

TO: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

FROM: Area Commander, Operational Response and Fire Protection - Stuart Smith

PRESENTING OFFICER(S): Area Commander - Stuart Smith
Telephone: 07900 267853
Email: stuart.smith@cambsfire.gov.uk

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GRENFELL DISASTER ACTION PLAN AND RELATED WORKS - UPDATE

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) against its Grenfell Disaster Action Plan following the publication of the findings from the Grenfell Inquiry.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The committee is asked to note the information within this report and specifically the works completed and underway to improve processes outlined at Paragraph 7.

3. Risk Assessment

- 3.1 The risk assessment is based on the information provided by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), previously presented to the authority in February 2022 and knowledge of fire safety inspectors within the organisation. This is subject to change over the coming year before the bill is laid in Parliament:
- 3.2 **Political** – The Grenfell Action Plan is reported on to the Home Office (HO) on a regular basis. Our response to the action plan is also reviewed by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) primarily looking at how we respond to incidents in tall buildings. There is also a strong link to new legislations such as the Fire Safety Act (FSA) and the Building Safety Act (BSA). These acts provide the Building Safety Regulator (Health and Safety Executive) with the power to direct fire and rescue services to provide resources to them to assist with their work.
- 3.3 **Economic** – It is recognised by the NFCC and HO that, on average, a 30% increase in fire safety inspectors would be required to provide the function required of the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). It has been calculated that this would mean an additional £20 million per annum required for fire and rescue services nationally. There is a charge back scheme that regional fire and rescue services have signed up to through Chief Fire Officers (CFO).

- 3.4 **Social** – Ensuring we can effectively respond to fire in tall buildings is vital to provide assurance to the public who reside within or near to these premises. Naturally, following the tragic Grenfell incident some Cambridgeshire residents became concerned about our response. Work with fire protection (FP) and community safety (CS) teams at tall building premises has helped reassure residents. We also regularly exercise at these premises (where we can) to test our response and learn for future events. This presence has also provided additional reassurance to local residents.
- 3.5 **Technological** – There is a large focus in the Grenfell Action Plan on technology and the sharing of simultaneous information between key commanders when responding to an incident. Investment in technology will be needed to allow us to be compliant with the national recommendations and specifically, the ability for inspectors and responsible persons of buildings to share data electronically.
- 3.6 **Legislative** – There is a legal requirement upon the authority to inspect and enforce the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (2005). The new Fire Safety Act 2021, Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2021 and the Building Safety Act (2022) will mean we are likely to have more legal duties to comply with and enforce against. This will require the service to ensure we have sufficiently qualified employees with the appropriate experience to enforce the legislation.
- 3.7 **Environmental** - We will spend more time delivering audits and exercising on high-risk buildings, especially within our cities. Working collaboratively there is the option of undertaking desktop as well as practical exercises. As part of our sustainability model, we have introduced bicycles to allow our inspectors to travel around these urban areas, reducing our carbon footprint as our delivery increases. The service also utilises electric vehicles with availability across our estate.

4. Background

- 4.1 Following the tragic Grenfell incident an inquiry was commissioned. This inquiry shared Phase One findings in October 2019. Phase Two of the inquiry is now closed to the public and the final report is being considered. The service immediately took the available findings and formulated an action plan.
- 4.2 The action plan has 43 areas for consideration and where required, implementation. It also sets out areas for legislation change.
- 4.3 This action plan is monitored and updated by a key group of stakeholders from across the organisation and reported into the HO on a six-monthly basis. At the time of writing, the service had submitted its latest review ahead of the 15 April 2023 deadline.

5. Funding

- 5.1 CFRS was given a grant of £55,182.53 to help implement and improve our response to tall building fires.
- 5.2 Initially, we used some of this money to purchase smoke hoods (£27,145). These can be worn by members of the public when removing them through smoke filled

rooms and out of a building, helping them breath filtered air throughout. CFRS were already implementing this prior to the release of the Phase One recommendations.

- 5.3 There is a sum of money left (£14,237.53) and we plan to spend this on upgrading our electronic communication (electronic evacuation boards), exercising and testing our processes when responding to a fire in a tall building.

6. Fire Protection (FP) Activities

- 6.1 Our FP team has been actively engaged with 'in scope building' responsible persons to ensure the building meet the standards under the new legislation that has recently been enacted (Fire Safety Act and Building Safety Act). A review of all tall buildings over 18m or more than seven floors within Cambridgeshire (twenty in total) is ongoing and appropriate action will be taken against responsible persons who are not compliant with the relevant legislation. We continue to lead the way in this area, working with our legal advisor to create documentation to help ensure we are legally compliant when issuing fire protection notices involving this new legislation.
- 6.2 We have also grown our FP department using the uplift grant funding. This is year on year funding and not guaranteed but has allowed us to upskill colleagues, develop our processes and make the department more efficient and effective whilst preparing for the additional workload relating to the new legislation.
- 6.3 BSR has formed a multi-disciplinary team for the eastern region of which, initially, CFRS personnel will not be part of. Moving into year two/three we are likely to see someone being seconded and then we can recharge the cost of this individual to the Health and Safety Executive.

