

CABINET (HOUSING) COMMITTEE

30 NOVEMBER 2015

FIRE SAFETY IN COUNCIL HOUSING

REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (CHIEF HOUSING OFFICER)

Contact Officer: Andrew Kingston Tel No: 01962 848240

Email: akingston@winchester.gov.uk

RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The primary purpose of this report is to give members an awareness and understanding of the current fire safety measures in the Council Housing Stock.

The report sets out an overview of the current legislative and/or good practice requirements, the internal management arrangements and the Council's current approach to specific areas of fire safety.

The Fire Safety Policy for Housing Services is subject to a bi-annual review. This report covers the review and makes some recommendations for changing practices, such as removing fire extinguishers from most communal housing areas. The recommended changes are set out in Appendix A (highlighted sections).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Committee notes the detail contained within the report, and considers whether further actions or additional information is required to address, or better inform, any areas of concern.

2. That the Committee approves the recommendations contained within Appendix A to the Report, which can be met from within existing financial resources.
3. That the Committee approves the Fire Safety Policy - Housing Services (Appendix C).
4. That improved guidance and advice be provided to tenants in the form of an updated and dedicated section to fire safety in the next re-draft of the Tenants Handbook, improved on-site (i.e. property specific) guidance and better awareness (of what action to take in the event of a fire) at tenancy sign-up.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Fire safety within the home is clearly a very important issue and particularly so in blocks of flats where occupiers live independently of each other but share common areas.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to appraise and update members on the current fire safety measures and management arrangements in the Council housing stock.

2 Legislation & Statutory Guidance

- 2.1 Fire safety in existing residential accommodation is regulated by the Housing Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.
- 2.2 The Housing Act 2004 introduced the housing, health and safety rating system (HHSRS). The HHSRS is the principal tool for assessing fire safety risk and regulating standards in all types and tenures of residential accommodation. The underlying principle of the HHSRS is that any residential premises should provide a safe and healthy environment for any potential occupier or visitor. The HHSRS provides a means of assessing dwellings which reflects the risk from any hazard and allows a judgement to be made as to whether that risk, in those particular circumstances, is acceptable or not. For these purposes, for example, it would consider the likelihood of an uncontrolled fire (and associated smoke) and the severity of the outcome (e.g. illness; injury; death; etc.). The enforcing authority for the Housing Act 2004 is the local housing authority.
- 2.3 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO) places duties on housing providers to risk- assess fire safety in their properties, to take adequate precautions to reduce that risk and to manage that risk which remains. The duties apply throughout a range of property types, but in residential blocks of accommodation they apply only within the common areas. The FSO does not apply to the individual flats, maisonettes, bedsits or the residential units themselves although access may need to be gained to a sample of flats to assess the potential impact of a fire from within an individual flat on other neighbours. The FSO places a duty on the responsible person (see para.3) to take such general fire safety precautions (see para.4) as will ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the safety of all relevant persons. These duties are enforced by the fire and rescue authorities.

3 Responsible Person

- 3.1 The responsible person is the person having control over the premises, so will usually be the landlord or manager of the premises. If any part of the block is a workplace, the responsible person is not necessarily a named individual, but the organisation who employs people to work there (i.e. where there is a scheme manager or caretaker, the Council).

4 General fire safety precautions

- 4.1 The standard fire safety precautions may be summarised as follows:-

- measures to reduce the risk of fire occurring;
- measures to reduce the spread of any fire through the premises;
- measures in relation to the means of escape;
- measures to ensure the means of escape can be safely used at all times;
- firefighting measures;
- means of fire detection and warning; and
- action to be taken in the event of fire.

- 4.2 All fire safety measures at the premises must then be subject to a proper system of maintenance by a competent person so as to be kept in efficient working order and in good repair.

- 4.3 The fire safety measures currently in place and recommended for the Council's housing stock is summarised in Appendix A. These measures have been formulated under the over-arching general Fire Safety Policy for Housing Services (Appendix C).

