

**To the Chair and Members of the Cabinet**

**Sprinkler Installation to Housing Revenue Account High Rise Flats**

<b>Relevant Cabinet Member(s)</b>	<b>Wards Affected</b>	<b>Key Decision</b>
Councillor Glyn Jones	all	Yes

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

1. After the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in London, local authorities across the UK have had to take immediate action, such as having the cladding on high rise blocks checked and the sector as a whole has been considering some of the wider and more long-term implications for them and their communities.

1.1 It is far too early to draw firm conclusions from the horrific Grenfell fire – especially as there is going to be a public inquiry and other investigations.

1.2 It is important to assure Doncaster residents that their safety is of paramount importance. St Leger Homes carry out regular fire safety checks at all Doncaster's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) high rise properties, in addition to carrying out regular fire risk assessments.

1.3 What we do know is that the cladding system used in Doncaster is an External Wall Insulation (EWI) Render System which is not the same as was used at Grenfell Tower. Locally initiated verification checks are being carried out on this system.

1.4 It is becoming more apparent that sprinkler systems in high rise flats are an important part of fire safety and are widely supported by Fire Authorities including South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue who have quoted;

“Sprinklers are a cost effective way of making homes safer – they stop fires from spreading, put them out quickly and save lives. We are especially concerned about those people who are most at risk of fire such as those with mobility or mental health problems or people with dementia who may not know how to react, or be able to react quickly enough, if they hear a smoke alarm.

South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue has long played a key leadership role in helping people to better understand the benefits of sprinklers as part our commitment to reduce the impact of fire on people, property and the environment.”

1.5 High rise social housing blocks create a number of specific fire safety and firefighting challenges that do not exist in other properties. The majority of such blocks were built between 1950 and 1970 when the design and fire protection standards of that time did not require sprinkler systems to be installed.

1.6 It is anticipated in the housing and building press that retrospective installation of sprinkler systems will become a requirement. Fitting sprinkler systems is a proactive measure that will enhance the safety of Doncaster's tenants which is paramount irrespective of legislation requiring this action.

1.7 The fitting of sprinklers will be supported by ongoing fire risk assessments and regular safety reviews.

1.8 This initiative will enable us to provide a safer environment for tenants in all Doncaster's high rise accommodation.

## **EXEMPT REPORT**

2. This report is not exempt however, Appendix A is not for publication as it contains commercial information, which is exempt under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (a) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

3. Procure and install a fit for purpose sprinkler fire suppression system to the flats in all 9 HRA high rise blocks in Doncaster.

4. To add the project to the Regeneration and Environment capital programme, the exact value will be included into the programme as part of the quarterly Finance and Performance reporting following the outcome of the procurement exercise.

## **REASONS FOR URGENCY**

5. This is a key decision and would normally require 28 days' notice. However, due to the need to respond quickly and ensure the necessary approvals are in place to undertake the necessary work and improve fire safety and reassure tenants that their safety is paramount this decision is being taken in accordance with urgency provision Executive Procedure Rule 15 - General Exception.

## **WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?**

6. Improved fire safety in high rise living accommodation.

## **BACKGROUND**

7. After the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in London, local authorities across the UK have had to take immediate action, such as having the cladding on high rise blocks checked and the sector as a whole has been considering some of the wider and more long-term implications for them and their communities.
- 7.1 In consideration of those tragic events it has become important to assure tenants that their safety is of paramount importance. St Leger Homes currently carry out regular fire safety checks at all Doncaster's HRA high rise properties, in addition to carrying out regular fire risk assessments. These have been reviewed in conjunction with South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue.
- 7.2 St Leger Homes and DMBC colleagues have been working closely with South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue to further alleviate any fears of residents in Doncaster's high rise blocks. While working together it has become more apparent that fire suppression sprinkler systems have been proven to reduce the impact of fire. They are a potentially lifesaving tool that bring many benefits.
- 7.3 It is intended that subject to this reports approval that the exact specification will be based on expert advice and subject to consultation with tenants and residents.

## **OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

8. **Option 1.**

Do nothing and rely on current fire safety provision and controls

**Option 2. Recommended option.**

- Procure and install a fit for purpose sprinkler fire suppression system to the flats in all 9 HRA high rise blocks in Doncaster this will improve fire safety to the buildings subsequently enhancing the safety to residents in the event of fire.
- To add the project to the Regeneration and Environment capital programme, the exact value will be included into the programme as part of the quarterly Finance and Performance reporting following the outcome of the procurement exercise.

## **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION**

9. The consensus in the housing and building press expects that retrospective installation of sprinkler systems will become a requirement. That said fitting sprinkler systems is a proactive measure that will enhance the safety of Doncaster's tenants which is paramount irrespective of legislation requiring this action. This will improve fire safety to the buildings subsequently enhancing the safety to residents in the event of fire.

## IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

10.

