

## Additional Agenda Item

### ***AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET***

<b>Report Title:</b>	Fire Safety in high-rise flats
<b>Name of Committee:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> June 2017
<b>Report Director:</b>	Head of Communities and Homes Head of Corporate Resources
<b>Portfolio:</b>	Communities and Homes Corporate Resources
<b>Ward Relevance:</b>	New Bilton and Eastlands
<b>Prior Consultation:</b>	Portfolio Holder for Communities and Homes Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Raj Chand, Head of Communities and Homes Liz Dunlop, Operational Housing Manager
<b>Public or Private:</b>	Public
<b>Report subject to Call-In:</b>	No
<b>Report En-Bloc:</b>	Yes
<b>Forward Plan:</b>	No
<b>Corporate Priorities:</b>	This report relates to the following priorities: Ensure residents have a home that works for them and is affordable
<b>Statutory / Policy Background:</b>	None
<b>Summary:</b>	Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, London, it is important that the council

considers the situation with regard to the high-rise flats at Rounds Gardens and Biart Place, Rugby.

This report outlines the range of measures that have been put in place by the council over the years to prevent the spread of fire in high-rise flats, the robust management and maintenance procedures in place and work carried out in a property following it becoming empty prior to a new tenant moving in.

Working with other agencies is also important to ensure that the fire safety and health and safety of our residents continues to be at a high level.

**Financial Implications:**

None as this stage. Depending on the outcome of the audit being carried out by Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service there could be costs in the future.

**Risk Management Implications:**

Not carrying out fire safety work could have a significant impact on residents and affect fire safety and their health and safety.

**Environmental Implications:**

There are no environmental implications for this report

**Legal Implications:**

There are no legal implications for this report

**Equality and Diversity:**

An equality impact assessment will be carried out and any impacts/risks and mitigation will be captured in the Operational Risk Register and reviewed regularly.

**Options:**

None

**Recommendation:**

The council works with the Fire & Rescue Service to facilitate the audit of the high-rise flats/blocks and acts upon recommendations on receipt of their report.

**Reasons for Recommendation:**

To ensure the highest standard of fire safety and health and safety for residents of high-rise flats.

## Additional Agenda Item

Cabinet – 26<sup>th</sup> June 2017

### Fire Safety in high-rise flats

#### Report of the Head of Communities and Homes

##### **Recommendation:**

The Council works with the Fire and Rescue Service to facilitate the audit of the high-rise flats/blocks and acts upon recommendations on receipt of their report.

##### **INTRODUCTION**

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower, London, it is important that the council consider the situation with regard to the high-rise flats at Rounds Gardens and Biart Place, Rugby.

This report outlines the range of measures that have been put in place by the council over the years to prevent the spread of fire in high-rise flats, the robust management and maintenance procedures in place and work carried out in a property following it becoming empty prior to a new tenant moving in.

The council's procedures and health and safety checks are up-to-date and are compliant with current fire safety and health and safety standards.

Working with other agencies is also important to ensure that the fire safety and health and safety of our residents continues to be at a high standard.

##### **BACKGROUND**

Rugby Borough Council owns and directly manages five blocks of high-rise flats, ten storey in height, with a total number of 313 flats

These blocks were built in 1965 and are located on the sites at :

Rounds Gardens: Ashwood Court, Beechwood Court and Royal Court

Biart Place: Green Court and Fairway Court

The blocks at Biart Place are clad directly with large Prefabricated Reinforced Concrete panels and are of similar appearance to the Bison Large Panel System. No additional cladding has been added since they were built.

The blocks at Rounds Gardens were clad directly with large Prefabricated Reinforced Concrete panels and were of a similar appearance to the Bison Large Panel System. However, in 1985 an external brick skin was added to all three blocks. A test was carried out on the blocks at Rounds Gardens on 21.6.17. to

identify what is behind the brickwork. It was found there was no combustible material, only mineral fibreglass insulation. There was no air gap and officers could see the inner concrete panel.

There have been a number of fires within the council's high-rise flats over the years. The Fire Service has so far been successful in containing these fires within the individual flat concerned. Other than dealing with smoke in the corridor on which the flat was located they have never needed to evacuate other residents.

## **FIRE SAFETY IN HIGH-RISE FLATS**

A range of measures have been put in place over the years to prevent the spread of fire in high-rise flats. These are shown at Appendix 1.

The council has robust management and maintenance procedures in place which are compliant with current fire safety and health and safety standards. These are shown at Appendix 2.

Appendix 3 outlines the work carried out in an empty property prior to it being let to a new tenant and also the sign-up procedure with a new tenant. During the sign-up procedure the council's fire safety leaflet and the additional conditions of tenancy for high-rise flats are discussed. The new tenant is provided with a copy of the fire safety leaflet.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH TENANTS OF HIGH-RISE FLATS:**

The council's website provides tenants with information specifically on fire safety in high-rise flats – see link below

<https://www.rugby.gov.uk/info/20069/information-for-tenants/347/fire-safety-in-blocks-of-flats>

A fire safety leaflet was delivered to all tenants in the council's high-rise flats in February 2017 a copy is attached at Appendix 4. The contents of this leaflet were agreed with the Fire Service and the council's Fire Safety Advisor.

