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**Report of Head of M&E and Technical Services**

**Report to Director of Resources and Housing**

**Date: 18<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

**Subject: Business case seeking approval for the appointment of three Fire Safety Officers.**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

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**Summary of main issues**

1. This report seeks to provide the business case for approval of an additional three Fire Safety Officers within Property & Contracts, funded through the Housing Revenue Account.
2. The report requests recruitment of the posts to enhance the current fire safety provision in light of additional resource demands and amendment to the LCC Fire Safety Strategy following the Grenfell Tower tragedy in June 2017. These posts are additions to the existing structure.

**Recommendations**

3. The Director of Resources & Housing is asked to approve the business case in respect of the three Fire Safety Officers, and that these three posts would be recruited to with immediate effect.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide the business case for approval of an additional three Fire Safety Officers within Property & Contracts, funded through the Housing Revenue Account.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Following the tragic events at Grenfell Tower in June 2017 Leeds City Council reviewed its fire safety strategy utilising guidance provided by central government. While the existing strategy met the baseline regulatory standards, the decision was made to exceed these minimum requirements and offer enhanced fire safety assurance to its customers.
- 2.2 This review resulted in a significant increase in the annual volume of Fire Risk Assessments being undertaken by the Fire Safety Team, particularly associated with high rise blocks. In addition, the increase nationally in the profile of fire safety, particularly across the social housing sector, meant the demand for additional support, training and expertise from the existing resource is vastly elevated.
- 2.3 This change to the strategy and increased resource demand means that an additional three Fire Safety Officers are required to ensure that Leeds City Council continues to meet the requirements set out in the amended strategy and associated regulations.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 The Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005 requires that the “Responsible Person” as defined by these regulations must undertake a suitable and sufficient Fire Risk Assessment in all buildings to which the regulations apply.
- 3.2 Guidance that accompanies these regulations with regard to re-inspection periods outlines that buildings utilised as an office / workplace must be inspected annually. All other properties (including high rise) should be reviewed at an interval set by the assessor dependent on what they consider the level of risk following inspection.
- 3.3 The risks that the assessor considers include the occupancy, construction type, the use of the building and existing fire safety measures in place. Typically the frequency ranged from 1 year to 4 years, dependent upon the assessment of these risks.
- 3.4 Following a review of its Fire Safety Strategy, Leeds City Council made the decision to exceed these minimum requirements and offer enhanced fire safety assurance to its customers. The pre- and post-review inspection frequencies are summarised below:

Property Type	Pre-Review Inspection Frequency	Post-Review Inspection Frequency
High Rise (General Needs)	1-4 years, dependent on risk	Annual
High Rise (Sheltered)	1-4 years, dependent on risk	Annual
Sheltered Accommodation	1-4 years, dependent on risk	Annual
Community Centres	1-4 years, dependent on risk	Annual
Offices / Workplaces	Annual	Annual
Low / Medium Rise	1-4 years, dependent on risk	1-4 years, dependent on risk

3.5 Post-Grenfell the Fire Safety Team has received an unprecedented volume of enquiries from internal staff, customers, Members and external requests received under Freedom of Information. In addition requests for additional support such as site visit, specification reviews, training and attendance at meetings has also vastly increased.

3.6 Coupled with the rise in the volume of Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) now required to be undertaken annually, the existing resource in place within the Fire Safety Team is unable to meet the demand placed upon it. This increase is further illustrated below:

Work Type	No. of Sites	Pre-Review Annual Vol.	Post-Review Annual Vol.	Increase (n=)	Increase (%)
High Rise (HR) FRA	115	29	115	+ 86	+ 300%
HR (Sheltered) FRA	6	2	6	+ 5	+ 300%
Sheltered FRA	29	7	29	+ 22	+ 300%
Comm. Centre FRA	39	10	39	+ 29	+ 300%
Office FRA	15	15	15	(0)	(0)
Low- / Mid-Rise FRA	1034	207	345	+ 138	+ 67%
<b>FRA Sub-Total</b>	<b>1238</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>660</b>		<b>+ 145%</b>
After-Fire Inspections	-	50	50		(0)
Support Activities	-	200	300		+ 50%
<b>TOTAL ACTIVITIES</b>	-	<b>519</b>	<b>1010</b>		<b>+ 95%</b>

Please note, this table is not an exhaustive list of all the activities undertaken by the Fire Safety Officers.