5 What is a Fire Risk Assessment (FRA)?

- 5.1 Fire risk is a combination of the likelihood of fire occurring and the consequences to the safety of people if it does occur.
- 5.2 In order to comply with the duties imposed by the FSO, the responsible person must ensure a competent person (see para. 6) carries out a fire risk assessment to:
- identify what fire hazards exist at the premises
 - identify what measures have been taken (or will be taken) to reduce the risk of those hazards causing harm to as low as reasonably practicable.

- decide what physical fire precautions and management arrangements are necessary to ensure the safety of people in the premises if a fire does start.

5.3 A fire risk assessment is an organised and methodical look at the premises, the activities carried on there and the likelihood that a fire could start and cause harm to those in and around the premises. The risk assessment must pay particular attention to those at special risk, such as disabled persons, elderly persons, children, or those with special needs.

6 Competent Person

6.1 There is no legal requirement for FRAs to be carried out by specialists. That said, the responsible person must ensure that a competent person(s) carries out the FRA. The responsible person must therefore ensure the competent person is someone with enough training and experience, knowledge and other qualities to be able to assess and implement the measures properly.

6.2 FRAs for the Council housing stock are carried out by the Compliance Officer within Property Services.

7 Why are properties individually risk assessed?

7.1 Existing residential accommodation comprises a wide range of property types, occupancy arrangements and occupier type. Fire risks in rented accommodation can be complex. The layout of complexity of common areas in blocks of flats can vary enormously in terms of changing levels and direction of travel. Other factors such as varying occupancy turnover rates, mixes of vulnerable or disadvantaged occupants with little social interaction or cohesion between occupiers add to this complexity. With these varying factors applying, it is not credible to offer a single solution to fire safety which can be applied broadly. Fire safety solutions must instead be based on the level of risk presented by an individual property and its mode and level of occupation. This risk-based approach is enshrined in current fire safety legislation, in particular the housing health and safety rating system and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

8 How often are the FRAs carried out ?

8.1 The risk assessment must be periodically reviewed to ensure that it is kept up to date.

8.2 All properties are fire risk assessed by the Compliance Officer into three categories – A, B or C. Category A are the higher risk properties and they get an annual FRA (eg. extra care schemes). Category B properties are reviewed annually, but may only have a full FRA completed every two years. Those with outstanding remedial works will still have an annual FRA. Category C properties are the lowest risk schemes/properties (i.e. with typically few, and/or simple layout, common areas) and these will only have an updated FRA completed every 5 years

9 Information for Tenants/Leaseholders

- 9.1 There is no requirement under the FSO to provide training to residents, but providing them with basic information on fire precautions is a simple and effective way of reducing fire risk in the premises.
- 9.2 The responsible person must give all tenants and other relevant persons information on fire safety measures and procedures for the premises. More often than not, this is satisfied by a mixture of on-site signage and guidance within standard tenancy documentation (eg. Tenants Handbook).
- 9.3 That said, and although it is unlikely that a tenant would refer to the Tenants Handbook in the event of fire, the guidance currently contained therein is very generic and needs improvement. Another improvement would be to provide additional guidance at tenancy sign-up so the tenant's attention is specifically brought to what action they should take in the event of a fire and the evacuation strategy (albeit, in the vast majority of cases, simply "get out, stay out") for their particular property.

10 Leaseholders

- 10.1 The responsibilities and duties imposed on the responsible person are limited to matters over which the responsible person has control. For example, a flat entrance door may form part of the demised (sold) property and therefore the responsibility for that door rests with the leaseholder. In these situations, the Council has no right to force a leaseholder to upgrade the door to a current standard, nor to carry out the works unilaterally.
- 10.2 If a leaseholder has made a property (i.e. the individual dwelling unit or the block as a whole) less safe through his actions or inactions, then the Council could take action against that leaseholder or refer the matter to relevant enforcing authority (HFRA).

11 Training to Property-based Employees

- 11.1 The responsible person must provide property/site-based employees with appropriate information and training on risks identified in the risk assessment and information on fire safety measures and procedures for the premises

12 Fire Detection and Alarm Systems

- 12.1 Smoke alarms to individual dwellings, and furniture complying with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988, are the two biggest factors that have seen a reduction in fires.
- 12.2 Apart from sheltered housing schemes (where a "stay put" policy is normal anyway), purpose-built blocks of flats are not normally provided with communal fire detection and alarm systems. In general needs blocks of flats designed to support a "stay put" policy, it is generally regarded as unnecessary and undesirable for a fire alarm system to be provided. A communal fire detection and alarm system will inevitably lead to proliferation

of false alarms which in turn imposes a further burden on the fire and rescue services and may also lead to residents ignoring warnings of genuine fires.

