

Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority

Performance Review and Scrutiny Committee

Item

26 February 2010

High Rise Residential Buildings – progress against action plan

Report of the Chief Officer

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1 Summary

- 1.1 Following the lessons learned from recent serious fires in high rise residential buildings across the country, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service is committed to ensure that similar buildings in Hampshire are assessed adequately from the responsibilities that HFRS has as a regulator, and also as the provider of preventative and emergency response activities to such buildings.
- 1.2 SMT and the CMT have received verbal updates and explanations of intended actions in recent months. This report is to formally record progress against agreed Service Delivery priorities for mitigating risks in high rise residential buildings. While high rise buildings are also utilised for commercial purposes the fire safety management in those buildings is based on a principle of evacuation in contrast to the stay put approach in residential flats. Such buildings are generally equipped with multiple staircases and comprehensive alarm systems and as such they present a significantly lower risk.
- 1.3 This report is supplemented by three appendices which detail our policy of fire safety standards upon which we will base our regulatory work, and also record progress against the prevention, protection and response proposed actions. Also attached as an appendix is some useful guidance for councillors produced by the I&DeA (Improvement & Development Agency) and CFOA (Chief Fire Officers' Association) which explains the relationships and responsibilities within local government regulation of fire safety.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 The committee note the progress made within the Service Delivery Directorate against the High Rise Action Plan

3 Introduction and Background

- 3.1 The fire at Lakenall House in 2009 resulted in multiple fatalities among residents which was unprecedented in the history for fires occurring in residential high rise

blocks. This resulted in an immediate prioritisation by the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor (CFRA) of a high level review of how fire safety is managed in such blocks and crucially which aspects are the specific responsibility of FRAs and which are those of local authorities or landlords. When combined with the Hertfordshire fire in which operational crews were deployed with fatal consequences dealing with a flat fire, it is clear that some longstanding assumptions on fire safety design and operational tactics need to be reconsidered.

- 3.2 The SD directorate have responded to this scrutiny by agreeing and implementing an action plan which draws together our regulatory role, our response arrangements and also our advice given to residents of high rise residential buildings.

4 Progress against action plan

- 4.1 The progress is summarised in appendix 1 together with the detail of activities undertaken or proposed. Appendix 2 details a technical standard for fire safety which provides a useful indication of the key issues.

5 Contribution to corporate aims and objectives

- 5.1 Completion of actions in the plan will reduce the likelihood of fire fatalities occurring in high rise residential blocks.

6 Risk analysis

- 6.1 The entire action plan is based on an analysis of risk within the high rise residential environment and each activity within the plan is a defined control measure.

7 Resource Implications

7.1 Human Resources

No additional human resources are required.

7.2 Physical Resources

There are no additional physical resources required.

7.3 Information and Communications Technology Resources

There are no additional ICT resources required.

7.4 Financial Implications (3 Year Financial Plan)

There are no additional financial implications.

8 People Impact Assessment

- 8.1 A PIA has not been produced at this stage, however the SD Directorate is researching ways in which our prevention and protection assumptions might impact on people, for example elderly or disabled residents. When fully explored this work will result in the creation of a PIA to inform decision making.

9 Consultation

- 9.1 Considerable consultation has taken place with our statutory partners and landlords in the compilation of the action plan.

10 Conclusion

- 10.1 The immediate priority is to achieve completion of the action plan, which is in practice a risk management plan. Beyond that there is a need to engage at national level within CFOA and CLG (Communities & Local Government) to ensure that future approaches to fire safety in high rise residential buildings are based on the lessons learned from recent tragedies. HFRS is well placed to contribute to this agenda through its profile within CFOA.

Background Information (Section 100D of Local Government Act 1972)

The following documents disclose the facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and has been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of the report:

Appendix A – HFRS Activity in Relation to High Rise Dwellings

Appendix B – High Rise Fire Safety – Guidance Documents

Appendix C – Extinguishing the risk – a councillor’s guide to fire safety

Note: The list excludes: (1) published works; and (2) documents that disclose exempt or confidential information defined in the Act.