

## **Grenfell Tower**

### **Purpose**

For discussion.

### **Summary**

Dany Cotton, London Fire Brigade Commissioner, and Roy Wilsher, Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council, will attend the Fire Commission meeting.

### **Recommendations**

Fire Commission members are asked to:

1. Note the LGA's work to date.
2. Comment on the lobbying priorities for future work outlined in paragraph 11 and feedback views to inform our discussions with Government to help ensure the safety of people living in high-rise buildings.
3. Feedback any views to influence the initial meeting between the FSMC, the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board and the National Fire Chiefs Council looking at fire suppression methods including sprinklers.

### **Action**

Officers to proceed as directed.

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## **Grenfell Tower**

### **Background**

1. In the early hours of the morning of 14 June, a fire broke out at Grenfell Tower in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Although firefighters from London Fire Brigade (LFB) were at the tower block within minutes of the alarm being sounded, the fire rapidly spread throughout the tower block. 250 firefighters were involved in fighting the fire and rescuing the occupants of the block. At the time of writing there are around 80 people presumed dead.

### **Issues**

2. The cause of the fire and the reason it spread so quickly through the tower block are now the subject of both an investigation by LFB and a criminal investigation by the Metropolitan Police. Media reports have focused on the possibility that the external cladding applied to the building caused the fire to spread so rapidly, but there is currently no definitive explanation and will not be until LFB concludes its investigation, which could take a number of weeks given the scale of the damage to the building.
3. Given public concerns about the safety of other tower blocks, councils have been reviewing fire safety assessments, relevant documentation relating to any refurbishments work, taking the advice of their fire and rescue services, and contacting residents to reassure them.
4. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has also surveyed councils to identify the number of tower blocks that may be at risk, while the LGA has written to council leaders and chief executives about the steps being taken by the sector to reassure residents and themselves that a similar fire could not occur in their own tower blocks.
5. Once the LFB investigation is concluded and the cause of the fire is known, there may have to be changes to fire safety advice, guidance and procedures.

### **LGA Work**

6. The LGA has been working to support councils and fire and rescue authorities in the wake of the fire to ensure that our member councils are equipped with the information they need to act swiftly, including seconding staff in to DCLG to provide direct support to councils as part of the national team dealing with the aftermath of the tragedy.
7. The LGA has provided regular communications with Chief Executives, Chief Fire Officers and council leaders and created a Frequently Asked Questions page on our website (based on questions from councils) with links to relevant guidance, DCLG information and factual information about what we know so far. This is being regularly updated and can be found on the LGA's website: [www.local.gov.uk/grenfell-tower-frequently-asked-questions-local-authorities](http://www.local.gov.uk/grenfell-tower-frequently-asked-questions-local-authorities).
8. The LGA has also been active in the media, including press notices and Lord Porter, the LGA's Chairman, appearing on a number of programmes.

9. The Fire Services Management Committee (FSMC) discussed the fire at their meeting in June. Following the conclusions of the LFB investigation into the cause of the fire there may need to be further updates to the guide published by the LGA in 2011 on fire safety in purpose built flats. Members agreed that a further report would be brought back to the next Committee meeting in September on the conclusions of the LFB investigation and what that means for fire safety going forward including any changes needed in policies and procedures.
10. The FSMC also agreed that an urgent meeting needed to be held between the Lead Members of the FSMC, the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board and the National Fire Chiefs Council to look at fire suppression methods including sprinklers. That meeting should be taking place soon.

### **Lobbying priorities**

11. The LGA has identified three key and urgent lobbying priorities for our work going forward. These are that:
  - 11.1. National action now needs to focus on what needs to happen to make buildings safe, and move away from testing one tiny part of the system. This should cover all landlords not just the handful of councils with relevant stock and those with Registered Social Landlords (RSL) with Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding in their area. Any future work needs to be well coordinated and prioritise those buildings at highest risk.
  - 11.2. Building regulations must be reviewed urgently to make sure they are much clearer on what can and cannot be used on the outside of buildings, covering whole systems not just the external panels. That review should be independently led and involve local government closely, as well as those involved in the practical application of the regulations to make sure they are clear and can be properly implemented.
  - 11.3. Government needs to agree to find the necessary resources for any required changes, both for remedial work and for any new tighter requirements.
12. As further findings emerge from the investigation at Grenfell Tower, the LGA will consider how these can be best taken forward.

### **Implications for Wales**

13. Fire and rescue services and the promotion of fire safety is a devolved issue.

### **Financial Implications**

14. There are no financial implications from this report.

### **Next steps**

15. Members are asked to:

- 15.1. Note the LGA's work to date.
- 15.2. Comment on the lobbying priorities for future work outlined in paragraph 11 and feedback views to inform our discussions with Government to help ensure the safety of people living in high-rise buildings.
- 15.3. Feedback any views to influence the initial meeting between the FSMC, the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board and the National Fire Chiefs Council looking at fire suppression methods including sprinklers.