- 12.3 The ability to manage a fire alarm system is rarely possible in a block of flats unless staffed at all times. Allowing residents to silence and reset a system is inappropriate because it could lead to major disablement of a fire alarm system. In addition to leaving residents at risk, it could also expose the Council to liability were a system not then to perform correctly in the event of fire. It is generally accepted that a communal fire alarm system should only be provided in building in which some control can be achieved over the occupants to ensure they respond appropriately. For most blocks of flats, it would be unrealistic to expect this. Nor it is necessarily desirable that evacuation should take place from areas remote from the fire, unless and until these areas themselves become threatened.

13 Evacuation Strategies

13.1 Stay Put/Delayed Evacuation

- a) This approach expects residents not directly affected by a fire to “stay put” and remain in their flat unless directed to do otherwise by the fire and rescue services. If a fire occurs within a flat, then the occupants should alert others in the flat, leave the building and alert the fire and rescue services.
- b) If a fire starts in the common areas, anyone in these areas should leave the building and alert the fire rescue services.
- c) Residents not directly affected by the fire may still choose to leave the building (and would and should not be prevented from doing so). Similarly, those evacuating the building may also choose to alert other neighbours so they also escape if they feel threatened.

13.2 Simultaneous Evacuation

- a) Simultaneous evacuation involves evacuating the residents from number of flats at the same time. Such an approach requires a fire detection and alarm system so that all residents are alerted to the need to evacuate. Purpose-built flats are not normally provided with such systems.
- b) Simultaneous evacuation is sometimes applied to buildings converted into blocks of flats, but usually only where it has not been possible to achieve the level of compartmentation required for a “stay put” policy.

14 Management and Control of Fire Safety Measures within Housing Services

- 14.1 A summary of the different team roles and responsibilities within Housing Services is detailed within Appendix B.

15 Shirley Towers – Fire Incident

- 15.1 On the 6 April 2010, Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service responded to a fire in Shirley Towers, Southampton. During that incident, tragically two firefighters died.
- 15.2 Both the Council's Health and Safety Advisor and the Compliance Officer attended a seminar on the learning points from the Shirley Towers incident. Apart from the fire signage at the four medium rise tower blocks on the Winnall estate, which was subsequently updated, there were no other learning points relevant to the Council.

16 Hampshire Fire & Rescue Services (HFRS)

- 16.1 Apart from responding to emergency incidents, HFRS also has a duty to enforce the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (FSO). This normally involves carry out random inspections to audit compliance with the order. If the fire and rescue authority identify a breach of the FSO, they will notify the responsible person, and may issue an enforcement notice requiring that steps be taken to remedy the breach. In the case of serious risk, a prohibition notice, prohibiting or restricting the use of the premises, may be issued.

17 Conclusions

- 17.1 The FRAs for the Council housing portfolio are already carried out, actioned and embedded in standard operating procedures for Housing Services.
- 17.2 The FRAs for the Council housing portfolio are carried and managed by a competent person (the Compliance Officer) within Property Services.
- 17.3 Information and guidance for tenants and leaseholders could be more consistent and improved.
- 17.4 Although the Council does not endorse firefighting by residents (and the standard advice by Fire & Rescue Services remains "get out, stay out"), should tenants and/or leaseholders choose to do so then they should be advised to purchase their own fire fighting equipment (e.g. fire blankets; personal fire extinguishers) .

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

18 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

- 18.1 The current and recommended measures within this report make a direct and positive contribution to a safer environment.

19 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 19.1 The current and recommended measures proposed in Appendix A are deemed reasonable and proportionate, and can be met from within existing resources.

20 RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 20.1 Many of the measures contained within Appendix A already form an integral part of existing maintenance programmes and within the HRA Business Plan, and therefore key risks have been assessed and actions are in place to mitigate those risks.