Tenants who have contacted the council recently to say that they had misplaced or thrown the leaflet away have been provided with a further copy.

The Summer version of the Tenants Times is almost finalised and every effort is being made to have this distributed before the end of June. Two pages have been dedicated to remind tenants of fire safety and advice

The article reminds tenants that they cannot store things in communal areas and the penalties of so doing: the council will enforce tenancy conditions or remove any items and recharge.

Estate walkabouts are completed in high-rise blocks twice a year. Anything picked up in terms of fire risk, i.e. items in communal areas, is dealt with promptly.

Officers will review existing notices relating to fire safety in communal areas of the high-rise flats and amend or add to as required.

## **FIRE SERVICE**

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service has notified the council that they will be commencing an audit throughout Warwickshire for high-rise blocks of flats. Officers will work with the Fire Service to ensure the results and any actions arising are acted upon to ensure the safety of our buildings and residents.

## **FIRE POLICY**

A copy of the Fire Policy for the council's housing stock is attached at Appendix 5. This is due to have a full review in January 2018. In the meantime arrangements are being made to update administrative issues relating to roles and responsibilities.

The review will be brought forward to be done in line with the findings of the Fire Service's audit and incorporate any additions/amendments and actions arising.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION**

The Chief Executive of the Local Government Association has written to all councils asking that a response be provided to a number of questions relating to fire safety. These are shown at Appendix 6 along with the relevant answers in response.

Name of Meeting:  
Cabinet

Date of Meeting:  
26<sup>th</sup> June 2017

Subject Matter:

Fire Safety in high-rise flats

Originating Department:  
Communities and Homes

## List of Background Papers

Document No.	Date	Description of Document	Officer's Reference	File Reference
1.				

\* The background papers relating to reports on planning applications and which are open to public inspection under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972, consist of the planning applications, referred to in the reports, and all written responses to consultations made by the Local Planning Authority, in connection with those applications.

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\* Exempt information is contained in the following documents:

Document No.	Relevant Paragraph of Schedule 12A
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\* There are no background papers relating to this item.

(\*Delete if not applicable)



## Appendix - 1

### Measures put in place at Rounds Gardens and Biart Place multi-storey blocks to prevent the spread of fire:

- Fitted new hoppers to all refuse chutes with improved seals.
- Sprinklers fitted in bin rooms at Biart Place and Rounds Gardens to prevent fires in refuse chutes.
- Installation of CCTV monitored by the council's control centre.
- Intumescent strips fitted to bedroom and lounge doors of every flat providing an additional half hour fire protection.
- New doors fitted to every flat providing thirty minutes fire protection.
- Compartmentation work to seal all holes going through floors (contractors carrying out any work affecting compartmentation are required to ensure everything is properly sealed where it goes through floors).
- New fire doors on all landings with self-closers (old ones were 30 years old, twisted and warped. As a result new seals could not provide the required fire protection).
- Meter cupboards at Rounds Gardens on all floors (external to flats located in lobbies) removed boards and sealed all holes going through floors with intumescent foam.
- Meter cupboards at Biart Place (external to flats but in corridors) smoke seals and strips fitted.
- Dulux pyroshield applied to all walls (if this goes on fire it does not burn but turns to steam).
- Rounds Gardens sprinkler system in the bin rooms replaced and brought up to standard with current regulations.
- Biart Place sprinkler system in the bin rooms being replaced to bring up to standard with current regulations.
- The meter cupboard work at Rounds Gardens is to install smoke seals and strips. To be done when the kitchens are refurbished which will start around July / August 2017 (three blocks).

**Rounds Gardens and Biart Place multi-storey blocks – management and maintenance procedures:**

**High Rise**

<b>Action</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Laundry driers duct cleaning	Annually in March
Fire doors	Checked every six months by way of estate inspection by Property Repairs Service officers.
Electrics	Checked annually and in line with safety regulations
Dry Risers	Wet tested every December / dry tested every June x 5 (includes Edward Court and James Court).
Bin Rooms	Alarm panel tested twice yearly and sprinkler system tested twice yearly, February and August (recently upgraded at Rounds)
Emergency Lighting	Serviced yearly from April
Fire Risk Assessment - Fire safety checks – communal and high rise blocks	Annually (last done Ashwood/Beechwood and Royal January 2017. Green and Fairway December 2016).
Testing Fireman Switches (override to access main doors by Fire Brigade)	Tested June and December annually.

Any works arising from the above is raised with an appropriate target date and completed. In addition to this any reports of faults or repairs via officers and/or tenants are acted upon promptly.

<b>Smoke alarmsRegime</b>	
High rise	Completed by way of annual flat inspection and / or Concierge dialling into flat and asking.

Records of the checks are kept and audited regularly.

## Appendix 3

### VOID (EMPTY PROPERTIES) AND SIGN UP PROCEDURE

Following an inspection of a void property various work is carried out. This includes:

- A periodic test
- Testing of the smoke alarm
- Testing of all electrical sockets/consumer unit
- Checking intumescent strip around fire doors and any servicing that needs carrying out.

