

CHESHIRE FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

MEETING OF: PERFORMANCE AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE
DATE: 24TH FEBRUARY 2021
REPORT OF: HEAD OF PROTECTION AND ORGANISATIONAL
PERFORMANCE
AUTHOR: SM LEE MCGARITY

SUBJECT: GRENPELL TOWER INQUIRY PHASE 1 & 2
UPDATE

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on the Service's response to the recommendations arising from The Grenfell Tower Inquiry: Phase 1 Report (The Phase 1 Report). And;
2. To provide an update on Phase 2 of The Grenfell Tower Inquiry.

Recommended: That Members

[1] Note the report.

Background

3. 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.
4. The GTI was divided into different phases to capture specific elements relating to the fire. Phase 1 addressed the events on the night of the fire, and the ongoing Phase 2 will investigate the wider issues which led to the fire and its impact.
5. The Phase 1 Report was released in October 2019. It focuses on the factual narrative of the events on the night and consists of a report overview and 4 volumes, concluding in Part 4, Chapter 33 with a number of recommendations.
6. Phase 2 of the GTI started at the end of January 2020 and has been severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. Remote hearings resumed in February 2021.

7. Phase 2 of the GTI is examining the circumstances and causes of the disaster, including how Grenfell Tower came to be in a condition which allowed the fire to spread in the way identified in Phase 1.
8. The Phase 1 Report recommended the need for new and revised legislation in many areas. The first of these major legislative changes has yet to be made. Although the Fire Safety Bill was published on the 20th March 2020, it has not yet become law.
9. The Bill, as drafted, clarifies that duty holders for blocks of flats must manage and reduce the risk of fire posed by external wall systems, balconies and flat entrance doors. This means that fire and rescue services will have the power to take enforcement action against building owners in relation to the external envelope including cladding, balconies and windows as well as flat front doors.
10. In addition, a recent change was also made to Approved Document 'B' (building regulations), which provides guidance on fire safety for new buildings. In future, sprinklers will be required in buildings over 11 metres (a significant reduction from the current 30 metres).
11. A paper was presented to Performance and Overview Committee in February 2020 detailing the Service's gap analysis findings and the High Rise Action Plan which had been developed to address required improvements.
12. A cross department High-rise Working Group was established within the Service in February 2020 to deliver the relevant requirements of the High Rise Action Plan.
13. Cheshire has 21 high rise residential buildings (over 18 metres) however there are a number of buildings which are just below this threshold. 17 of the 21 buildings are either fitted with sprinklers or are in the process of being fitted with sprinklers.
14. The following sections of this paper detail the headline progress and actions that have occurred since the previous paper to the committee.

Information

15. The Service has received two government grants relating directly to high rise work streams and recommendations in The Phase 1 Report.
16. The first grant, for £60,000, is aligned to the Building Risk Review program of works. This workstream requires all services to provide assurance to MHCLG and the Home Office against a specific list of 'in scope' buildings.

This list is predominantly made up of high-rise and relevant cladded buildings and the work must be completed by the end of December 2021. The 'in scope' list of buildings in Cheshire consists of 38 buildings (note these are not all high rise).

17. This funding has been used to create a Station Manager position within the Protection Department to manage the Building Risk Review program and all Protection related aspects of the GTI and high rise work.
18. The second grant of £83,357 was for the procurement of smoke hoods for use at operational incidents and for infrastructure to support ongoing Grenfell related work. Smoke hoods were a recommendation in The Phase 1 Report.
19. The Service is using this funding to purchase a number of pieces of new high rise specific kit, including smoke hoods, which are detailed later in this paper and to part fund the second year of a Watch Manager within Operational Policy and Assurance (OPA). This post was previously fully funded by the Service and manages the workload generated by The Phase 1 Report recommendations and gap analysis with responsibility for managing, co-ordinating and delivering the High Rise Action Plan activity.
20. Papers are regularly presented to the SMT, most recently in September and December 2020, detailing the work completed by the High-rise Working Group and the intention of the Group's next steps.
21. A key next step for the High-rise Working Group is the implementation of the Immediate Building Evacuation (IBE) procedure. This procedure will replace the already embedded High-rise Immediate Resident Evacuation (HIRE) procedure.
22. The IBE procedure is an improvement upon the HIRE procedure and can be implemented at any building requiring immediate evacuation. It was developed following notable fires including Beechmere, Crewe and The Cube in Bolton. Neither of these buildings were high-rise, however they required a full emergency evacuation.
23. The IBE procedure enables incident commanders to quickly and simply implement a process with supporting resources to effectively manage large scale building evacuations.