21 TACT COMMENT

- 21.1 The November TACT meeting was scheduled for after the dispatch date for this report. The final version will be shared with TACT at its meeting on 18 November and TACT has asked for the opportunity to comment and respond verbally at the Committee meeting.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

- Appendix A - Fire Safety Measures in WCC Council Housing
- Appendix B - Fire Safety Roles and Responsibilities of Managers
- Appendix C - Fire Safety Policy – Housing Service
- Appendix D - Fire Extinguisher Protocol

FIRE SAFETY MEASURES IN WCC COUNCIL HOUSING

		Individual dwellings		Communal areas		
Measure		Houses/bungalows	Flats/bedsits/maisonettes	General Needs (purpose built, converted and newly decommissioned sheltered)	Extra Care/Hostels or where there is 24/7 staff presence	
1	PREVENTING FIRES	Position				
(a)	Gas, oil and solid fuel heating systems	Current	WCC installed or adopted - serviced annually by WCC in accordance with manufacturers instructions ; un-adopted - should be serviced annually by tenant but no legal requirement to do so + no proactive measures by WCC	WCC installed or adopted - serviced annually by WCC in accordance with manufacturers instructions ; Un-adopted/Leaseholders - should be serviced annually by tenant but no legal requirement to do so + no proactive measures by WCC	Serviced annually by WCC in accordance with manufacturers instructions	Serviced annually by WCC in accordance with manufacturers instructions
		Recommended	WCC installed or adopted - ditto/no change; un-adopted - formally encourage tenants to have appliances checks yearly	WCC installed or adopted - ditto/no change; Un-adopted/Leaseholders - formally encourage leaseholders to have appliances checks yearly and forward copy of test certificate to WCC for information purposes only	Ditto/no change	Ditto/no change
(b)	Electrical installation (carcass)	Current	WCC installed or adopted - testing programme by WCC currently moving from 10 to 5 year cycle in accordance with good practice. Properties also re-tested at every change of tenancy	WCC installed or adopted - testing programme by WCC currently moving from 10 to 5 year cycle in accordance with good practice. Properties also re-tested at every change of tenancy; Un-adopted/Leaseholders - no proactive measures by WCC	Testing programme by WCC currently on a 5 year cycle in accordance with BS7671:2008 Requirements for Electrical Installations - Guidance Note 3.	Testing programme by WCC currently on a 5 year cycle in accordance with BS7671:2008 Requirements for Electrical Installations - Guidance Note 3.
		Recommended	Ditto/no change	WCC installed or adopted - testing programme by WCC currently moving from 10 to 5 year cycle in accordance with good practice. Properties also re-tested at every change of tenancy; Un-adopted/Leaseholders - formally encourage leaseholders to have installation checked every 5 years + recommend subsequent new leaseholders have installation checked when the lessee changes.	Ditto/no change	Ditto/no change

FIRE SAFETY MEASURES IN WCC COUNCIL HOUSING

		Individual dwellings		Communal areas		
Measure		Houses/bungalows	Flats/bedsits/maisonettes	General Needs (purpose built, converted and newly decommissioned sheltered)	Extra Care/Hostels or where there is 24/7 staff presence	
(c)	Portable appliances (cookers; washing machines; temporary heaters etc.)	Current	WCC owned/supplied - PAT tested annually by WCC; tenant owned - no legal requirement on tenants to have items periodically tested + no proactive advice given by WCC	WCC owned/supplied - PAT tested annually by WCC; tenant owned - no legal requirement on tenants to have items periodically tested + no proactive advice given by WCC	WCC owned/supplied - PAT tested annually by WCC	WCC owned/supplied - PAT tested annually by WCC
		Recommended	WCC owned/supplied - PAT tested annually by WCC; tenant owned - formally encourage tenants to have troublesome ("tripping") items tested/replaced	WCC owned/supplied - PAT tested annually by WCC; tenant owned - formally encourage tenants to have troublesome ("tripping") items tested/replaced	Ditto/no change	Ditto/no change
(d)	Electrical sockets (sufficient and appropriately positioned)	Current & recommended	Included in minimum void standard and on ad-hoc demand/request	Included in minimum void standard and on ad-hoc demand/request	N/A	N/A
(e)	Furniture & furnishings	Current	Tenants responsibility - no proactive measures/advice offered by WCC	Tenants responsibility - no proactive measures/advice offered by WCC	All WCC furniture complies with Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988	All WCC furniture complies with Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1990
		Recommended	Formally encourage tenants to only use second-hand furniture/furnishings that comply with Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988	Formally encourage tenants to only use second-hand furniture/furnishings that comply with Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1989	Ditto/no change	Ditto/no change