New tenants are provided with fire safety leaflets at sign up, this includes leaflets specifically for high-rise and for 'people with sight, hearing or mobility difficulties', where appropriate.

Tenants in high-rise properties sign a document called 'additional conditions for tenants of Rugby Borough Council's high rise flats', this includes references to:

- non hoarding as this is a fire hazard,
- appropriate disposal of refuse/litter,
- appropriate disposal of furniture and large goods, as these cause obstructions and create a fire risk, electric meter cupboards are not to be used for storage of any items in the interest of electrical safety
- the storage and use of paraffin heaters and gas appliances is prohibited
- petrol, gas and other flammable liquids are fire risks and therefore cannot be stored in flats or storage cupboards
- ground floor entrance and exit door, fire doors on all landings, the laundry and to all communal areas and facilities must not be propped open

Tenants are encouraged to test smoke alarms following the sign up and to take additional responsibility to ensure that they work on a regular basis (outside of the annual checks that are made).



## MOBILITY SCOOTERS



Mobility Scooters and electric bikes are not permitted to be stored in communal areas under any circumstances unless you have received written permission to do so.

If mobility scooters are found in communal areas you will be asked to remove them.

## REPORTING FAULTS

Report faulty or damaged smoke alarms or fire doors on 01788 533 888.

Report items stored or left in communal areas to 01788 533 533.



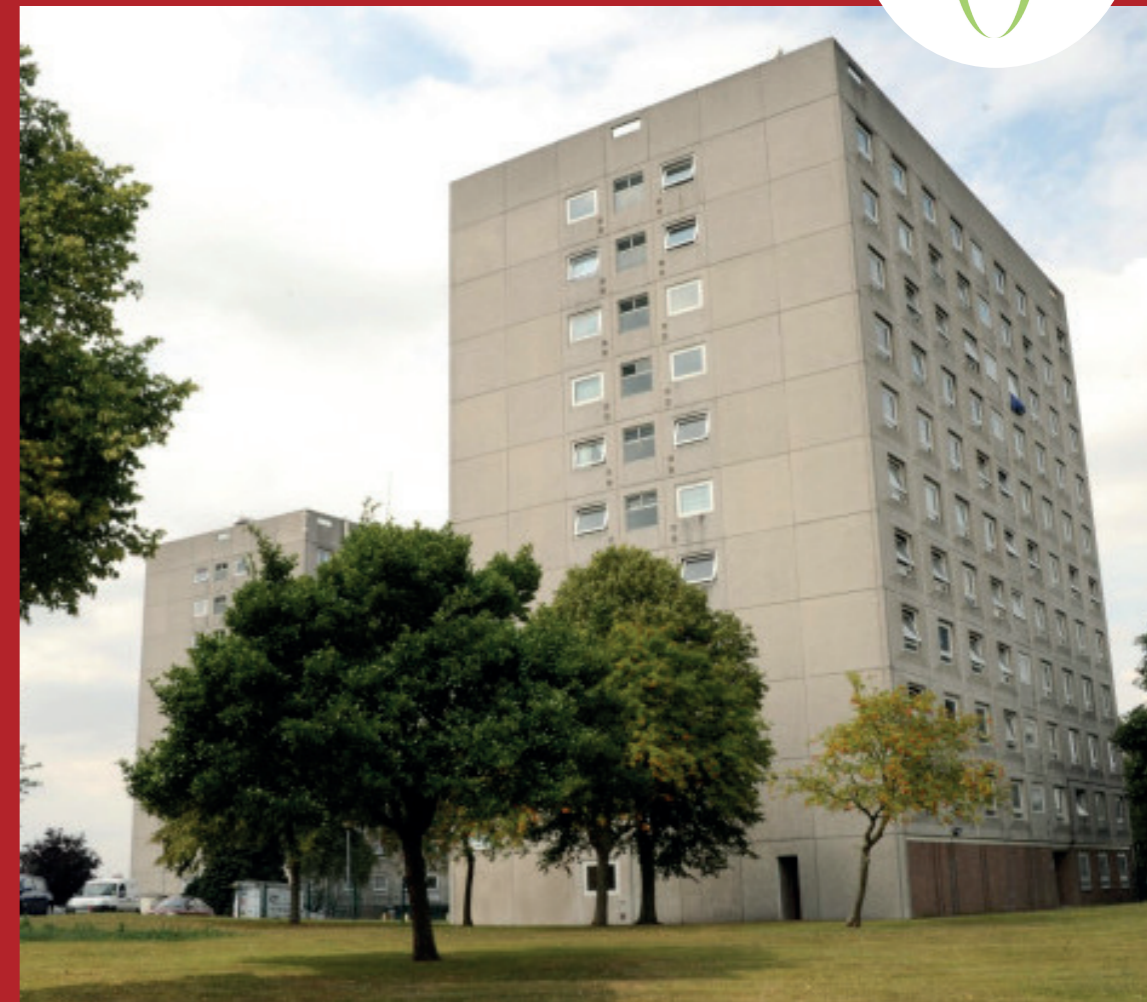
## WARWICKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service offer free home safety checks and under some circumstances you may be eligible for a free smoke alarm.

