

CHESHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: 26TH FEBRUARY 2020
REPORT OF: LEE SHEARS
AUTHOR: SM MARK POLLARD

SUBJECT: GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY PHASE 1 UPDATE

Purpose of Report

1. To update the Performance and Overview Committee on the Service's planning, position in relation to the recommendations in The Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report (hereafter referred to as the Report).

Recommended: That

- [1] The Committee considers the information contained within the paper.
- [2] The Committee continues to support the work the service is carrying out in relation to the recommendations contained within The Report.

Background

2. Following the fire at Grenfell Tower on the night of 14 June 2017 Sir Martin Moore-Bick was appointed to lead the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI) as the Chairman (appointed 28 June 2017). The purpose of the inquiry was to examine the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire.
3. The Report from Phase 1 of the GTI was released in October 2019. It focuses on the factual narrative of the events on the night and consists of an overview and 4 volumes, concluding with a number of recommendations.
4. In the run up to the publication of the Report, the Protection Department were proactive in responding to consultations and "calls for evidence" from various Government departments. These included, but were not limited to:-
 - Response to the Dame Judith Hackitt report (Building a Safer Future Consultation)
 - Response to the call for evidence in relation to the Fire Safety Order
 - Response to the competency framework (Raising the Bar) consultation

- Response to a call for evidence in relation to proposed changes to Approved Document B, specifically relating to Sprinklers (height thresholds) and fire safety measures within high rise blocks of flats.

Information

5. The Service undertook a gap analysis concerning the recommendations in the Report in order to assess the Service's current position and to help determine any actions that were necessary. The gap analysis is attached to this report as Appendix 1.
6. A paper was presented to Service Management Team in December detailing the findings of the gap analysis. Since then an action plan aimed at addressing required improvements has been prepared.
7. The gap analysis demonstrated that the Service was in a relatively good position in relation to many of the recommendations. The analysis showed that since the Grenfell incident in 2017 the Service has been proactive and had carried out considerable work to ensure its operational effectiveness in the event of a high rise incident.
8. In response to the Report and to manage the arising action plan an inter-departmental High Rise Working Group was created. Additionally, to manage the workload generated by the recommendations and gap analysis a temporary Watch Manager has been appointed to the Operational Policy and Assurance (OPA) Department with responsibility for managing, co-ordinating and delivering activity in this area.
9. In December 2020 the NFCC issued a briefing note relating to the Report detailing its position in relation to the recommendations. This note was accompanied with an overview of works completed, the works in progress and planned future works. It is important to note that the NFCC is keen to develop common approaches to some of the issues identified in the Report and want to lead on many of the recommendations to prevent 45 different approaches so as to ensure consistency.
10. Work has already started in a number of areas, including the evaluation of smoke hoods through the Operations Committee and the start of a significant piece of work on the practicalities of changing from a Stay Put building strategy to complete emergency evacuation. A Steering Group is being established by MHCLG to oversee some of the work.
11. Furthermore some of the recommendations suggest new or revised legislation is required which will require Government intervention to address.
12. Many recommendations relate directly to fire control rooms and their procedures and arrangements for communicating and interacting with the incident ground. Work in relation to these recommendations will be carried out by North West Fire Control and will be monitored by the Service.

13. Since 2017 the protection team has completed audits on each of the 21 high rise residential blocks within Cheshire and has been proactive in the promotion of sprinklers within such premises. Out of the 21 blocks within Cheshire 17 will be fitted with sprinklers by the end of 2020. Engagement work is ongoing in relation to the four outstanding premises.
14. None of the high-rise residential premises within Cheshire were found to have Aluminium Cladding Material (ACM) of the type used on Grenfell Tower, and the Protection Department continues to monitor current Government guidance in relation to other cladding types/systems and take action as required. The Decks development in Runcorn is an example of this continuing work.
15. In the coming year Protection officers will be completing further joint Site Specific Risk Information (SSRI) visits with operational crews to each of our high-rise premises. The emphasis of these visits will be to ensure the relevant protection information is contained within the SSRI plans. In addition the visits will ensure that crews are familiar with and can recognise, the risks associated with dealing with incidents in high rise buildings and have the relevant information to deal effectively with them.
16. A review of all SSRI plans relating to high-rise premises has been completed by the SSRI Training Officer (SSRITO) with further training planned for crews in the coming year.
17. The Operational Training Group (OTG) and Command Training Group (CTG) have also included high rise training and incident simulation within their training programmes. This is best evidenced by the work completed by the CTG, who have assessed and trained incident commanders at all levels in relation to high-rise scenarios.
18. Crews from Cheshire have also been involved in several over the border high-rise exercises with both Merseyside and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Services.
19. The Operational Policy and Assurance (OPA) department has also ensured that Service policies and procedures have been kept up to date with changes to the National Operational Guidance (NOG).
20. A regional working group has been established in order to ensure that work carried out in relation to the Report recommendations is completed in a joined up manner. This is managed through the North West Region Operational Convergence Group. The most relevant example of this joined up approach has been the adoption of the HIRE protocol.
21. HIRE (High-rise Immediate Resident Evacuation) is a procedure now agreed by each Service that uses North West Fire Control (NWFC). In short, HIRE is a message that would be initiated from the incident ground where fire spread and development is not what the Incident Commander would expect and evacuation of the building is deemed necessary. On receipt of the HIRE message NWFC will change their response to callers. Advice will change

from instructing them to act in accordance with the building fire evacuation strategy (which may include a stay put arrangement), to advising them to immediately evacuate the building. NWFC will also make every effort to call back previous callers to inform them of the change of advice.

22. The Service is currently working to embed the HIRE procedure at all levels of incident command and will be carrying out a number of table top and live exercises to:-
 - I. Robustly test crews and incident commanders in the identification of situations where HIRE is required and the implementation and use of the procedure on the incident ground
 - II. Ensure that resources and equipment deployed are suitable and sufficient to effectively manage the change to simultaneous evacuation. This will include testing communication and information flow between the incident ground and NWFC.
 - III. Ensure that the procedure is effective and workable based on a local and regional response to an incident.

Financial Implications

23. At this time the financial implications are limited to the cost of the additional Watch Manager post, however it is foreseeable that work arising from this report will have additional financial implications and this will form part of future papers as required.

Legal Implications

24. There are no legal implications directly related to this paper. However, legal issues may be highlighted as the work continues to deliver the action plan.

Equality and Diversity Implications

25. There are no equality or diversity implications arising from this paper.

Environmental Implications

26. At this point no environmental implications have been highlighted.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1 – Gap Analysis