FIRE SAFETY MEASURES IN WCC COUNCIL HOUSING

	Measure		Individual dwellings		Communal areas	
			Houses/bungalows	Flats/bedsits/maisonettes	General Needs (purpose built, converted and newly decommissioned sheltered)	Extra Care/Hostels or where there is 24/7 staff presence
(f)	Communal refuse and waste (external)	Current & recommended	N/A	N/A	Weekly/fortnightly bin emptying	Weekly/fortnightly bin emptying
(g)	Communal refuse, waste and personal effects (internal) (i.e. internal communal areas/landings)	Current & recommended	N/A	N/A	Scheduled inspection regime by housing officers (Estates Team) ; Ad-hoc waste clearances; "Zero Tolerance" clear landing policy enforced	N/A
(h)	Cigarette stub collectors	Current & recommended	N/A	N/A	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned
(i)	Door entry systems	Current & recommended	N/A	N/A	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned
(j)	Lightning Protection Systems	Current & recommended	N/A	N/A	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned
(k)	No Smoking Signage	Current & recommended	N/A	N/A	Provided	Provided
2	Fire detection systems					
(a)	Smoke detectors	Current	WCC provided and tested annually; battery operated type upgraded when void (to hard-wired "linked" with standby supply);	Tenants - WCC provided and tested annually; battery operated type upgraded when void (to hard-wired "linked" with standby supply); Leaseholders - no proactive engagement by WCC	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted unless or until FRA recommends otherwise; tested weekly by on-site WCC staff;

FIRE SAFETY MEASURES IN WCC COUNCIL HOUSING

		Individual dwellings		Communal areas		
Measure		Houses/bungalows	Flats/bedsits/maisonettes	General Needs (purpose built, converted and newly decommissioned sheltered)	Extra Care/Hostels or where there is 24/7 staff presence	
		Recommended	WCC provided and tested annually; battery operated type upgraded when void and/or when electrically tested (to hard-wired "linked" with standby supply);	Tenants - WCC provided and tested annually; battery operated type upgraded when void and/or when electrically tested (to hard-wired "linked" with standby supply); battery operated units in maisonettes to be replaced forthwith; Leaseholders - advise to purchase and maintain their own	Remove/decommission existing (where present), and do not provide unless or until FRA recommends otherwise	Ditto/no change
(b)	Heat alarms (in kitchens)	Current & recommended	Not currently fitted by WCC	Not currently fitted by WCC	N/A	N/A
(c)	Sounders in flats/maisonettes above commercial premises/shops	Current & recommended	N/A	TBC - awaiting confirmation from Estates (who have requested copies of FRAs from commercial premises)	N/A	N/A
3	Compartmentation					
(a)	Fire doors to kitchens/risk rooms	Current & recommended	N/A	Provided and maintained "as built" unless or until FRA recommends otherwise	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned unless or until FRA recommends otherwise	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted unless or until FRA recommends otherwise
(b)	Fire doors (with smoke seals)	Current & recommended	N/A	Provided and maintained "as built" unless or until FRA recommends otherwise	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned unless or until FRA recommends otherwise	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted unless or until FRA recommends otherwise

