

Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

26 September 2017

Response and Recovery from Emergencies and Learning from the Grenfell Tower Fire event July 2017

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report provides the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee with an overview of recent actions and testing of the council's preparedness to the response and recovery of an emergency. This report pays specific regard to actions and lessons identified in the wake of the Grenfell Tower fire.
- 1.2 The report includes feedback from the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) multi-agency training event 'Exercise Concido' which looked at the recovery in the wake of the collapse of a block of flats.

2. Background

- 2.1 Wiltshire Council has a duty under section 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to ensure that if an emergency occurs the council is able to manage the emergency, in cooperation with other 'Category 1' responders. The Local Authority is the lead agency for the recovery period of a Major Incident.
- 2.2 Wiltshire Council has a good record in meeting its statutory obligations under the CCA and is regarded as a strong partner within the Wiltshire and Swindon LRF. The council has detailed plans in place for emergency response and recovery, including the Integrated Emergency Management Plan which was signed off by full council in February 2016.
- 2.3 Grenfell Tower is a 24 storey block of domestic flats in North Kensington. The fire at Grenfell Tower started on 14 June 2017 and burned for approximately 60 hours. The incident was responsible for injuring over 70 people and has caused in excess of 80 deaths, although the definitive death toll is not expected until at least 2018. Authorities have been unable to trace any surviving occupants of 23 of the flats.
- 2.4 Investigations revealed the fire to have started in a fridge-freezer on the 4th floor; however the rapid spread of the fire is believed to have been accelerated by the building's exterior cladding.
- 2.5 This incident has come under heavy public and political scrutiny, and has received criticism in relation to safety guidelines, the building's fire precautions and the ongoing management of the disaster.

3. Summary of Actions for Noting

3.1 Aluminium Composite Material Screening

3.1.1 Grenfell Tower, first constructed in 1972, recently underwent a major renovation, which was completed in 2016. To insulate the building, the renovation included replacement windows and the installation of new aluminium composite rainscreen cladding.

3.1.2 A screening programme for priority buildings known to use Aluminium Composite Materials (ACM) is now underway. Prioritisation has been given to buildings fitted with ACM that are taller than 18 meters and used for overnight accommodation; the programme also includes schools and hospitals.

3.1.3 Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service is leading on the review of properties in the Wiltshire and Swindon area. The Fire Service is visiting all residential high rise premises (5 floors and over) both to inspect and reassure. In their assessment, there are just 10 relevant properties which are all in the Swindon area. **No properties have been identified in Wiltshire.** However, in accordance with national guidance (See Appendices A and B) the Fire Service are happy to receive referrals from partner organisations.

3.1.4 In addition, the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) are in regular contact with LRF Chairs to provide updated information on the government's response to the Grenfell Tower Fire. They have given assurance that all information from the incident's debriefs and the investigation process will be shared to assist in our own emergency planning. The LGA is offering guidance and FAQs at the following:
<https://www.local.gov.uk/grenfell-tower>
<https://www.local.gov.uk/grenfell-tower-frequently-asked-questions-local-authorities>
<https://www.local.gov.uk/grenfell-tower-press-releases>

3.2 Plan Review Cycle

3.2.1 The Wiltshire Council Integrated Emergency Management Plan was agreed by full council in February 2016. The integrated plan details the authority's plans in relations to response, recovery and business continuity in the event of a Major Incident or other emergency.

3.2.2 In order to deliver continuous improvement the plan is exercised, tested and reviewed on annual basis.



3.2.3 In January 2017 the LRF Training and Exercising Sub-Group, identified a need to exercise the multi-agency recovery from a large scale Major Incident and scheduled 'Exercise Concido' to take place later in the year.

3.3 Exercise Concido

3.3.1 Exercise Concido took place on Thursday, 6 July 2017 at the Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Training centre in Devizes.

3.3.2 The exercise was a full day table-top to test recovery processes in the aftermath of the structural collapse of a four story block of residential flats. The scenario was set in the fictional town of 'Swinbridge' to avoid confusion over boundaries and allow full engagement and 'exercise play' for both Wiltshire and Swindon local authorities.

3.3.3. Wiltshire Council was represented the following staff:

Name	Role	Exercise Participation
Deborah Haynes	Consultant in Public Health Public Health & Protection	Directing Staff
Nicole Smith	Head of Housing Operations & People Services	Player
Steve Handyside	Health & Safety Contract Surveyor, Adult Care, Safe Guarding & Housing	Player
Matt Perrott	Engineer, Highways & Street Scene	Player
Sarah Kelly	Emergency Planning Officer	Player
Chris Manuel	Emergency Planning Officer	Player

Alongside both local authorities representation included Wiltshire Police, Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue, the Environment Agency, Acute and Mental Health NHS Services, Network Rail and Great Western Railway, Highways England, the MOD, British Red Cross, Rotary, RAYNET and the RSPCA.

3.3.4 The aim and objectives of the exercise were as follows:

Aim: To gain a fuller understanding of the role of partner agencies in relation to the recovery phase of an incident.

Objectives:

- To understand why and when handover from response to recovery takes place.

- To understand how agencies roles in the recovery phase differ from roles in the response phase.
- To explore the long-term implications on health organisations following a major incident.
- To consider how multi-agency partners can work towards supporting a community to return to a new normality.
- To exercise both Local Authority Recovery Plans.

3.3.5 The exercise scenario had five phases and invited players to walk through the response to numerous scenarios including: casualty rescue and evacuation, the operation of a rest centre, widespread community engagement and support, management of spontaneous volunteers, heightened media and public scrutiny, engagement with voluntary agencies, longer term re-housing plans and issues relating to investigation and independent enquiry.