Warwickshire Fire and Rescue can be contacted by Telephone on 01926 466282 or by email on [firesafety@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:firesafety@warwickshire.gov.uk)

There is also lots more useful advice on their website:

[www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fireandrescue](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fireandrescue)



# FIRE SAFETY IN HIGH RISE FLATS

## FIRE SAFETY IN BLOCKS OF FLATS

By taking sensible precautions you are no more at risk from fire if you live in a high rise building than any other type of building.

Blocks of flats are built to reduce the possibility of fire spreading out of the flat it starts in.

If the fire is in another flat you are safer staying in your own flat unless you are affected by heat and smoke from another flat.

### SMOKE ALARMS

We will make sure you have at least one working electronic smoke alarm.

Test your smoke alarm once a month to make sure it is working

If your smoke alarm is battery operated call 01788 533888 and we will fit a smoke alarm that is wired into the electricity circuit. If your smoke alarm is wired into the electricity circuit and it is not working call 01788 533888 to arrange a repair.

If you don't have a smoke alarm at all call 01788 533888 and we will arrange to have one fitted.

### IF THE FIRE IS IN ANOTHER FLAT

**If there is a fire in another flat:**

Stay in your flat and phone the fire service. Your flat is a safe place from fire.

Only leave your flat if it is affected by smoke or fire or if you are instructed to do so by the Fire Service.



## THINK AHEAD

Make a plan so if the worst happens you have a better chance of escaping.

Make sure everyone in the flat knows the escape plan.

Make one room the safe room. If possible it should have an opening window and a phone.



## ESCAPE ROUTES

Keep the escape routes in your flat clear. If they are not you could trip over things when you are trying to escape.

Remember most fires happen at night so it will be dark and if the fire is in your flat smoke could make it difficult to see.

The communal areas of blocks of flats must be kept clear at all times. This reduces the chance of a fire starting and stop you from tripping over things when you are leaving the building.

If there is a fire and you need to leave the building always use the stairs.

**Never use the lift.**

## IF THE FIRE IS IN YOUR FLAT

**If a fire starts in your flat:**

Stay Calm.

Tell everyone in the flat to get out.

Don't stop to collect anything.

Call the fire brigade.

If the fire is blocking your escape route go back to your safe room, block the bottom of the door with blankets or clothes to stop the smoke.

## IF THE FIRE IS IN A COMMUNAL AREA

A Communal Area is a shared area such as a landing or corridor that is not part of your actual dwelling. If you smell smoke or see fire in a communal area leave the building and phone the fire service. If your escape route is blocked return to your flat and call the fire service.

Your flat is a safe place from fire.

Only leave your flat if it is affected by smoke or fire or if you are instructed to do so by the Fire Service.





# **RUGBY BOROUGH COUNCIL HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICE FIRE POLICY**

## **Links to Other Documents**

*Mobility Scooter Policy*

**January 2016  
(Review date January 2018)**

Housing Fire Policy Version 7

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# 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Rugby Borough Council (RBC) Housing and Property Service are committed to minimising the risks associated with fire within its properties in line with its duties as a landlord. It recognises the importance of fire safety and the need to operate a clear Fire Safety policy to ensure the safety and welfare of residents, visitors and staff. RBC Housing and Property Service will:

Ensure that sufficient resource is made available to enable fire safety systems and equipment systems to be operated and maintained in accordance with current relevant legislation, guidance and best practice.

Take all reasonably practicable steps to ensure the risk of fire is minimised. However, should a fire occur it will be investigated to take remedial steps to reduce the risk of future fires.

Carry out fire risk assessments and reviews of all communal areas, sheltered schemes and community buildings at a frequency determined by the initial risk assessment.

Maintain passive and active fire precautions effectively

Require external contractors, and internal maintenance staff to maintain fire integrity of buildings during and on completion of works

Liaise with staff and residents to ensure fire risk is minimised

Liaise with local fire services to ensure best practice and promote fire awareness

Signed:

Date:

**Adam Norburn** (Executive Director)

**Duty Holder**

Signed:

Date:

**Steven Shanahan** (Head of Housing and Property)

**Duty Holder**

Signed:

Date:

**Rob Kindon** (Property Manager)

**Nominated Person for the Housing & Property Service**



## **2. INTRODUCTION**

Following the introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 the responsibility for fire safety passed to organisations which had previously received safety audits and advice from local Fire Services.

The change in legislation firmly places the responsibility to complete fire risk assessments and effectively manage fire safety for all premises under an organisation's control where there are communal areas. For RBC Housing and Property Service this means all residential schemes with communal areas, sheltered schemes with communal areas and community buildings will require an assessment to be completed by the council's Fire Safety Advisor. Access is also now expected, although not legally required, into a sample number of flats to determine the level of fire protection, what fire systems are in place and to increase resident fire safety awareness.