7. Plan of Action

7.1 Our Response

- 7.1.1 CFRS initially established a large multifaceted team to allocate and oversee the implementation of recommendations. This system was working well, however, due to the pandemic we had to establish a more hybrid method of addressing the required work. The team was reduced in size, work packages were allocated and monthly team meetings established with work package owners scrutinising and gauging progress.
- 7.1.2 The team reviewing and implementing these national recommendations were confident that several of the recommendations may have already been addressed by action undertaken as far back as 2013. CFRS asked for a peer review by a colleague who is currently seconded to the NFCC. The result of this confirmed that, through historical actions and improvements, CFRS had indeed already complied with some recommendations. Further work was undertaken on all other recommendations to ensure these areas had been reviewed and that all opportunities to improve had been explored.
- 7.1.3 During the pandemic some fire and rescue services suspended their Phase One response however CFRS continued despite the additional pressures that period of

restrictions presented. All operational members of staff were given (virtual) 'tall building behaviour whilst involved in fire' training.

- 7.1.4 Assurance has been a key part of any change/improvement implemented. We have worked with bordering fire and rescue services to share data and our actions in response to the recommendations. We have tested against any new procedures that we have adopted using tabletop and multi appliance exercises. This has ensured that all colleagues have been brought on the journey as we implemented the recommendations from Phase One of the inquiry.

7.2 Work Completed

- 7.2.1 At the time of writing, CFRS has completed 38 of the 43 recommendations, with a predicted completion date of September 2023. Assurance of the improvements remains ongoing and will continue to be reviewed by the Grenfell Recommendations Implementation Team.

- **Training** - CFRS will ensure that all responders will be appropriately trained for responding to fires in tall buildings, that all commanders have understanding relating to the transition between phases of evacuation. Additionally, the behaviour of tall buildings when involved in fire will be communicated. Training all colleagues in the use of electronic evacuation boards enabling Combined Fire Control, Command Unit and Bridgehead to see simultaneous information about who is in the building, what rooms have been cleared, what information individuals have been told and the calls being received into Combined Fire Control will be undertaken.
- **Legislation** - FP teams have worked to ensure CFRS are compliant with the new legislation, primarily allowing the electronic flow of information about tall buildings into CFRS from responsible persons. As an enforcing authority FP teams continue to work with responsible persons of these buildings and where required will enforce against the Fire Safety Order (including the new legislation mentioned above).
- **Equipment** - CFRS has provided smoke hoods to all front-line appliances and continues to invest in technological solutions for assisting with fires in tall buildings which has been identified through the recommendations.
- **Policy** - CFRS has adopted National Operational Guidance and continues to develop procedures and policies in line with Grenfell recommendations to ensure safety to responders and residents of tall buildings.
- **Communications** - CFRS had invested in this area prior to the Grenfell incident and as such has good communication via our breathing apparatus sets and fire ground radios. Further updates on electronic communication technology are being implemented including the use of fixed TV screens in Combined Fire Control and mobile tablets on the incident ground. Later this year, as part of programme management, we will launch a project to review fire ground data provision; this project will aim to further support and improve fire ground communication.

7.3 Outstanding Areas of Work

- 7.3.1 FP teams will be visiting all twenty tall buildings to ensure they are compliant with the new legislation including sharing of electronic plans, fitting secure information boxes on each building, way finder signage and reviewing external wall systems and front doors of flats on or within the tall building.
- 7.3.2 Electronic evacuation boards are currently being implemented along with associated infrastructure. Training and exercising are also being completed. This was a development that was due to be implemented in the coming months however following feedback from a HMICFRS desktop review we felt the need to escalate this implementation.
- 7.3.3 Review Incident Command Unit (ICU) - In conjunction with electronic evacuation boards the ICU technology is being reviewed to ensure it is fit for purpose and will function as required when attending a tall building fire.
- 7.3.4 Operational Fire Standards - A board has been established to ensure that when fire standards are released for review and then published, a gap analysis is completed and a plan established into how the standard will be met (unless we already have processes in place over and above the new standard). Fire standards that relate to Grenfell recommendations are being reviewed with action plans in place to implement improvements where needed.

8. National Picture in Response to the Inquiry

- 8.1 There hasn't been a national update on progress since August 2022. Once the latest data that is being submitted now has been processed, an update will be produced on all fire and rescue services' actions against the recommendations.
- 8.2 It is worthy of note that, as of August 2022, CFRS was in the top percentage of all fire and rescue services for completion rates.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Documents	Location	Contact Officer
Grenfell Action Plan Fire Authority Building Safety Bill - Update Report	Fire Service Headquarters Hinchingsbrooke Cottage Brampton Road Huntingdon	Stuart Smith Area Commander Operational Response and Fire Protection 07900267853 stuart.smith@cambsfire.gov.uk