Outcomes	Implications
<p>All people in Doncaster benefit from a thriving and resilient economy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Be a strong voice for our veterans</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i></li> <li>• </li> </ul>	
<p>People live safe, healthy, active and independent lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i></li> </ul>	<p>Installation of sprinkler systems in high rise blocks will enhance the safety of residents</p>
<p>People in Doncaster benefit from a high quality built and natural environment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Creating Jobs and Housing</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Safeguarding our Communities</i></li> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Bringing down the cost of living</i></li> </ul>	<p>Help safeguard vulnerable and elderly residents.</p>
<p>All families thrive.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Mayoral Priority: Protecting Doncaster's vital services</i></li> </ul>	
<p>Council services are modern and value for money.</p>	
<p>Working with our partners we will provide strong leadership and governance.</p>	

## RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

11. Installing sprinkler systems to flats will minimize any spread of fire thus protecting life and property. The main risk of installation will be one of access to all flats. Therefore legal means of access may need to be sought to ensure full compliance in all flats. Installation will not be optional. However it is thought that residents would welcome this investment. Prior consultation will take place on a locality basis and a full myth busting leaflet is being addressed which will cover resident's concerns. This will include such things as;

Myth:"Water damage from a sprinkler system will be more extensive than fire damage."

Fact: Water damage from a building sprinkler system will be much less severe than the damage caused by water from fire fighting hose lines or smoke and fire damage.

Myth:"When a fire occurs, every sprinkler head goes off."

Fact: Sprinkler heads are individually activated by fire temperatures in excess of 155°. Residential fires are usually controlled with one sprinkler head.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

12. The Council has a duty to protect the safety of its tenants.

The 2011 Localism Act introduced the so called "general power of competence" which states that "A local authority has power to do anything that individuals generally may do".

12.1 S111 Local Government Act 1972 provides a local authority with the power to do anything (whether or not involving the expenditure, borrowing or lending of money or the acquisition or disposal of any property or rights) which is calculated to facilitate, or is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.

12.2 The appointment of a contractor to install the sprinkler system must be procured in accordance with Contract Procedure Rules and EU Procurement Regulations as required.

12.3 Whilst it is not easy to 'set off' sprinklers by accident, where tenants 'set off' sprinklers in their own flats they will be responsible for damage caused to their own furnishings. To assist in this residents will be offered our own insurance scheme.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

13. This report seeks approval for the following expenditure which will be added to the Housing Capital Programme;

- Installation of sprinkler systems in 9 high rise blocks comprising 603 individual flats.
- Removal of decorative capping at Silverwood house which has been identified as Category 2 as defined by DCLG's tests and replacement with a fully compliant alternative and
- The appointment of a fire safety expert to carry out a level 4 fire risk assessment which includes intrusive works within all high rise blocks.

13.1 The estimated costs for the sprinkler system is between £1m and £3m. The Government have stated that they will provide funding to Local Authorities which need it on a case by case basis, details of how to

access this funding have not yet been published. But the Council will need to fund this from the capital programme until such time as the government have confirmed the funding.

13.2 A Sprinkler Fund of £1 million is available for match funding from South Yorkshire Fire Service and a bid has been made for these resources, the outcome of which is as yet unknown.

13.3 Further financial details are included at Appendix A however, this information is not for publication as it is exempt under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12 (a) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

## **HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

14. None.

## **TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS**

15. None at this stage.

## **PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS**

16. To deliver an expedient route to market for the supply and installation of suitable fire suppression systems to Doncaster's High Rise Accommodations there are a number of existing national framework agreements open to the Council and St leger Homes which offer a compliant route to market by way of inviting further competition.

These are:

- YPO 582 & ESPO 225 (Joint FW agreement); Fire Safety Products & Services.
- Fusion 21; High Rise Refurbishment Agreement
- PAGABO; National Framework Agreement for Fire Safety – lot 4 Fire Safety – Supply & Installation of Fire containment equipment

16.1 St Leger Homes and the Council have a duty under their Contract Procedure Rules and overarching Public Contract Regulations 2015 to ensure all contracting activity is carried out in a fair, transparent and compliant manner.

16.2 Where the above frameworks are not suitable then a specific Authority (SLHD / DMBC) led tender must be carried out in line with Contract procedure rules, PCR2015 and EU Procurement Law as St Leger Homes and the Council have a duty to ensure all contracting activity is carried out in a fair, transparent and compliant manner.

16.3 Where applicable the engagement of Procurement & Legal Services is recommended so as to ensure all procurement and commissioning

activity is carried out under the auspices of the aforementioned legislation.

- 16.4 It is intended to complete the procurement of the installation as quickly as possible. However, there is likely to be a significant increase in demand for the manufacture and installation of such schemes. Therefore at this stage it is difficult to confirm timescales. Tenants and board members will be kept updated of progress.

## **EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

17. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) Due Regard Statement was created by the Equality Act 2010. The duty came into force in April 2011 and places a duty on public bodies and others carrying out public functions. The aim of the PSED is to embed equality considerations into the day to day work of public authorities, so that they tackle discrimination and inequality and contribute to making society fairer. 'Due Regard' is a legal term that requires proportionality and relevance. The weight given to the general duty will depend on how that area of work affects discrimination, equality of opportunity and good relations.
- 17.1 The installation of sprinklers will enhance the safety of all residents in all 9 high rise blocks, as there are a large proportion of tenants who are either vulnerable or elderly.

## **CONSULTATION**

18. Consultation has been undertaken with the Housing Portfolio Holder, Senior Council officers and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue. Further consultation will be required with residents of all high rise blocks.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

19. None.

## **REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS**

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