

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report To: Audit Committee - 31 August 2017

Subject: Grenfell Tower – Manchester Governance Arrangements

Report of: Strategic Director (Development)

Summary

This report summarises the governance in place to manage Manchester's response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy

Recommendations

Audit Committee to note the report.

Wards Affected:

All

Contact Officers:

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

Documents used in the development of this report:

- Grenfell Towers – The Implications for Manchester - Report to Executive 28th June 2017.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Immediately following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London the Council undertook a number of actions as reported to Executive in 28th June 2017. These included the Chief Executive hosting a meeting with social housing providers to ensure a measured and proportionate response. Officers from the Council have also joined the GM Mayor's Task Force which is being chaired by the Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester.
- 1.2 As reported in the June Executive report, each social landlord has reviewed the insulation and cladding (if any) on its tower blocks, revisited the latest Fire Risk Assessments and reconsidered its policy in the event of a fire in one of its flats.
- 1.3 The Council has contacted all social housing providers to establish the total number of properties over 6-storeys high. The Council owns 36 tower blocks, One Manchester owns 17, Wythenshawe Community Housing Group owns 9 and a range of other social landlords own a further 17 blocks making a total of 79.
- 1.4 From information provided by the GMFRS it is estimated that the number of privately owned High Rise residential tower blocks in the City is 212. The Fire Officer is responsible for enforcement across all sectors and has been taking an active role in providing assistance to all landlords in the City. To date the Fire Officer has visited over 120 high rise building taking a risk based approach to prioritise those visits.

2 Governance

- 2.1 Within days of the tragedy occurring, DCLG sent an information request to all Council Chief Officers and all Registered Housing Provider Chief Executives requiring a detailed technical response on all tower blocks owned by a social landlord. At the request of the Chief Executive, The Director of Housing and Residential Growth was tasked with co-ordinating a Manchester response. By the end of the following week all the relevant data on both tower blocks owned by the City Council and tower blocks owned by social landlords in the City had been completed and returned to DCLG. Progress was reported to the Chief Executive who was in regular contact with the DCLG unit established to manage the aftermath of the fire.
- 2.2 Early in the week following the fire, the Chief Executive convened a meeting of all the key Housing Provider Chief Executives and relevant senior council officers together with the Chief Fire Officer to discuss our response and to share intelligence. The Deputy Leader of the Council attended that meeting. Subsequently the Mayor of Greater Manchester convened a similar meeting for Greater Manchester senior officers and established a Task Group for Greater Manchester, chaired by the Deputy Mayor Paul Dennett and led by the Chief Fire Officer.
- 2.3 The Greater Manchester Task Group meets fortnightly and receives update reports from from four workstreams or 'cells';

- Technical specifications;
- Regulation;
- Finance;
- and Communications.

The aim of the task group is to produce a Greater Manchester response in terms of a standard approach to fire safety in high rise buildings agreed with the GMFRS; Develop a clear 'ask' of Government if we believe we can manage any aspect of regulation better at a Combined Authority level and to provide evidence and input into the Grenfell Enquiry. Officers from the City Council attend both the Task Group and the workstream groups.

- 2.4 Within the City council, the Chief Executive has asked the Strategic Director (Development) to lead a Manchester officer group from across the Council ensuring that all buildings where the Council has an interest or a responsibility draw together experience, responses and advice. Officers from Planning and Building Control, Housing, Education, Facilities Management and Health and Safety meet regularly to ensure that a corporate response to fire safety issues are addressed properly. The Deputy Leader meets the Director of Housing and Residential Growth on a weekly basis and updates are provided at those meetings.
- 2.5 The Council's Executive has received a report at its meeting on the 28th June 2017 and a follow up report is scheduled for the Executive at its meeting on the 13th September 2017. Both of these reports also cover the wider position with other social housing landlords in the City together with the position on private landlords. The September report will also present summary details of actions and responses on other City owned buildings.
- 2.6 The City Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Board is chaired by the City Treasurer and receives reports on the implications of the Grenfell Tragedy for the HRA. This is supported by a sub group of Council Officers and officers from the Councils managing agents, Northwards Housing, S4B and Renaissance Miles Platting. This group will work through the range of options and issues raised in September's Executive report and will recommend the best course of action to the Council, taking into account findings of the GM Task Group, any early findings of the Grenfell Inquiry, resources and risk.

3 Community engagement

- 3.1 Each of the Council's managing agents has established a communications strategy for residents in the tower blocks which has consisted of a range of leaflets/newsletters; block meetings; one to one meetings and telephone conversations. A number of block meetings have included Ward members and the Deputy Leader of the Council and have all been aimed at providing assurance and listening to residents' concerns.
- 3.2 The Council have developed a specific web page with information and frequently asked questions and the Council's press office have formulated responses to both the media and public interest. Following Executive in

September and subject to its approval, we will publish all the current Fire Risk Assessments for all the Council owned tower blocks. Northwards have already made these available to residents in tower blocks managed by them.

- 3.3 There have also been a significant number of freedom of Information requests, many from press agencies and these have been managed through the Council's corporate complaints procedure.

4 Recommendations

- 4.1 Members are requested to note the current governance of the City council's response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy