

SCRUTINY BOARD (ENVIRONMENT, HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES)

LEEDS' RESPONSE TO GRENFELL

TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The horrific events of the 14 June in west London have resulted in continued public and media interest in the safety of high-rise blocks across the UK. This has been particularly focussed on the presence of Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) types of cladding systems that are similar to the system installed at Grenfell Towers, which fire safety experts have pointed at as a possible reason the blaze spread so quickly.
- 1.2 The immediate priority for Leeds City Council following the events of Grenfell Tower has been the assurance of Leeds citizens regarding their personal safety. Initially this was focussed particularly on the Council's 116 high rise blocks, where investigations have confirmed that the 23 cladded blocks in Leeds do not have any Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) type of claddings systems that are similar to the system installed at Grenfell Towers. This, and further safety and advice and reassurance have been communicated to residents directly and through media and press releases. Resident engagement sessions for all blocks have also taken place.
- 1.3 However, other actions have also been taken as part of a strategic action plan to assess and respond to the impact of the Grenfell Tower fire in Leeds. This has included assessing other public buildings such as schools and hospitals, controlling procedures in case of the need to evacuate properties and keeping local stakeholders up to date on all developments. A strategic task group has been established to oversee this work which includes all relevant council service leads and representatives of the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 1.4 At its meeting on 17th July 2017, the Executive Board received a report detailing the work undertaken to-date by Leeds City Council and partners since the events of the Grenfell fire. However, alongside the work of the strategic task group, the Executive Board also acknowledged the role of Scrutiny and agreed the following recommendation:

That in relation to the role of Scrutiny Boards, the following Scrutiny Boards be requested to pick up scrutiny of the relevant actions / emerging issues:-

- (i) Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) – emergency planning;*
- (ii) Scrutiny Board (Infrastructure and investment) – private sector properties and building control;*

(iii) Scrutiny Board (Environment, Housing and Communities) – Council housing stock safety, resident engagement and investment decisions.

- 1.5 In responding to this recommendation, the Environment, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Board agreed to undertake an inquiry and establish formal terms of reference surrounding its particular areas of responsibility.

2.0 Scope of the inquiry

- 2.1 The purpose of the Inquiry is to make an assessment of and, where appropriate, make recommendations on the following areas:

- The actions currently in progress or completed in ensuring compliance with fire safety standards for Council housing stock;
- The level of engagement activity undertaken with local residents regarding fire safety and details of ongoing engagement plans.
- The role of the Council in encouraging fire safety compliance amongst other local housing providers, with particular reference to the Council's enforcement of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- Contingency measures for re-homing council residents in the event of a major fire.
- The medium/longer term investment strategy for Council housing stock in relation to fire safety measures, such as sprinkler systems, and associated communication methods.

3.0 Desired Outcomes and Measures of Success

- 3.1 It is important to consider how the Scrutiny Board will deem if their inquiry has been successful in making a difference to local people. Some measures of success may be obvious and others may become apparent as the inquiry progresses and discussions take place.

- 3.2 The key outcomes sought from the inquiry are:

- Providing reassurance that the Council is complying with current fire safety standards;
- Instilling confidence for the Council to lead by example to other housing providers;
- Ensuring that the Council's medium/longer term investment strategy for Council housing stock is informed by robust evidence.

4.0 Comments of the relevant Director and Executive Member

- 4.1 In line with Scrutiny Board Procedure Rule 12.1 where a Scrutiny Board undertakes an Inquiry the Scrutiny Board shall consult with any relevant Director and Executive Member on the terms of reference.

5.0 Timetable for the inquiry

- 5.1 The Inquiry will take place over two sessions, including a working group meeting to provide flexibility for the Board to gather and consider evidence.
- 5.2 It is anticipated that the Scrutiny Board's report will be produced by November 2017.

6.0 Submission of evidence

6.1 Session one – Working Group Meeting - date tbc

To consider the level of engagement activity undertaken with local residents regarding fire safety and details of ongoing engagement plans.

6.2 Session two – Scrutiny Board Meeting – 9th October 2017

To consider evidence in relation to the following:

- The actions currently in progress or completed in ensuring compliance with fire safety standards for Council housing stock;
- The role of the Council in encouraging fire safety compliance amongst other local housing providers, with particular reference to the Council's enforcement of the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- Contingency measures for re-homing council residents in the event of a major fire.
- The medium/longer term investment strategy for Council housing stock in relation to fire safety measures, such as sprinkler systems, and associated communication methods.

6.3 Session three – Scrutiny Board Meeting – 6th November 2017

To consider the Scrutiny Board's draft report for formal approval.

7.0 Witnesses

- 7.1 The following have been identified as possible contributors to the inquiry, however others may be identified during the course of the inquiry:

- Director of Resources and Housing
- Executive Member for Communities
- Chief Officer Housing Management
- Chief Officer Property and Contracts
- Chair of the Tenant Scrutiny Board

- Chair of Vital (Voice of Involved Tenants Across Leeds)
- Chair of the High Rise Tenant Group
- Representation from West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Representation from the University of Leeds

8.0 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 8.1 The Equality Improvement Priorities have been developed to ensure our legal duties are met under the Equality Act 2010. The priorities will help the council to achieve it's ambition to be the best City in the UK and ensure that as a city work takes place to reduce disadvantage, discrimination and inequalities of opportunity.
- 8.2 Equality and diversity will be a consideration throughout the Scrutiny Inquiry and due regard will be given to equality through the use of evidence, written and verbal, outcomes from consultation and engagement activities.
- 8.3 The Scrutiny Board may engage and involve interested groups and individuals (both internal and external to the council) to inform recommendations.
- 8.4 Where an impact has been identified this will be reflected in the final inquiry report, post inquiry. Where a Scrutiny Board recommendation is agreed the individual, organisation or group responsible for implementation or delivery should give due regard to equality and diversity, conducting impact assessments where it is deemed appropriate.

9.0 Post inquiry report monitoring arrangements

- 9.1 Following the completion of the Scrutiny inquiry and the publication of the final inquiry report and recommendations, the implementation of the agreed recommendations will be monitored.
- 9.2 The final inquiry report will include information on the detailed arrangements for how the implementation of recommendations will be monitored.