Work completed

24. The table provided in Appendix 1 is a brief overview of the work completed by the Service's departments in relation to The Phase 1 Report and the Service's High Rise Action Plan.

25. A regional working group has been established in order to ensure that work carried out in relation to The Phase 1 Report recommendations is completed in a joined up manner. This is managed through the North West Region Operational Convergence Group.

Financial Implications

26. The Watch Manager post within OPA was approved as a 1-year growth bid for the year 2020/21 to oversee and co-ordinate the High-rise Working Group activity. This has subsequently been part-funded from the infrastructure funding.
27. The Protection Station Manager is funded from the Building Risk Review grant and this spend is reported in regular returns to the Home Office.
28. Budget bids have been prepared for the purchase of specific equipment aligned to the high rise work and are approved via the normal budget management processes e.g. 150 smoke hoods for use at operational incidents at an initial cost of £16,000.

Legal Implications

29. The Building Safety Bill and Fire Safety Bill have many implications for fire and rescue services in terms of responsibilities and enforcement powers. These implications are being considered at Service, NFCC and national level.
30. It is important that the Service responds appropriately to the GTI and the Hackett review. The NFCC is conducting a number of surveys to understand how services have responded to the recommendations and to monitor how change has been implemented across fire and rescue services. This should assist the Service to understand how it is performing in relation to the considerable change that is envisaged.

Equality and Diversity Implications

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

Environmental Implications

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

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: PO GRENFELL UPDATE MAY 2020

Appendix 1 – Work Completed

APPENDIX 1

Appointment of a SM role to manage the Building Risk Review and Protection high rise implications
Contacted high-rise Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) for additional information to assist in operational response and SSRI enhancement
Liaised with neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services to assess their response to the Grenfell Tower inquiry.
Continuing dialogue with RSLs over installation of sprinklers in high rise residential blocks
Responding to consultations and calls for evidence
Monitoring output from NFCC and MHCLG and taking action as required
Created a high-rise project on the Cheshire Planning System.
Considering the impact that the release of the Fire Safety Bill in March 2020 will have on delivery
Created a working plan for inspection of all in scope premises throughout Cheshire
Produced a suite of evidence relating to the Service's response to the Grenfell incident for HMICFRS inspection
Gap analysis of Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service's (GMFRS) High Rise standard operating procedures (SOP) completed
Gap analysis of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service's (LFRS) SOP (High Rise) completed
Gap analysis of Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service's (MFRS) SOP (High Rise) completed
Gap analysis of the NFCC National Operational Guidance (NOG) update on 'Fires in tall buildings' and 'Fires in buildings that fail' completed
Gap analysis of The Cube fire report completed
The content of the GMFRS SOP that does not form part of current Cheshire policy is being reviewed and considered for adoption. i.e. Stairwell Protection Teams, working above the Bridgehead without BA (half donned), Evacuation Officers, Evacuation Command Unit and all relevant equipment

Research, development, testing and evaluation of specialist high rise equipment has taken place leading to inform revised procedures, budget bids and procurement.

Budget bids prepared and agreed for smoke hoods, smoke curtains, Cleveland hose straps and 51mm hose. Further bids for additional specialist equipment are also being considered.

A funding bid submitted to replace the existing 'ToxiRAE' gas detectors. This supports the recommendation for gas detection to be used in conjunction with functional roles such as Stairwell Protection Teams when implementing the IBE procedures.

Managing the replacement of the Service's current pack-set radio communications and ancillary equipment (e.g. leaky feeders) with consideration given to The Phase 1 Report recommendations

Attended a major live HIRE exercise at the GMFRS Bury Training and Development Centre. Newly identified equipment was trialled during the exercise

Operational crews carried out two live exercise in December to test the IBE procedures and the implementation of a co-ordinated evacuation of a building. The learning from these exercises is directing future developments