 In addition, the district heating system which provides heat and hot water to over 460 homes in Calside, including four high rise blocks, was upgraded in 2015 to a new biomass system which has provided residents with a modern, controllable and energy efficient system. The electric storage heating system in Provost Close was replaced in 2016 with a modern electric wet system, which allows residents to control their heating in a way which wasn't possible with the storage system. Financial provision has also been made for the remaining four blocks which have electric storage heating to be upgraded to electric wet systems over the next two years.
- 3.4 Extensive foyer improvements were carried out during 2017 to enhance the entrance areas at Provost Close, Maxwellton Court, Gleniffer and Nethercraigs Courts to create a welcoming environment for both residents and visitors.

#### **4. Concierge and Caretakers**

- 4.1 A concierge and caretaking service is provided, with 24 hour concierge service on site at four blocks in Glenburn and Gallowhill and the remaining 10 blocks benefiting from a caretaking service during office hours on weekdays. The role of the concierge and caretakers includes a range of housekeeping duties and safety checks, as well as offering advice and assistance to tenants and residents.
- 4.2 The concierge and caretaker service is valued highly by residents and plays an important role in ensuring a safe environment for residents and visitors, particularly in matters relating to fire safety. Concierge and caretaking staff duties include the daily inspections of landings, fire doors and bin chutes, as well as regular fire alarm tests, the safe removal of bulky items and so on.

- 4.3 With this in mind, it is proposed to enhance the cover provided at the 10 high rise blocks which are currently staffed by a team of caretakers who are generally on duty Monday to Friday, 8am – 4pm. Proposals are being developed to extend caretaking cover into the evenings and weekends at all 10 blocks, with a view to introducing this enhanced cover later this year. The 4 high rise blocks at Gallowhill and Glenburn will continue to have concierge staff on duty 24/7.

## **5. Fire Safety Update**

- 5.1 Following the Grenfell Tower fire on 13 June 2017, a group of key officers including representatives from the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service have been meeting regularly to:
- review the measures that are in place to ensure fire safety at our high rise blocks;
  - agree any actions that may enhance these fire safety arrangements; and
  - ensure tenants and residents are kept up to date and re-assured of our ongoing commitment to fire safety
- 5.2 Reports were presented to the Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board in August and November 2017 detailing the range of measures that are in place to ensure the on-going safety of everyone living in our high rise properties and the advice that has been given to residents. The reports also set out a range of actions that had been undertaken which can be summarised as follows:
- an independent assessment of the external cladding system at five blocks which concluded the materials used for both cladding and insulation are not the same as those used at Grenfell Tower and all materials used complied with the Scottish Building Regulations;
  - a fire safety assessment of each of the five blocks where no adverse concerns in relation to the fire risk of the buildings were identified;
  - installation of communal area fire alarm systems in five blocks, with all fourteen blocks linked to a 24 hour monitoring system;
  - council properties had 60 minute fire resistant front doors fitted and this was extended to privately owned properties where it was identified that the existing door did not meet the necessary fire resistance rating; and
  - written correspondence to all residents, as well as drop-in sessions to allow residents to meet face to face with Housing Services staff and Scottish Fire & Rescue Service officers

5.3 Since the last update to Board in November 2017, the joint meetings between council officers and Scottish Fire & Rescue Service have continued to take place and a range of further actions have been progressed which can be summarised as follows:

- an independent audit of fire safety measures within each of the fourteen blocks has recently concluded and the outputs are currently being reviewed to inform future programmes of work;
- works have commenced to install an automatic fire suppression system at the bin areas of each of the fourteen blocks;
- works to upgrade the smoke detection alarms within tenants' properties have been completed in three blocks, with works currently underway in a further two further blocks. These improvements will be rolled out to all high rise blocks over the course of 2018;
- a specialist consultant has been appointed to advise on the replacement of the balcony enclosure panels at George Court, with this work planned for completion later this year; and
- regular review of any callouts to high rise blocks which Scottish Fire & Rescue Service have responded to. The majority of these have been false alarms, many caused by members of the public smoking in common areas. This issue is being addressed through increased signage and advice to residents requesting their assistance in reducing these incidences. There have been four instances of 'accidental fires' across all fourteen blocks during the two year period from April 2016. These were all due to residents cooking and were contained to the kitchen areas in the flats concerned

## **6. Next Steps**

6.1 The Scottish Government's Ministerial Working Group on Building and Fire Safety has commissioned an inventory of the design of high rise domestic buildings in order to better understand how further improvements to fire safety in the existing stock can be made. The council has provided the requested information for this exercise and will await any findings or guidance from the Scottish Government in this regard.

6.2 The Scottish Government recently announced their intention to bring forward legislation during autumn 2018 to improve the standard of smoke alarms in all tenures to ensure all homes have the highest level of protection by the end of 2020. The new guidance specifies the following requirements:

- one smoke alarm installed in the room most frequently used for general daytime living purposes;
- one smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey, such as hallways and landings;

- one heat alarm installed in every kitchen;
  - all alarms should be ceiling mounted; and
  - all alarms should be interlinked.
- 6.3 The upgraded smoke detection alarms currently being installed in our high rise properties as described in Section 5.3 meet these new requirements and arrangements will require to be made to roll out this standard to all our housing stock in line with the proposed new legislation.
- 6.4 It is anticipated that the Council will have enforcement responsibilities to ensure home owners comply with these new conditions, however details of these responsibilities are still to be published.
- 6.4 The consideration of fitting fire suppression systems (sprinklers) to all high rise flats is still being reviewed by both the UK and Scottish Governments and the council awaits their findings / guidance on this issue. A further report will be presented to the Policy Board on this and any other related fire safety matters in due course as findings / guidance are published by the respective Governments.
- 

## Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – there is provision within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Capital Programmes for all identified actions to date. The financial impact of the recently announced proposed changes to legislation regarding smoke detectors is currently being assessed and provision will be made in future HRA Capital Programmes.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – none
3. **Community/Council Planning** –
  - *Our Renfrewshire is safe – the range of fire safety measures that are in place is helping to keep residents safe.*
  - *Working together to improve outcomes –close working with the Fire and Rescue Service is helping to ensure all residents at all high rise blocks feel safe.*
4. **Legal** – none
5. **Property/Assets** – none
6. **Information Technology** – none
7. **Equality & Human Rights**

- (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report because it is for noting only. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

- 8. **Health & Safety** – None
- 9. **Procurement** – none
- 10. **Risk** – none
- 11. **Privacy Impact** – none
- 12. **Cosla Policy Position** – n/a.

---

### List of Background Papers

- (a) Background Paper 1 - Report to Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board on 29 August 2017 – Fire Safety – High Rise Blocks

Background Paper 2 – Report to Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board on 7 November 2017 – High Rise Blocks - Update

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Development \* Housing Services for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Tom Irvine / Louise Feely, 0141 618 6146 / 6049, [Tom.irvine@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:Tom.irvine@renfrewshire.gov.uk) / [Louise.feely@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:Louise.feely@renfrewshire.gov.uk).

---

FC/LF/CVG  
10 May 2018

**Author:** Louise Feely, Housing Asset and Investment Manager,  
Tel: 0141 618 6049