FIRE SAFETY MEASURES IN WCC COUNCIL HOUSING

		Individual dwellings			Communal areas	
Measure			Houses/bungalows	Flats/bedsits/maisonettes	General Needs (purpose built, converted and newly decommissioned sheltered)	Extra Care/Hostels or where there is 24/7 staff presence
(c)	Fire door self-closing mechanisms	Current & recommended	N/A	Provided and maintained "as built" unless or until FRA recommends otherwise	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned unless or until FRA recommends otherwise	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted unless or until FRA recommends otherwise
(d)	Fully protected escape route - current provision	Current & recommended	N/A	N/A	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned unless or until FRA recommends otherwise	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted unless or until FRA recommends otherwise
4	Fire Fighting					
(a)	Fire blankets (in kitchens)	Current	Not provided by WCC; no advice to tenants;	Not provided by WCC; no advice to tenants;	N/A	Provided and maintained by WCC unless or until FRA recommends otherwise
		Recommended	Advise tenants to purchase their own	Advise tenants and leaseholders to purchase their own	N/A	Ditto/no change
(b)	Handheld fire extinguishers (see Appendix D)	Current	Not provided by WCC; no advice to tenants;	Not provided by WCC; no advice to tenants;	Mixed provision	Provided and maintained by WCC unless or until FRA recommends otherwise
		Recommended	Advise tenants to purchase their own	Advise tenants and leaseholders to purchase their own	WCC to provide and maintain in plant rooms, common rooms and laundries; decommission/remove all others (where present) incl. those to general flat corridors/landings, and do not provide unless or until FRA recommends otherwise	Ditto/no change

FIRE SAFETY MEASURES IN WCC COUNCIL HOUSING

		Individual dwellings			Communal areas	
Measure			Houses/bungalows	Flats/bedsits/maisonettes	General Needs (purpose built, converted and newly decommissioned sheltered)	Extra Care/Hostels or where there is 24/7 staff presence
(c)	Sprinklers	Current & recommended	Not provided	Not provided	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned unless or until FRA recommends otherwise	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted unless or until FRA recommends otherwise
5 Means of Escape						
(a)	Fire protected communal lobbies and stairwells	Current & recommended	N/A	N/A	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted/decommissioned unless or until FRA recommends otherwise	Provided and maintained "as built"/converted unless or until FRA recommends otherwise
(b)	Emergency Escape Lighting	Current & recommended	N/A	N/A	Where provided, maintained by WCC and tested every 6 months	Where provided, maintained by WCC and tested every 6 months
(c)	Clear landings/stairwells	Current & recommended	N/A	N/A	Scheduled inspection regime by housing officers (Estates Team) ; Ad-hoc waste clearances; "Zero Tolerance" clear landing policy enforced	Scheduled inspection regime by on-site staff ; "Zero Tolerance" clear landing policy enforced
(d)	Fire Exit Signs	Current & recommended	N/A	N/A	Provided if more than one escape route	Provided

APPENDIX B

Housing Services: Fire Safety Roles & Responsibilities

Senior Managers in the Housing Service must ensure that the Fire Safety Policy, and related procedures, are implemented and adhered to. Detailed below is a summary of the different team responsibilities within the Housing Service.

Property Services

To undertake the Fire Risk Assessments programme, and organise the remedial actions which are connected to the fabric of the building or relevant building services, e.g. lighting, fire detection and alarm systems. This will require arranging and procuring the professional services of fire safety specialists. Works are to be prioritised, as directed by the Compliance Officer, and organised in a timely manor with the competent contractors.

The Compliance Officer should undertake appropriate audits of the remedial works undertaken by contractors, to ensure the works are finished to a suitable standard.

Housing Estates

To undertake the necessary weekly and monthly checklist for general needs schemes to ensure that communal areas are clear of combustible materials, and alarm systems are in working order. As directed by the Compliance Officer to complete additional management measures identified in the Fire Risk Assessment.

To liaise with tenants so that appropriate fire safety information is communicated, e.g. evacuation procedures.

Housing Sheltered

To undertake the necessary weekly and monthly checklist for sheltered schemes to ensure that communal areas are clear of combustible materials, and alarm systems are in working order. As directed by the Compliance Officer to complete additional management measures identified in the Fire Risk Assessment.

To liaise with tenants so that appropriate fire safety information is communicated, e.g. evacuation procedures.

Temporary Accommodation

To undertake the necessary weekly and monthly checklist for temporary accommodation schemes to ensure that communal areas are clear of combustible materials, and alarm systems are in working order. As directed by the Compliance Officer to complete additional management measures identified in the Fire Risk Assessment.