It is critical that staff, residents, visitors and contractors are given clear information on the actions to take in the event of discovering a fire or on being alerted to a fire. The information given will vary depending on individual circumstances.

In addition to the assessment, a procedure must be in place to ensure fire safety systems and equipment are tested and maintained in line with legislation, standards or best practice. Management of buildings must also be undertaken to ensure compliance, for example communal corridors are clear of obstructions and combustible materials and final exit doors are operable in the event of a fire.

Failure to comply with legislation and manage fire safety effectively may result in enforcement notices leading to fines, closure of premises or potentially imprisonment

This policy sets out the RBC Housing and Property Service responsibility to mitigate the risks associated with fire. We will comply with all relevant legislation, principally:

- The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
- The Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1999
- The Housing Act 2004
- The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) Regulations 2005
- Building Regulations 2010: Part B: Fire Safety
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Electrical Equipment (Safety and Use) Regulations 1994
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1998

## **3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

The introduction of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRFSO) 2005 significantly changed the responsibilities of landlords in relation to fire safety. The RRFSO legally requires landlords or those in charge of buildings to ensure the following is in place:

- A suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment
- Provide and maintain the required fire fighting, safety and detection equipment for each property
- Emergency exits and escape routes must be kept clear and accessible at all times
- Ensure evacuation procedures are in place and evacuation information is available to all relevant persons
- Provide adequate and relevant fire safety training

## **4. DUTIES, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **Executive Director -**

The Executive Director of RBC is ultimately responsible for complying with the duties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Failure to comply with legislation, primarily the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, could result in warning notices, prosecutions, fines and potentially imprisonment. They are required to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to managing fire risk

In practice these duties are carried out on behalf of the Executive Director by Senior Management and those reporting to Senior Managers.

### **Head of Housing and Property -**

The Head of Housing and Property has responsibility for the implementation of this policy. They are required to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to managing fire risk to enable:

- An up-to-date property register to be in place
- Adequate processes and procedures to be in place to manage fire risk
- Sufficient resources are available to complete and review fire risk assessments within set timescales
- Sufficient resources to be made available to rectify faults or defects relating to fire safety
- Sufficient information, instruction and training to be in place for staff, residents and visitors
- Monitoring the performance of staff and contractors, and
- To ensure that residents, the general public, staff and contractors are not unnecessarily exposed to risk, and

### **Property Manager -**

The Property Manager will assist and deputise for the Head of Housing and Property and is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this policy to ensure delivery of a comprehensive fire safety programme. They are required to:

- Ensure adequate resources are allocated to manage fire risk including employing a Fire Safety Advisor to undertake fire risk assessments.
- Monitor the performance of their subordinates against the policy

- Advise the Head of Housing and Property of any issues arising in connection with the management of fire risk

### **Housing Regeneration Manager -**

The Housing Regeneration Manager will ensure due diligence, with regards to fire safety, is given during strategic planning and procurement of private sector housing.

### **Housing Maintenance Specialist or the Council's Fire Safety Advisor -**

The Housing Maintenance Specialist or the council's Fire Safety advisor shall be responsible for providing fire safety advice and completion of fire risk assessments for RBC Housing and Property Service and shall:

- Formulate and revise this Fire Safety policy,
- Arrange regularly timetabled audits to ensure that the provisions within the Fire Safety Policy are being enforced to the standard required,
- Ensure sufficient information, instruction and training is made available,
- Ensure that fire precautions are maintained effectively including maintenance and day-to-day management,
- Investigate fires and introduce controls to reduce the risk of such incidents recurring,
- Ensure a designated deputy is available in their absence.

### **Housing Maintenance Team -**

The Housing Maintenance team, under the direction of the Housing Maintenance Team Leader, will ensure that fire safety is fully considered when specifying works. Specifications will include choice and use of suitable materials. Where necessary inspections will be carried out during and post works to ensure fire integrity is maintained at all times. The Fire Risk Assessments and Risk Register will be reviewed and refreshed at this point.

Should serious fire safety issues be identified during works, contractors will be instructed to cease work and discussions held with contract managers to agree rectification of faults. Where minor fire safety issues are identified contract managers will be contacted to ensure problems are rectified within reasonable time frames.

Where there are repeated problems, RBC Housing and Property Service will review the contract and take appropriate action which could include increased frequency of on-site checks, instructing contractors to train staff appropriately to increase knowledge and awareness or, in serious cases, termination of the contract.

Where contractors are undertaking works in any RBC properties or communal areas and there is likelihood that fire precautions may be affected, regular monitoring is to be included to ensure these precautions are maintained.

### **Housing Maintenance Officer (Gas) -**

The Housing Maintenance Officer (Gas) will ensure that all council owned gas appliances and supply fittings are maintained in line with current gas regulations to

reduce the risk of fire or explosion from faulty gas appliances and supply. They will also ensure plant rooms containing gas installations are kept in good condition.

Where faults or non-compliance issues are identified they will instruct the relevant contractors to address the issues as a matter of priority.

As part of their day-to-day duties they will also advise on all matters relating to gas safety.

