

Report for: Cabinet 9 July 2019

Title: Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks Report
Cabinet response to the Scrutiny Panel recommendations

Report authorised by: Dan Hawthorn, Director of Housing, Regeneration & Planning

Lead Officer: Alan Benson, Head of Housing, Strategy and Commissioning

Ward(s) affected: All

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Key

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 The report sets out the proposed Cabinet response to the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Fire Safety in High Rise blocks as proposed by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

2. Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 I welcome the input of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in helping the development of housing fire safety policy in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire. I note that we have just passed the second anniversary of that tragic event and now, as then, our first thoughts are with the victims. In the light of that event it is right that ensuring the safety of our residents in their homes is a critical part of our Borough Plan commitment to drive up the quality of housing for all.
- 2.2 I look forward to working closely with my fellow members in scrutiny, as the Committee moves on to the next phase of its review: namely to consider the implications for the Council, once the implementation plans for recommendations of the Hackitt review are known.

3. Recommendations

Cabinet is asked:

- 3.1 To consider the Overview and Scrutiny Review of Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks (attached as Appendix 1).
- 3.2 To agree the responses to the Overview and Scrutiny report recommendations (attached as Appendix 2).

4. Reasons for decision

- 4.1 On 25 March 2019, Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the Scrutiny Panel Review of fire safety in high rise blocks.
- 4.2 In developing its report, the Panel held a number of evidence gathering sessions and took evidence from Council officers as well as a range of experts and local stakeholders. The Panel then made a number of recommendations, which were adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25 March 2019.
- 4.3 The recommendations made in the report can be used to help guide the ongoing development of fire safety policy for the Council's housing stock, particularly in respect of the 54 high rise blocks. While the report does not set out a detailed list of explicit objectives to be delivered to a given timescale, many of the recommendations are either currently being incorporated into the Council's approach to fire safety in housing, or will be considered once proposals for implementing the recommendation of the Hackitt review and Grenfell Inquiry, are known. Specific reasons for each recommendation response are given in Appendix 2; the draft responses to recommendations.

5. Alternative options considered

- 5.1 To refuse to accept the recommendations. This option was rejected because the recommendations are clearly of benefit to residents and will provide helpful guidance in putting in place plans to ensure that Council homes are safe.

6. Background information

- 6.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (OSP) produced a report on Fire Safety in High Rise blocks which was approved by Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) on 25th March 2019. The review project was set up in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017. The OSP sought to review the response that was made to the fire in Haringey as well as looking at how other local authorities had responded for the purpose of learning. Further detail on the implementation plans for the recommendations of the Hackitt Review is awaited, and the Public Inquiry on the fire is still ongoing. In view of this, the report is interim. Once these outcomes are known, a report will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on their implications for the Council and partners.

7. Contribution to strategic outcomes

- 7.1 The new Borough Plan sets out housing as its first priority. Within that priority the third key aim is to '*drive up the quality of housing*' and in particular to '*ensure safety in housing of all tenures across the borough, responding to any new regulations as they emerge*'. The recommendations and responses made will guide the Council's actions towards delivering on this aim.

8. Statutory Officers comments (Chief Finance Officer (including procurement), Assistant Director of Corporate Governance, Equalities)

Finance

- 8.1 This report sets out recommendations to help guide the ongoing development of a comprehensive fire safety policy for the Council's housing stock, with focus on the high-rise blocks in the borough.
- 8.2 The implementation of most of the agreed recommendations in this report will be contained within the existing resources.
- 8.3 Retrofitting of sprinklers will be funded from the HRA capital programme budget carry forward. Attraction and retention of professional and technical staff has been factored into the existing MTFS.
- 8.4 The council will ensure that its capital programme for housing stock can facilitate the necessary works to meet the council's legal obligations.

Legal

- 8.5 Under Section 9F Local Government Act 2000 ("The Act"), Overview and Scrutiny Committee have the powers to review or scrutinise decisions made or other action taken in connection with the discharge of any executive and non-executive functions and to make reports or recommendations to the executive or to the authority with respect to the discharge of those functions. Overview and Scrutiny Committee also have the powers to make reports or recommendations to the executive or to the authority on matters which affect the authority's area or the inhabitants of its area.
- 8.6 Pursuant to the above provision, Overview and Scrutiny Committee has conducted a review of Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks and made a number of recommendations to Cabinet. Overview and Scrutiny Committee must by notice in writing require Cabinet to consider the report and recommendations. Once approved, the report and recommendations should be presented to the next available Cabinet meeting together with an officer report where appropriate.
- 8.7 Under Section 9FE of the LGA, there is a duty on Cabinet to respond to the Report, indicating what (if any) action Cabinet proposes to take, within 2 months of receiving the report and recommendations.

Equalities

- 8.8 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

The three parts of the duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

- 8.9 The Scrutiny Report recommendations aim to improve the quality of housing for Council tenants in Haringey. Women, BAME communities, and individuals with disabilities and/or long-term health conditions are over-represented among social housing tenants in Haringey. Although no data is available on single parents in Haringey social housing, single female parent households are overrepresented among those in temporary accommodation and are therefore likely to be overrepresented among social tenants. Where the recommendations of the Scrutiny Report are incorporated into the Council's approach, it can be anticipated that they will have a positive impact for social tenants with protected characteristics.

9. Use of Appendices

Appendix 1: Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks (including appendices)

Appendix 2: Draft response to recommendations

10. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 10.1 Draft minutes of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 25 March 2019 are available on the Haringey Council website at this [link](#).