3.7 This table demonstrates that the demand volume of Fire Risk Assessments to be completed by the Fire Safety Team has increased by 145% annually, inclusive of a 'catch up' programme to assess properties that are yet to receive an FRA. The total 'activities' required has increased by 95%. During this period, the resources available to complete these activities has remained static. As such, the resource demand exceeds the resource availability. Therefore a risk based approach has been taken to the allocation of the resource and the activities completed. Whilst the volume has increased, it must also be noted that the properties that now require an annual review are, by nature, more complex and time consuming.

### 3.8 Considerations & Objectives

3.9 The existing team of Fire Safety Officers is unable to meet the increased demand for Fire Risk Assessments. As such, activities are being completed on a risk-based approach, with high-rise blocks treated as a priority. This means that the

backlog of low- and mid-rise blocks without an 'in date' Fire Risk Assessment is increasing continually.

- 3.10 Short term objectives include the effective completion of Fire Risk Assessments to all high rise, sheltered accommodation and offices within the year. Also to begin the 'catch up' on the mid- / low-rise stock backlog referenced above. In addition, work continues to ensure adequate provision of contracts and contractors are place to enable a smooth flow of work from identification in the FRA to delivery of work on site.
- 3.11 On completion of an FRA the Defects and Significant Findings are collated and logged for the appropriate team to action (Housing Management, M&E, Repairs and Planned). The increase in frequency and catching up the backlog will have an inevitable impact on these numbers. Budget is allocated for the expected work that is identified in the FRA, however the Fire Safety Team must also work to ensure effective reporting mechanisms are in place to monitor the completion of these works.
- 3.12 The mid- to long-term plan is to imbed the FRA programme into a cyclical inspection regime, offering a more efficient and effective delivery of the programme. This will also support the timely delivery of the work identified in the FRA`s in a consistent, priority order.
- 3.13 **Post Grenfell Recommendations**
- 3.14 It is inevitable that following completion of the Public Enquiry into Grenfell a number of recommendations will be made.
- 3.15 In the view of Leeds City Council's fire safety experts, these recommendations are likely to include:
- The increased frequency of FRAs.
  - The quality of fire risk assessments and the competency of those who carry out the assessment. (Recognised body to administer this).
  - Review and requirement of capital investment in updating detection and alarm systems.
  - Review and updating of building regulations.
  - Supervision of building work and adherence to building regulation becomes more robust.
- 3.16 This business case therefore sets out Leeds City Council's opportunity to anticipate these changes and recruit officers with the right skills, knowledge and experience prior to an increase in the 'market demand'. All of these will impact on the workload of Property and Contracts, in particular the Fire Safety Team.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

- 4.1.1 Consultation has been completed with colleagues from finance, HR and Property & Contracts' senior management team.

## **4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

- 4.2.1 This decision has no direct impact on equality, diversity, cohesion and / or integration.
- 4.2.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed. This can be found at Appendix A.

## **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 This proposal supports the revised council strategy to increase the frequency of Fire Risk Assessments to exceed the legislative requirements.
- 4.3.2 In addition, the proposal contributes to the Best Council Plan, most notably residents to 'be safe and feel safe'.

## **4.4 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 It is proposed that the three posts would be graded at SO2, consistent with the existing Fire Safety Officers. At spinal point 34, this equates to a salary of £30,756, with total costs to Leeds City Council of £38,728 per post amounting to £116,184 within each financial year.
- 4.4.2 These posts are to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account. Consultation with the Property & Contracts Finance Team has confirmed that these posts are not budgeted in the 2018/19 financial year. However, due to the level of vacancies within the first six periods of this financial year, there is capacity within the staffing budget to accommodate the posts.

## **4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.3 This is a Significant Operational Decision and is not eligible for Call In.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 It is essential that we fulfil our commitment to increase the frequency of FRAs to our higher risk properties and catch up with the assessments of our low- / mid-rise stock whilst still maintaining the current level of service, help and advice.
- 5.2 To achieve this these posts need releasing as they will undertake important duties for the Council and enhance our reputation whilst fulfilling the Council's values

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Director of Resources & Housing is asked to approve the business case in respect of the three Fire Safety Officers, and that these three posts would be recruited to with immediate effect.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.