### **Sheltered Housing Team Leader -**

The Sheltered Housing Team Leader must ensure that wardens have sufficient knowledge of fire safety and of their responsibilities in relation to day-to-day management of their allocated schemes to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. Where required, training and instruction must be given to wardens.

### **Sheltered Housing Wardens -**

Sheltered Housing Wardens must receive annual fire safety and fire management training to enable them to undertake their duties effectively.

- They will undertake tasks such as testing of fire alarm systems, visual checks of fire extinguishers, fire doors etc. as required and keep accurate records
- All residents or visitors receive adequate fire safety information

Sheltered Housing Wardens are responsible for the management of fire safety within their schemes. They are required to ensure communal areas are kept clear at all times and when necessary instruct tenants to remove items. They must also report any fire safety related issues to the relevant service.

Sheltered Housing Wardens play a vital role in the education of tenants in relation to fire safety and must therefore be given training to enable them to pass knowledge and information to tenants and be able to spot hazards when visiting housing schemes.

### **Estates Management Team Leader -**

The Estates Management Team Leader must ensure that housing officers and estate officers have sufficient knowledge of fire safety and of their responsibilities in relation to day-to-day management of general needs housing, particularly communal areas within blocks of flats, to enable them to fulfil their duties effectively. Where required, training and instruction must be given to housing officers and estate officers..

### **Housing Officers and Estate Officers -**

Housing Officers and Estate Officers are responsible for the management of fire safety within general needs housing. They are required to ensure communal areas are kept clear at all times and when necessary instruct tenants to remove items. They must also report any fire safety related issues to the relevant service.

Housing Officers and Estate Officers play a vital role in the education of tenants in relation to fire safety and must therefore be given training to enable them to pass

knowledge and information to tenants and be able to spot hazards when visiting housing schemes.

## **Employees -**

All Employees of RBC, irrespective of their position, have a responsibility to:

- Take reasonable care for their own health and safety and that of other persons
- Co-operate with managers to enable compliance with this policy and the legal duties it holds,
- Diligently undertake fire safety works or repairs to ensure that the desired standard of fire precautions are maintained,
- Remove or reduce hazards that, in their opinion, may present a serious risk to health of themselves or others.
- Report hazards that have been removed or that may present a serious risk of fire.

Employees are required to report concerns about fire safety. This will usually be through the normal management chain.

## **Tenants and Leaseholders -**

Tenants and leaseholders living in flats where there are communal areas must be given fire safety information regarding evacuation procedures specific to their property and general good practice guidance on fire safety.

Tenants and leaseholders must not make any alterations to their property without formal permission, particularly the front doors to flats and any works which may reduce the effectiveness of passive fire safety measures e.g. creating holes in external walls and active fire safety measures e.g. removal or disabling smoke detectors.

## **Contractors -**

Contractors are required to report any fire risk concerns and carry out works in a way that does not negatively affect the fire protection in place.

Contractors must be competent to undertake the works for which they are employed to prevent reduction of fire protection. Common problems caused by contractors are:

- Leaving breaches in fire compartmentation
- Painting over intumescent strips and cold smoke seals
- Incorrect/poorly fitted fire doors
- Cabling incorrectly fitted
- Cabling installed in plastic conduit

Where contractors are undertaking works in any RBC properties or communal areas and there is likehood that fire precautions may be affected, regular monitoring is to be included to ensure these precautions are maintained.

Post contract works may be subject to inspection to ensure compliance.

Fire safety is also a key consideration in terms of our regeneration and development work. This will be achieved through early engagement of Construction Design and

Management (CDM) advice in planning our projects, as well as at delivery and implementation stages.

Main contractors are obliged to enact their own health and safety procedures whilst working on site, including fire safety and ensuring safe access and egress of emergency vehicles. The client will request information on health and safety issues at contract monitoring meetings, and challenge performance accordingly.

## **Operational Health and Safety Group -**

The Operational Health and Safety Group is responsible for:

- Reviewing resources and ensuring sufficient resources are allocated to fire safety
- Reviewing progress of the completion of fire risk assessments and subsequent action plans
- Ensuring relevant training is planned and delivered
- Plans to ensure resources for future fire assessments and reviews are in place
- Ensure planned works to improve fire safety are in place and financial resources are allocated
- The Chair of the Operational Health and Safety Group will report in to the Strategic Health and Safety Group.

## **5. FIRE RISK ASSESSMENT**

Due to the requirements of the Fire Safety Order, assessments must be carried out by or with the assistance of the council's Fire Safety Advisor (someone with specialist knowledge, experience and training).

Sheltered housing scheme assessments will be reviewed annually.

General needs scheme assessments will be reviewed on frequency determined by initial risk assessments but not more than three years between assessments.

Fire assessments for non-sleeping accommodation, such as community rooms, will be reviewed on a frequency determined by the initial risk assessment but no less than every two years. If a community room is integral to sleeping accommodation the assessment will be reviewed annually as part of the accommodation review.

Any fire assessment scoring a rating of "moderate" or above will be re-assessed within a maximum of six months to ensure improvements are made as required.