To liaise with residents so that appropriate fire safety information is communicated, e.g. evacuation procedures.

APPENDIX C

Title	Fire Safety Policy - Housing Services
Section	Property Services, Housing Services
Author	Spencer Scott, Compliance Officer
Date finalised	September 2015

Review Period	Every 2 years
Review Date	November 2017
Lead Officer	Compliance Officer (Property Services)

Change History

Version	Date	Description	Ref. ID
1	November 2013	New Policy document.	HS/008/2013
2	September 2015	Policy reviewed.	HS/008/2015
3			

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Appendix to Policy

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This Policy ensures Winchester City Council Housing Services manages and controls the fire risks for all Housing Properties, especially those based at hostels and sheltered schemes, and ensures that there are suitable and sufficient arrangements for fire safety management across all associated properties.
- 1.2 As an overarching policy this document covers key arrangements and guidance on related roles and responsibilities necessary for the safety and protection of tenants, staff, contractors, visitors, and WCC Housing properties.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 The Winchester City Council Housing Service shall ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that fire management arrangements comply with the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and other appropriate regulations. Relevant Government guidance will be followed, for example the Local Government Association Fire Safety in Purpose-built blocks of flats (2011).
- 2.2 The Winchester City Council Senior Management is committed to the effective management of fire risk, and the prevention of any associated injury or ill-health to: tenants, staff, visitors, contractors, and any persons affected by the premise including Fire and Rescue Service personnel.
- 2.3 Where an evacuation plan is required for a scheme, e.g. *Stay Put*, this will be decided through the property specific Fire Risk Assessment.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This guidance gives specific information on the management arrangements in Winchester City Council sheltered housing schemes, temporary accommodation hostels, medium rise flats and places of work within the housing stock.
- 3.2 The linked documents and guidance to this Policy is detailed in the appendix, in addition the *Sheltered Services Policy and Procedure* manual will also be relevant.

4 Legislation: The Fire Safety Order

- 4.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 came into affect 1st October 2006, and is enforced by the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service (HFRS) locally. The key actions of this Order are detailed below. This Order replaced all previous fire legislation, and gives Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service powers to visit and inspect for fire safety issues within any Winchester City Council Housing Services schemes as part of normal

APPENDIX C

routine, or where there is believed to be just cause, i.e. via a formal complaint.

- 4.2 The Localism Act 2011 has introduced legislative changes which allow a fire and rescue service to charge for Unwanted Fire Signals (UFS). Although HFRS has not introduced any charges currently, WCC must continue to stop any UFS from our properties.
- 4.3 The key actions under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 are:
- A Fire Risk Assessment is required for each place of work, with an action plan to manage any deficiencies/ recommendations identified by the assessment, undertaken by a 'competent' Fire Risk Assessor. As a Social Landlord WCC is required to undertake a Fire Risk Assessment covering the communal areas of a property, and consider who may be harmed by a fire;
 - Fire Risk Assessments are reviewed regularly and revised when significant operational or property changes have occurred;
 - The appointed Fire Risk Assessor should have their competency assessed against relevant national standards (Ref. *Fire Risk Assessment Competency Council: Guide to Choosing a Competent Fire Risk Assessor 29th April 2014*);
 - The 'Responsible Person' shall ensure there is an Appointed Person for each supported/ sheltered scheme site, and given suitable training and instruction, and sufficient time for the role;
 - Fire Awareness training is required for all staff, which is achieved via the WCC e-learning portal. Additional fire extinguisher training will be provided as necessary;
 - Fire fighting equipment, smoke/ heat detection and alarm systems must be tested and maintained;
 - An Evacuation Plan will be in place for relevant sites e.g. extra care schemes;
 - In house Fire Safety checks and monitoring should be detailed in the Fire Safety Logbook, via the *Weekly/ Monthly Fire Safety Checklist*. Items of non-compliance should be raised up the management chain for resolution;
 - All visits by HFRS inspections should be reported to the Corporate Health and Safety Adviser and Compliance Officer (Property Services). Correspondence will usually follow their visits.

