



**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
**Fire & Rescue Service**  
*Creating Safer Communities*

Nottinghamshire and City of Nottingham  
Fire and Rescue Authority  
Community Safety Committee

# **GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY AND TALL BUILDING RESPONSE**

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

**Date:** 09 June 2023

**Purpose of Report:**

To update Members on actions being taken following the completion of the Grenfell Tower action plan and subsequent work to ensure an effective response to fires in tall buildings.

**Recommendations:**

It is recommended that Members:

- Note the content of the report.
- Endorse the ongoing work being undertaken to ensure an effective response to fires in tall buildings.

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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 On 14 June 2017, a fire occurred at Grenfell Tower, London, which destroyed the 24-storey block of 129 residential flats. Tragically, 72 people lost their lives at the incident.
- 1.2 The Right Honourable Sir Martin Moore-Bick was appointed as Chairman of the public inquiry; set up to examine the circumstances leading up to, and surrounding, the fire at Grenfell Tower.
- 1.3 On 21 January 2020, Government published its response to the Phase One, Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI), making 47 recommendations.
- 1.4 The Service developed an action plan to define and track progress against implementing these recommendations. All 47 recommendations were completed and closed by December 2021.
- 1.5 Quarterly returns were completed for the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) who monitored sector progress in this area.
- 1.6 The Service has continued to assure tall building activities since the completion of the action plan and refine and test procedures to ensure they are able to provide an effective response to a fire in a tall building.
- 1.7 His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has highlighted that addressing the Grenfell Tower Inquiry recommendations and tall building response will be an area of focus during their upcoming inspection. This is likely to include a practical assessment of the evacuation of a large number of people from tall buildings.

## **2. REPORT**

- 2.1 The Service has continued to improve its preparedness activities including site specific risk information, and the training of operational staff. This report highlights the work undertaken across the Service to ensure preparedness and effectiveness in response.

### **RESPONSE / RISK AND ASSURANCE**

- 2.2 NFRS has assessed 23, high-risk, tall buildings. These buildings are classified as 'high-risk' due to factors such as; external flammable cladding, poor compartmentation, fire safety defects, or complexity of layout. This information is generated through effective liaison between departments within the Service, as well as from other agencies, and 'responsible persons' for the buildings.
- 2.3 NFRS, along with Joint Fire Control (JFC), have carried out five tall building exercises in the last twelve months. These have been debriefed and learning has been captured to drive continuous improvements.

- 2.4 Tall building 'tabletop' exercises have been conducted with all Watches and On-Call stations. These were facilitated by officers and 58 tabletop exercises were delivered in total. These have refreshed procedural approaches for responding to these types of incidents and have standardised the Service's approach across all operational teams.
- 2.5 No-notice exercises have been carried out and will continue over the next six months. These are designed to test the Service's capability to co-ordinate the evacuation of large number of people, from different communities and with different accessibility and evacuation needs. All officers and JFC personnel will participate in at least one exercise.
- 2.6 New specialist equipment has been purchased to provide and support effective rescues and safe evacuation of people through smoke-filled environments. This includes the purchase of smoke hoods, smoke curtains, dividing breaches, short lengths, additional radios, and loud hailers. The smoke hoods have already been used operationally and have supported the safe rescue of trapped persons.
- 2.7 A programme of 'dry riser' testing is now being undertaken by firefighters, commencing with the 23 high risk tall buildings. This is to ensure firefighters are familiarised with delivering water within tall buildings and to also check for defects.
- 2.8 Tall building lessons, produced from the National Operational Guidance (NOG), have been completed by all operational staff and form part of ongoing continual professional development for all operational staff.
- 2.9 Joint meetings between Risk and Assurance and Fire Protection continue with the 'High Rise Residential Group' continuing to audit the shared understating of risks across departments.

## **FIRE PROTECTION**

- 2.10 On 23 January 2023, the Fire Safety England Regulations were enacted in law. The Government introduced these regulations under article 24 of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (Fire Safety Order). This was a means for the Government to implement the majority of the recommendations relevant to them from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 report.
- 2.11 The new regulations require the responsible persons in multi-occupied residential buildings which are high-rise buildings, as well as those above 11 metres in height, to provide additional safety measures.
- 2.12 In all multi-occupied residential buildings, the regulations require responsible persons to provide residents with fire safety instructions and information on the importance of fire doors.

- 2.13 In high-rise residential buildings, responsible persons are required to:
- Provide their local fire and rescue service with up-to-date electronic building floor plans and to place a hard copy of these plans, alongside a single page building plan which identifies key firefighting equipment, in a secure information box on site;
  - Provide to their local fire and rescue service information about the design and materials of a high-rise building's external wall system and to inform the fire and rescue service of any material changes to these walls;
  - Undertake monthly checks on firefighter and evacuation lifts in their building and check the functionality of firefighting equipment, reporting defects to the fire and rescue service;
  - Install and maintain a secure information box in their building. This box must contain the name and contact details of the responsible person and hard copies of the building floor plans;
  - Install signage visible in low light or smoky conditions that identifies flat and floor numbers in the stairwells.
- 2.14 In residential buildings with storeys over 11 metres in height, responsible persons are also required to undertake annual checks of flat entrance doors and quarterly checks of all fire doors in the common parts.
- 2.15 NFRS Fire Protection staff provide advice regarding the points above to responsible persons of tall buildings within Nottinghamshire and have legal powers to enforce compliance.
- 2.16 The Joint Audit and Inspection Team (JAIT) continues in the city conurbation and to date has conducted inspections of 188 buildings (21,747 flats). There are a further 21 buildings (1271 flats) over 18 metres, and 275 buildings (7,072 flats) below 18 metres that are scheduled for inspection.
- 2.17 In October 2023, the Building Safety Act commences in law. This will see changes to the Regulatory Reform Order and provide greater powers to the Health and Safety Executive as the new Building Safety Regulator. This regulator will be supported by a multi-disciplinary team, which will include representation from the fire sector.
- 2.18 NFRS are seconding a Fire Safety Inspector to the multi-disciplinary team and have backfilled this post using additional, temporary funding that has been provided by the Home Office.