3.3.6 Despite the detail and design of the exercise being constructed back in January 2017, the scenario was eerily similar to the issues faced in the Grenfell Tower Fire disaster. The planning group were sensitive to this; however, all agencies were happy to continue with the event, and it was agreed that the exercise was even more timely, relevant and important in the circumstances.

3.3.7 The Wiltshire Council plan was generally found to hold up well to the scenario, and received praise from multi-agency partners, with several agencies requesting copies.

3.3.8 In particular the exercise highlighted the need to further engage with our voluntary agency colleagues, who brought a wide range of skills, expertise and resources to the response. I would highlight the comment made by the British Red Cross representative, who having just returned from responding to the Grenfell Tower fire, was happy to share her learning from the experience. She commented on the quality of the Wiltshire plan and fitness to respond.

3.3.9 All agencies completed a post exercise debrief from and an exercise report containing lessons identified will be available shortly via the LRF Training Sub Group.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Wiltshire Council plans are robust, however lessons identified from both the Grenfell Tower Fire and Exercise Concido will be reviewed closely, and any and all changes made to the Local Authority plans in accordance.
- 4.2 Wiltshire council will continue to follow advice from the LGA, DCLG and Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Service in relation to managing properties containing ACM and rebuilding public confidence and reassurance.
- 4.3 Wiltshire Council has a contract in place with the British Red Cross for support in emergencies. This contract has been used successfully in previous incidents e.g. Operation Felton Modern Slavery response in 2015.

This relationship should continue, and continued local engagement with the voluntary sector is an invaluable part of local response plans.

5. Proposals

5.1 OSMC is asked to note the content of this report.

5.2 OSMC is asked support a continuing program of training and exercising for emergency response and recovery across the organisation and increased engagement with partners in the voluntary sector.

Director: Tracy Daszkiewicz, Director Public Health (Interim)

Appendix A – DCLG Letter to Local Authorities



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Melanie Dawes CB
Permanent Secretary

Department for Communities and Local
Government
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To Local Authority Chief Executives and
Housing Association Chief Executives
By Email

22 June 2017

Safety checks following Grenfell Tower fire

Thank you all for your continued work following the appalling tragedy in North Kensington. Our priority must continue to be checking on the safety of buildings and listening to and being open with residents, and reassuring them as much as possible.

My letter of 18 June asked that local authorities and other registered providers of social housing identify whether any panels used in new build or refurbishment are of a particular type of cladding made of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM).

The testing process for samples of cladding is underway and the attached note sets out the action that an independent panel of experts advise must immediately be taken if it is determined that the insulation within Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) is unlikely to be compliant with the requirements of the current Building Regulations. This advice has been endorsed by the National Fire Chiefs Council who will be circulating it separately to their members.

These interim mitigating measures must immediately be implemented to ensure the safety of residents, pending replacement of the cladding.

If you have any questions about the testing process for the cladding please email housingchecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk

If you have questions about the advice on action which needs to be taken please contact safetychecks@communities.gsi.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

MELANIE DAWES

APPENDIX B – NFCC Letter to Local Authorities



NFCC
National Fire
Chiefs Council

To:

- Local Authority Chief Executives
- Local Authority Directors of Housing
- Chief Executives – Housing Trusts and Associations
- Local Authority Directors of Public Health
- Local Authority Directors of Environmental Health
- NHS England
- Homes and Communities Agency

23rd June 2017

FIRE SAFETY IN HIGH-RISE PREMISES

Following the serious fatal fire on 14 June 2017 at Grenfell Tower, London, I am writing to you on behalf of the National Fire Chiefs Council about the importance and need for all agencies to work collaboratively together to ensure the fire safety of residents living in high-rise premises. You will be aware that Fire and Rescue Services work with local authorities, social landlords, tenants and other partners to help raise awareness of important fire safety messages for people living in high-rise accommodation. The Fire and Rescue Service conducts this work to ensure people can access information and guidance on fire safety in high-rise premises and to promote the free offer of a home fire safety visit to residents and home owners. These visits are an effective and proven way of delivering fire safety information directly and help householders to reduce the risk of fire in their home.

Given the seriousness and gravity of the fire in London, we are seeking your help to assist Fire and Rescue Services to engage further with partners who have regular contact with people living in high-rise premises (i.e. Housing Officers, Environmental Health Officers, housing trusts, health workers, carers etc), to ask that they work and support Fire and Rescue Services promote some basic but very important fire safety information and questions to people living in these types of dwellings.

In particular, the Fire and Rescue Services would be grateful if you would encourage your staff or commissioned agencies, when visiting people in high-rise premises, to ask the following four key fire safety questions:

- Does the householder have a working smoke alarm?
- If the smoke alarm activates, would the householder be able to hear it?
- Does the householder know what to do if the smoke alarm activates?
- Is the householder able to get out of the premises if the smoke alarm activated?

If the householder answers **no to any of the above questions**, Fire and Rescue Services would ask that partner agencies make a referral to them for a home fire safety visit.

Please contact your local Fire and Rescue Service to find out more information on how you can refer people for a Home Safety Assessment. You can access contact details for your local Fire and Rescue Service via the following link to the Chief Fire Officers Association website: <http://www.cfoa.org.uk/>

The National Fire Chiefs Council is grateful to you for any help and assistance you can give to ensure people living in high-rise premises remain safe from the devastating effects of fire.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'SE', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Stewart Edgar
Prevention Lead
National Fire Chiefs Council