The assessment process will not determine frequency of site inspections or visits as all schemes and blocks will require regular monitoring to ensure fire safety standards are maintained.

## **6. ASSESSMENT PRIORITY**

A schedule of assessments is in place for the financial years 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18.

A degree of flexibility will be required to allow for urgent requests from internal services or the Fire Service to complete assessments.

## 7. FIRE EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

The majority of fire equipment is maintained on a contract basis. To ensure compliance with regulations, records must be available for inspection by enforcing bodies. Liaison with contractors will take place to ensure records are clear as to the work undertaken and copies are left on site where appropriate e.g. community rooms.

## 8. FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS AND SMOKE/HEAT DETECTORS

RBC Housing and Property Services has installed hardwired smoke detectors with battery back-up at all properties.

- Fire alarm systems, which cover communal areas, may be present in some properties. Where this is the case they will be maintained in line with current standards.

Where additional fire alarm systems are installed they will comply with BS5839.

## 9. COMMUNAL AREA MANAGEMENT

**Sheltered Housing** – Wardens will be responsible for ensuring compliance with a managed use approach.

Managed use allows strictly defined use of common parts and limits the items allowed, to control fire load and ease of ignition. It will involve strict conditions on where such items can be kept. Items permitted to be in communal areas are:

- Pot plants and door mats outside front doors
- Framed pictures and notice boards on walls
- RBC Housing and Property Service will provide seats in communal areas that are fire resistant where determined that they are required for the use of residents

Managed use will only be permitted where:

- There is a suitable standard of fire protection
- It will be limited to buildings in which the main elements of structure are made of concrete, brick and other non-combustible materials
- Generally, it will only apply to buildings which have effective security, e.g. access control

If there are regular breaches of defined rules then a zero tolerance approach as below will be enforced

**General Needs** – Estate Officers and Housing Officers will be responsible for the management of general needs communal areas, which must be clear of all items including combustible and non-combustible items with the following exceptions:

Door mats, and living plants (these must be kept on window cills and not be excessive in number or size)

No exceptions will apply to the above.

Combustible items can increase the intensity of fires and can be used to start deliberate fires. Non-combustible items can cause obstruction to residents, visitors, staff and the fire service

By taking this simple approach to items in communal areas makes ongoing management by housing and estates teams clear and unambiguous.

## **10. ONGOING FIRE SAFETY MANAGEMENT**

Regular checks and general management of fire safety will be carried out by Housing Officers, Estate Officers or Wardens. In addition, random fire safety reviews may be undertaken by the Housing Maintenance Specialist or the council's Fire Safety Advisor.

It is critical that inspections are carried out and enforcement of this policy is maintained

General fire safety training and instruction will be given to enable staff to carry out the required tasks.

## **11. PRINCIPLES OF FIRE PROTECTION**

Buildings are designed to reduce the risk of fire spread from one part of a property to another. This is particularly important for blocks of flats as a fire in one flat could affect others in the block.

Each flat should form a protected compartment which reduces the risk of fire spreading from the flat to another flat or communal area.

The front doors to flats must also be designed, fitted and maintained to stop the spread of fire and smoke for at least 30 minutes.

To make sure this protection is always in place properties must be kept in good order.

## **12. EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR BLOCKS OF FLATS**

If a fire starts in a flat everyone in the flat must be instructed to leave immediately. Occupants must not stop to collect any belongings. Front doors to the flat must be closed, if possible, as occupants leave to stop the fire and smoke spreading into the communal areas.

Once out of the building residents must telephone the fire service or ask someone to do this for them if they do not have a telephone.

If the fire starts in a flat but escape routes out of the flat are blocked, residents are advised to go to the furthest room from the fire closing all doors behind them. If they have access to a telephone, they should call the fire service. If they do not have a



telephone they should shout out of a window to attract attention. Whilst waiting for the fire service residents should block the bottom of the door with blankets, coats or other soft material to stop smoke entering the room.

If residents are in a communal area and discover a fire or smell smoke they must leave the building immediately and call the Fire Service. Residents are asked to wait for the Fire Service to arrive so that they can advise where the likely location of the fire is. If their escape route is blocked they should return to their flat and close the door.

If residents are alerted to a fire in another flat they must stay in their own flat and keep their front door closed. They should not try to leave the building as they could find themselves in the area where the fire is and may also get in the way of the Fire Service as they enter the building.

Residents should only leave their flat if the Fire Service tells them to or they start to be affected by smoke or fire.

If the Fire Service is called they will take control of the building, and residents must follow their instructions.

### **13. EVACUATION PROCEDURE FOR COMMUNITY ROOMS**

If residents, visitors or staff are in a RBC Housing and Property Service community building and they discover a fire or are alerted to one they must leave the building immediately using the nearest safe exit. People should move away from the building as far as possible and someone should call the Fire Service if they are able. If an alarm system with call points is fitted the person discovering the fire should raise the alarm by pressing a call point as they exit the building.

### **14. VARIATIONS OF PROCEDURES**

Whilst the above procedures will be relevant under most circumstances there may be some alterations or deviations dependent on the results of the fire risk assessment which is carried out for each property with communal areas.

