

 Brent	<p style="text-align: center;">Cabinet 24 July 2017</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Report from the Strategic Director for Community Wellbeing</p>
Wards Affected: All	
<p>Programme of Works to enhance Fire Safety in the Council's Housing Stock</p>	

Reason for Urgency

This report follows on from a decision taken at Full Council only on 10 July 2017 to increase the 2017/18 Capital Programme. It forms part of the Council's priority response to enhancing fire safety measures in the Council's housing stock. Undue and unnecessary delay to the process of developing a detailed programme of works would be caused if this report was deferred until the next scheduled meeting of Cabinet.

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the process for developing a detailed programme of fire safety works, following Council's agreement of a £10million increase to the Council's 2017/2018 Capital Programme, in order to meet the cost of enhancing the fire safety measures in the Council's housing stock.

2.0 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Cabinet notes the proposed process for developing a fully itemised and costed programme of fire safety work for Cabinet consideration and approval by October 2017.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 On 10 July 2017, Council discussed a report which sets out fire safety arrangements for residential accommodation in Brent and specific measures which the Council and Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) are taking in response to the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower last month.

- 3.2 Council agreed that a £10million programme was required and resolved to ask the Government to meet this cost increase to the Council's 2017/2018 Capital Programme, in order to meet the cost of enhancing the fire safety measures in the Council's housing stock.
- 3.3 Council agreed that the Chief Executive should write to the Government as a matter of urgency to request that the Government provide direct financial support to meet the costs that will be incurred. The letter has been sent to the Government requesting financial support, as well as requesting that the Government urgently consider revocation of the permitted development rights for office to residential conversions; that the Government review the building control laws which allow the use of building control teams from both the private sector and other local authorities to inspect buildings which can mean a total lack of oversight by local authority inspectors of the fire risk level in some privately owned high rise blocks and that the Government address whether licensing laws for landlords in the private sector are stringent enough to ensure that all dwellings are fit for human habitation.
- 3.4 The draft minute recording Full Council's decision (which has not been formally approved yet) is attached at Annex 1 and the letter is attached at Annex 2.

4.0 Actions to develop the detailed work programme for enhanced fire measures in High-rise blocks

- 4.1 A specification is in the process of being developed, which will outline the enhanced fire detection equipment that could be installed, over and above the required standard. In order to establish the exact works required, a suitably qualified specialist will carry out a survey of each building, and specify the schedule of works. This will be specific to each block, but may include detection systems localised alarms in communal areas and/or dwellings, fire suppression systems such as sprinklers, or smoke extraction systems.
- 4.2 The appropriate procurement framework will be accessed in order to appoint the relevant specialists required in order to complete this preparatory work.
- 4.3 Surveyors will visit all blocks between now and September in order to carry out these surveys, which will inform the detailed plan which will be brought back for consideration by Cabinet in October 2017.
- 4.4 It will be important to keep residents informed and reassured throughout this process. A letter has been sent to all tenants and leaseholders to advise them of the outcome of the Full Council discussion, attached at Annex 3, and a programme of communication will continue throughout this process.

5.0 Financial implications

- 5.1 If the Council's request for government financial support is rejected, further consideration will need to be given to how this will be funded, with a detailed funding plan to be brought to Cabinet in October 2017, along with the detailed programme of works.

6.0 Legal implications

- 6.1 Owners and landlords of buildings have to comply with various legal obligations to ensure the safety of others and to discharge the duty of care they owe. The fire safety works outlined in this report include safeguards over and above minimum statutory requirements.
- 6.2 The procurement and contract issues arising will be reported at the same time as the detailed and costed programme of works.

7.0 Equality implications

- 7.1 There are no direct equality implications in relation to this report.

8.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 8.1 There are no direct staffing or accommodation implications in relation to this report.

Background Papers

- Minutes of full Council meeting
- Copy of letter to Government
- Copy of letter to tenants and leaseholders

Contact Officers

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