## **PREVENTION**

- 2.19 Safety messaging continues to be a focus for Prevention Team activity. Community events have been carried out at the 23 high risk tall buildings,

reassuring residents and educating them on evacuation strategies; providing bespoke safety advice for residents of tall buildings.

- 2.20 A dedicated page has been created on the Service's website to provide further information and guidance to residents. This information, along with all the website pages, can be translated by the user into any language, and is also supported by a read-aloud function.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The Grenfell Infrastructure grant of £100,748.71 was received by the Service and used to purchase specialist equipment detailed in this report.
- 3.2 The secondment of a Fire Safety Inspector to the HSE multi-disciplinary team (MDT), and the backfilling of the Fire Safety Inspector post, is to be funded from the temporary, two-year funding from the Home Office. After this point, the MDT is predicted to become 'self-funding'. This position will be monitored by the Service and updates presented to Members at future meetings.
- 3.3 Ongoing costs for exercising and assurance activities are aligned to the 2023/24 training budget.

### **4. HUMAN RESOURCES AND LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no human resources or learning and development implications arising from this report.

### **5. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

An equality impact assessment has driven the Service's approach to inclusion in relation to response activities. This has seen the introduction of exercises that focus on communities with accessibility requirements and continues to be tested by Response teams.

### **6. CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

### **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The Service has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act to ensure the safety of employees and others affected by its activities. Implementation of the GTI recommendations will ensure the Service complies with these requirements.

- 7.2 The Fire Services Act requires that NFRS resource to community risks including those associated with tall buildings and that adequate arrangements are in place to provide an effective operational response.
- 7.3 The Civil Contingencies Act requires that the Service has necessary plans in place to respond to a major incident which may include a fire in a tall building.
- 7.4 The Local Government Act 1999 places a statutory duty on NFRS to 'secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised'. The reporting of progress against these matters ensures that the Service is focusing on key objectives, as set by the Fire Authority, and continuous improvement. This ensures that Members can apply effective scrutiny to be satisfied that statutory obligations are being met.
- 7.5 The Fire Authority has a statutory duty to regulate the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, 2005.

## **8. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Effectively implementing the GTI recommendations ensures that the Service is well placed to ensure an effective operational response to a fire in a tall building. It will also go some way to ensuring an effective operational response to any type of major incident.
- 8.2 Enhanced employee training targeted at Control Operators, Incident Commanders and all operational employees will enhance the Service's ability to recognise and respond to a fire in a tall building in the most effective way. Enhancing safety for firefighters on the incident ground, and outcomes for members of the public involved in the incident.
- 8.3 Implementing updated command structures for fires in tall buildings will ensure appropriate spans of control and effective command decision making is in place at large scale incidents requiring search and rescue.
- 8.4 GTI recommendations and tall building response will be a focus for HMICFRS during the next tranche of inspections. Effective organisational response to the Inquiry will mitigate the risk of a negative inspection result and the subsequent reputational risks that this poses to the Service.
- 8.5 Close media scrutiny of both the GTI and subsequent fires that have occurred in tall buildings and clad buildings elsewhere in the country poses a significant reputational risk for the organisation were such an event to occur in Nottinghamshire.
- 8.6 Routine reporting of progress against the recommendations is required to the Home Office and NFCC. The Service responds in an assured and constructive manner to these consultations.

## **9. COLLABORATION IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 There are significant collaboration implications related to the actions required for Joint Fire Control relating to policy, procedure and training for Control Operators given the tri-service fire control arrangements in place, coupled with the Joint Fire Control managed by Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service.
- 9.2 Operational policy and guidance relating to fighting fires in tall buildings has been developed regionally. A collaborative approach to implementation is required since any large-scale incident is likely to result in cross-border support being requested from neighbouring fire and rescue services. A common understanding of ways of working is required to ensure this response is effective.
- 9.3 The Joint Audit and Inspection Team continue to work collaboratively with local authorities and Nottingham City Homes, delivering joint visit and sharing of risk information regarding high-risk sites.
- 9.4 NFRS is seconding a Fire Safety Inspector to the multi-disciplinary regulatory team. This will ensure an effective means to educate and enforce, when required.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members:

- 10.1 Note the contents of the report.
- 10.2 Endorse the ongoing work being undertaken to ensure an effective response to fires in tall buildings.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS FOR INSPECTION (OTHER THAN PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS)**

None.

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