



Corporate Fire Safety

Report by the Director for Communities

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update in respect of improvements to Corporate Fire Safety and includes all corporate buildings, plus Adur Homes. In addition, this outlines the ongoing work that is being delivered by officers to support private sector landlords, agents and residents, following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower.
- 1.2 In May 2017, Mazars issued their final internal audit report to Worthing Borough and Adur District Councils, titled Fire Risk Management. The auditor found “satisfactory assurance” after a thorough and lengthy audit but raised ten recommendations, nine at priority level 2 and one at level 3. This report sets out how officers have addressed these.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Between 2011 and 2015, West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WSFRS) as the regulators of Fire Safety, served five Notices of Deficiencies on the Councils, three on Adur District Council in respect of Adur Homes and two on Worthing Borough Council in respect of the Connaught, the Studio Theatre and the Pier.
- 2.2 The notices highlighted some constructional defects but, mostly, raised concerns in respect of the management of fire safety.
- 2.3 The Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) tasked the Head of Building Control and Land Charges in conjunction with the Head of Housing and Head of Business and Technical Services to react to the notices, investigate the corporate position and report back.
- 2.4 A meeting was held with WSFRS and a programme of improvement commenced.
- 2.5 In 2016 an internal audit commenced to check progress. This audit proved to be complex due to important connectivities across many service areas, resulting in the

final report being issued in May 2017. Significant progress has been made, resulting in just 10 recommendations for action and an overall rating of “Satisfactory Assurance”.

3.0 Current Position

- 3.1 WSFRS have lifted all of the notices of deficiencies following effective demonstration of new fire safety management procedures and the completion of some building improvement works.
- 3.2 A programme of Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) is underway. All relevant Adur Homes stock has been assessed and a programme of work commenced. Further FRAs updates are being undertaken. All significant corporate buildings now have FRAs and the identified actions are being delivered against a risk based programme. Although the management of fire safety is continuous, the programme of work is expected to continue for a further five years.
- 3.3 To achieve the full benefit of this work going forward, new policies, procedures, staff training and induction procedures have been written and adopted. These are now being embedded by the Organisational Leadership Group as part of the cultural change needed to deliver these improvements.

4.0 Future Programme

- 4.1 FRAs are ongoing across both the Adur Homes’ estate and corporate properties.
- 4.2 A programme of work continues to be delivered, based on the findings of the FRAs.

5.0 Private Sector Support

- 5.1 Through the Head of Service, Building Control and Land Charges and, specifically, the Fire Safety Advisor (Building Control) the Council supports a growing number of residential property agents to deliver their fire safety responsibilities by providing a FRA and advice service. This service is on target to deliver in excess of 60 quality, impartial FRAs this year, generating an income of approximately £22k. There is also the important aspect of social value in this work, as it improves the safety of our private sector residents.
- 5.2 The Private Sector Housing team (PSHT), within Housing Services, take a proactive approach to delivering their Housing Act responsibilities. Part of which, includes fire safety. The Fire Safety Advisor is able to support this work and, by providing FRAs and advice, help property owners to meet the requirements of the Housing Act. Increasingly, the PSHT are leading closer working between colleagues in Planning

and Building Control Services and themselves, to ensure that anomalies in legislation are addressed early in the design and approval process.

5.3 Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Towers, all of the above named services have been busy working with the DCLG and other partners, including WSFRS. Contacts for FRAs and fire safety advice have risen significantly. Your officers have been and continue to be fully engaged with this process, inspecting high rise residential properties, re-assuring residents, providing advice, supporting managing agents etc. I am pleased to confirm that the Council's high rise buildings have no significant issues and, whilst detailed audit inspections, are not yet in place on all 44 of our private sector high rise blocks, no significant issues have been identified and no aluminium composite material (ACM) cladding has been identified.

6.0 Legal

6.1 This report informs Members of actions, based around existing statutory powers only. There are, therefore, no legal implications.

7.0 Financial implications

7.1 There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report. Items of expenditure have been reported elsewhere.

8.0 Recommendation

8.1 The Joint Governance Committee is asked to:-

- A. Note the progress made in delivering improved and compliant management of fire safety across both the Adur District and Worthing Boroughs' property portfolios, which has included addressing the audit report of May 2017.
- B. To note the ongoing programme of fire safety improvements across the Adur Homes estate.
- C. To further note the work of the Private Sector Housing Team and the Building Control Partnership in delivering improved Fire Safety within the private sector.

Local Government Act 1972

Background Papers:

Internal Audit Report - Fire Risk Management (May 2017)

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