Wandsworth

Chief Executive
Paul Martin

Wandsworth Borough Council
Chief Executive's Group
The Town Hall Wandsworth High Street
London SW18 2PU

Date: 20 June 2017

For further information on this agenda, please contact the Committee Secretary: Ms Thayyiba Shaah on Tel: 0208 871 6039 or
email: tshaah@wandsworth.gov.uk

HOUSING AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 20TH JUNE, 2017 AT 7.30 P.M.
ROOM 122 - THE TOWN HALL, WANDSWORTH HIGH STREET, WANDSWORTH SW18 2PU

Members of the Committee:
Councillor Mrs. J. Cooper (Chairman); Councillor Mrs. Clay (Deputy Chairman); Councillors Cuff, Hart, Jones, Lescott, Macdonald, Thom and White.

SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA

13. Fire at Grenfell Tower and the implications for the management of high rise blocks in Wandsworth Council's housing stock (Paper No. 17-239) **(Pages 3 - 8)**

Report by the Director of Housing and Regeneration (Attached).

This page is intentionally left blank

AS PROVIDED FOR UNDER SECTION 100B(4)(b) QF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, THE CHAIRMAN IS OF THE OPINION THAT THIS REPORT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AT THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY, BY REASON OF THE SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ARE THAT THE RECENT FIRE AT GRENFELL TOWER IN THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA TOOK PLACE ON THE 14TH JUNE 2017 SUBSEQUENT TO THE DESPATCH OF THE AGENDA AND THAT THE REPORT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AT THIS MEETING AS IT DETAILS WITH THE IMPLICATION FOR THE COUNCIL MANAGED STOCK IN WANDSWORTH WITH AN OVERVIEW OF THE EXISTING FIRE SAFETY REGIME.

PAPER NO. 17-239

WANDSWORTH BOROUGH COUNCIL

HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 20TH JUNE 2017

EXECUTIVE – 3RD JULY 2017

Report by the Director of Housing and Regeneration on the fire at Grenfell Tower and the implications for the management of high rise blocks in Wandsworth Council's housing stock.

SUMMARY

This reports details the tragic circumstances of the recent fire at Grenfell Tower in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and details the implication for the Council managed stock in Wandsworth with an overview of the existing fire safety regime.

GLOSSARY

ACM - Aluminium Composite Material
BRE - Building Research Establishment
DCLG - Department for Communities and Local Government

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Housing and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to support the recommendations in paragraph 3.

2. If the Housing and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve any views, comments or additional recommendations on this report these will be submitted to the Executive for consideration.

3. The Executive are recommended to approve that: -

   (a) the Director of Housing and Regeneration brings a report back to the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee once the investigation at Grenfell Tower has progressed sufficiently to provide some clarity on the cause and

unprecedented spread of the fire, including any required or potential improvements for fire safety in Wandsworth Council housing blocks; and

(b) the Director of Environment and Community Services be asked to prepare a report for the Finance and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee setting out the Council's emergency planning arrangements and preparedness for an event of similar scale in Wandsworth.

GRENFELL TOWER FIRE

4. Grenfell Tower, in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, is a 24 storey tower block constructed in 1974, containing 120 flats (six units on 20 floors and four floors utilised for non-residential purposes). It was recently refurbished in 2015/16 at a cost of £8.7 million, including the installation of external cladding. The block is managed by the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation, a long established body that manages all council housing in the Borough.

5. The fire started in the early hours of 14th June and the first call to the London Fire Brigade's control room was at 00:54. A team of 200 firefighters with 40 fire engines and a range of other specialist vehicles, including 14 fire rescue units, attempted to control the blaze and rescue people.

6. On 19th June the Metropolitan Police announced that they believed that sadly 79 people are either dead or missing presumed dead following the incident, but that this figure may change. Of the 79, five people had been formally identified.

7. The cause of the fire has not yet been determined. There has been comment on the extraordinary speed at which the fire spread, with speculation that this may have been aided by the building's exterior cladding.