If there are any particular differences in evacuation procedures they will be relayed to residents or property users via the Housing Management and Sheltered Housing teams.

### **15. RECORD KEEPING**

A central file will be used to hold all copies of assessments and register. Access will be given to relevant members of staff. All risk assessments will be held electronically at the Town Hall and individual communal facilities.

Fire assessments must be made available to enforcing authorities on request.

## **16. ALLOCATION OF ACTION PLANS**

Actions arising from fire assessments will be split into two areas, Housing Management and Housing Maintenance. Housing Management will deal with actions relating to tenancies such as instructing residents to remove items from communal areas etc. Housing Maintenance will deal with actions relating to maintenance and repair such as repair of fire doors, maintenance of emergency lighting etc.

In all cases non-compliance and non-completion of actions will be monitored and reported on by the Housing Maintenance Specialist or the council's Fire Safety Advisor.

## **17. FIRE SAFETY REPORTING**

All fires at RBC Housing and Property Service properties must be reported. In the event of a serious fire the Housing Maintenance Specialist, and relevant line manager must be contacted as soon as possible.

Any employee who has concerns regarding fire safety must raise them initially with their line manager who in turn can consult with the Housing Maintenance Specialist or the council's Fire Safety Advisor if further advice is required.

## **18. FIRE SERVICE LIAISON**

To establish good relationships and working partnerships, representatives from the Fire Service will be invited to regular meetings with RBC Housing and Property Services to ensure agreement with regards to working practices, discuss any concerns or issues, review of fires if any have occurred, false alarms and unwanted activations.

Fire Service practices and expectations will also be reviewed to ensure RBC Housing and Property Service is compliant with requirements.

## **19. POST FIRE ACTION**

The following protocol must be followed to ensure the safety of employees, residents, and the general public.

If the fire is of sufficient magnitude that the Fire Service is called they will take control of the situation and the property until they are satisfied that danger from the fire is fully eliminated.

The first member of staff to be informed of the fire should contact their immediate line manager who should in turn escalate the call to a senior member of staff

The first member of staff to arrive at the scene should establish contact with the senior officer from the emergency services for an overview of the situation. That member of staff should continue to be the lead contact with the emergency services for continuity reasons.

Once control of the property has been released back to RBC Housing and Property Services the following must be established before allowing re-entry by staff or residents:

Is the property structurally stable – If not or you are unsure under no circumstances is entry permitted.

Is the area free from asbestos - If not or you are unsure under no circumstances is entry permitted

Is the condition of the building such that it has too many hazards to safely enter - If it is no entry permitted

The Housing Maintenance team will arrange for the required specialist to be contacted to establish if the building is safe to enter e.g. surveyors, structural engineers, and asbestos specialist

Although the aftermath of a fire can be emotionally devastating we must not allow re-entry to the property until safe to do so. This may mean being in conflict with affected residents but regardless of the emotions staff must be clear that the actions taken are in the interest of all parties.

Staff should be ready to give a full debrief, including a written overview, of the events, particularly the first member of staff to arrive on site.

Any additional resources and staff involvement post incident will be co-ordinated by the designated senior member of staff.

## **20. POLICY REVIEW DATE**

The Housing Maintenance Specialist will initiate a review of this policy every two years unless legislative changes or any other reason require an earlier review.

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION**

Questions received from the Local Government Association and responses provided by the council:

**1. Establishing which tower blocks councils own or manage (including through a Tenant Management Organisation, Estate Management Board, Arms Length Management Organisation or Registered Social Landlord) that have been refurbished.**

Rugby Borough Council owns and directly manages five blocks of high-rise flats, ten storey in height, with a total number of 313 flats

**2. Ensuring any building control sign-off has taken into account the guidance Fire Safety in purpose-built blocks of flats (for example, paragraphs 72.1-2 on cladding. Some councils are instructing independent specialists to check cladding and the way it was installed).**

The council has not employed a cladding system to any of its blocks.

**3. Establishing if there is an up to date fire risk assessment that has been produced since the refurbishment and who carried it out.**

Not applicable.

**4. Confirming that where a block is designed on the compartmentalisation principle, no work at any time since its construction has compromised that principle. Some councils are considering reviewing fire compartmentation reports.**

We have not done any work since the blocks were constructed that has compromised the principle of compartmentalisation.

**5. Reviewing the fire safety advice given to residents in light of the outcomes of the above actions and in line with the guidance.**

The council's fire safety leaflet for high-rise flats was reviewed and agreed with the Fire Service and the council's Fire Safety Adviser prior to it being delivered in February 2017 to all tenants of the council's high rise flats.

**6. Many councils have been contacting residents to reassure them based on their actions and are issuing advice in conjunction with their local Fire and Rescue Service.**

Fire safety leaflets have been provided for tenants of high-rise flats who have contacted the council to say they have lost their copy or thrown it away.

The council's website provides a range of advice relating to fire, etc., in high-rise flats.

The Tenants Times, the tenants' magazine, has a two page article relating to fire safety and is being delivered to all tenants before the end of June.