HIGH RISE AND OVERCLAD BLOCKS IN WANDSWORTH

8. Wandsworth Council has 100 blocks of ten storeys or more containing 6,420 residential flats and maisonettes. Three of the tower blocks have had cladding systems fitted in the past - Sudbury House, Castlemaine and Weybridge Point. All systems will have used materials that were compliant with the appropriate standards in place at the time and the works would have received Building Control consent. We do know that the cladding works were closely supervised by Clerk of Works directly employed by the Council. The cladding systems have been in place in excess of ten years and in two of the blocks (Castlemaine and Sudbury House) serious domestic fires have tested the integrity of the panels as can be seen by the photos set out in Appendix 1 to this report. Members may be aware that the press has drawn comparisons between Grenfell Tower and Castlemaine; however, they are blocks of different design and the cladding systems and materials used appear very different. Neither the Council (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) nor the London Fire Brigade have confirmed exactly what cladding system was used at Grenfell Tower, although information has been picked up from the original planning consent.

9. To repeat, the cladding system used at Castlemaine has been subject to an intense domestic fire without any spread.

10. A letter was hand delivered to all residents in high rise blocks on the evening of Wednesday 14th June giving reassurance, details of the fire safety regime in place in Wandsworth with some additional fire safety advice. Given the speculation about the cladding system at Grenfell Tower a separate letter was hand delivered to residents of the high rise over-clad blocks. An additional letter of reassurance was sent to Castlemaine residents on 16th June with the enclosed photographs of Castlemaine demonstrating the integrity of the cladding system.

CURRENT FIRE SAFETY CHECKS

11. All Council/co-op managed blocks were subject to an independent Fire Risk Assessment in 2016 and a regime of checks and inspections is in place to ensure that the risk of fire in our managed stock is minimised. This will include regular checks of all communal areas for fire hazards, flammable materials etc. Further checks on fire doors, communal lighting also take place.

12. Detailed fire safety advice is issued to all new tenants and reissued periodically through Homelife and the website.

13. All void properties are fitted with sealed unit smoke alarms (lithium battery powered with a ten-year life span) and tenants are provided with new alarms and replacements at no cost. Leaseholders are encouraged to fit their own alarms and the London Fire Brigade also offer to provide fire safety visits on request at which smoke alarms are provided at no charge.

CLADDING

14. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) have been in contact with all social housing landlords asking for detailed stock information and requiring checks of all Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding, providing a free testing service via the Building Research Establishment (BRE). The Council is in the process of removing a sample of the cladding from relevant blocks to allow the necessary reassurance testing. Residents will be notified of this.

FURTHER ACTION

15. The investigation into the Grenfell Tower fire is still ongoing and the Council will act on the advice and recommendations that come out of this terrible incident. There has been contact with the Borough Commander who has first-hand experience of the Grenfell Tower incident. He has confirmed that, whilst there have been many serious fires in Wandsworth's managed stock, he can think of no incident where the building has not performed as it should and contained the fire.

16. Detailed information is being collated on the cladding systems applied to the residential blocks in Wandsworth. Further letters are planned to residents in lower rise blocks (five to nine storeys) and to the residents of the overclad high rise blocks as appropriate.

Grenfell Tower fire

17. The next edition of Homelife will contain more fire safety advice to residents and further reassurance.

18. Assistance has been and will continue to be offered to Kensington and Chelsea as they manage the aftermath of the fire.

19. Further reports will be submitted as the fire investigation and public inquiry proceed.

The Town Hall,
Wandsworth,
SW18 2PU.

BRIAN REILLY
Director of Housing and Regeneration

20th June 2017

Background Papers

There are no background papers to this report.

All reports to Overview and Scrutiny Committees, regulatory and other committees, the Executive and the full Council can be viewed on the Council's website (www.wandsworth.gov.uk/moderngov) unless the report was published before May 2001, in which case the committee secretary (Thayyiba Shaah –, 020 8871 6039; email tshaah@wandsworth.gov.uk) can supply if required.

APPENDIX 1 TO PAPER NO. 17-239

Sudbury House fire in 2010

Castlemaine fire in 2008

This page is intentionally left blank