5 Definitions

<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
<u>Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005</u>	<p><u>The main regulatory legislation which sets standards for the control measures to be taken for fire safety, including the need for all work places to have Fire Risk Assessments undertaken.</u></p> <p><u>General measures include:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <u>Reduce the risk of fire occurring on the premises and the risk of fire spread;</u> b) <u>Measures in relation to the means of escape from the premises;</u> c) <u>Measures for assuring that, at all material times, the means of escape can be safely and effectively used;</u> d) <u>Measures in relation to the means of fighting fires;</u> e) <u>Measures in relation to the means for detecting fire on the premises and giving warning in case of fire on the premises;</u> f) <u>Instruction and training of employees, and providing tenants with relevant information.</u> <p><u>Abbreviated to RR(FS)O.</u></p>
<u>Responsible Person</u>	<p><u>Detailed in the RR(FS)O, as the person who has responsibility for fire safety matters on site. The Responsible Person (RP) is required to ensure that fire risk assessments have been undertaken and the relevant site checks are carried out to the right frequency. Fire Safety management arrangements are likely to be delegated down to an Appointed Officer(s), who are those staff regularly visiting staff.</u></p>
<u>Fire Risk Assessment</u>	<p><u>A formal written document which records the following:-</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Fire hazards (sources of ignition, fuel and oxygen); b) People at risk (people in and around the premises, and those especially at risk, e.g. those with reduced mobility); c) Evaluate, remove/ reduce and protect from significant risk (of fire starting, risk to people from fire, remove/ reduce fire hazards, remove/ reduce risks to people from fire, protect by providing fire precautions – active and passive); d) Record, plan, inform, instruct and train (major findings and action taken, discuss and work with others, prepare an emergency plan, inform and instruct, or training staff); e) Review: review the assessment annually, and make changes as necessary.
<u>False Alarm</u>	<p><u>An alarm activation from a fire detection/ warning system, resulting from a cause other than a fire. Creates Unwanted Fire Signals (UFS).</u></p>

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<u>Fire Safety Logbook</u>	<u>A management system for fire safety that includes a weekly/ monthly checklist monitoring form, maintenance records, building plans, evacuation procedures and information on specific arrangements for disabled/ dependent building occupants. Provides assurance and compliance with parts of the RR(FS)O.</u>
<u>Manual Fire Suppression systems</u>	<u>Fire Extinguishers: water; foam, carbon monoxide; & powder forms. These extinguishers are used on different fire types, and the primary purpose is to ensure a small fire does not become a large fire. Staff using extinguishers must have received appropriate training &/ or instruction.</u>
<u>Compartmentation</u>	<u>A key element of passive fire protection in buildings, based on the principles of subdividing a building into fire resistant compartments which can contain or limit the spread of fire, smoke and other dangerous gases, from entering other compartments for a period of time.</u>
<u>Chichester Careline</u>	<u>Chichester Careline are the contractor receiving all the out of hours calls for the Tunstall alarm activated. They have suitable call handling procedures to follow prior to contacting the fire and rescue service.</u>

6 Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for fire safety issues for WCC properties.

6.2 The Chief Housing Officer has control over the whole Housing Stock, and shall ensure the following management arrangements are in place:

- That the Fire Safety Policy is implemented in buildings under the control of the Housing Service, e.g. sheltered schemes, which have communal areas;
- That nominated appointed persons are available to undertake the statutory fire safety checks/ tests and the recording of all such actions as required in the Fire Safety Logbook for the building;
- That appointed persons receive training deemed necessary to ensure they are competent to carry out their duties with regard to fire safety;
- The correct implementation and monitoring of the fire safety management system for those buildings, including the Fire Risk Assessments and Weekly/ Monthly Fire Safety Checklist;
- That other Housing Service staff and contractors are trained and competent to carry out their duties with regard to fire safety, e.g. *A2 Dominion Support Staff*.

6.3 Fire safety advice will be provided by the Compliance Officer internally, with additional external advice occasionally sought from competent fire safety consultancies e.g. *Building Research Establishment*.

6.4 Housing Service Managers shall ensure that this policy is known and acted upon by staff directly under their control. Fire safety can only be dealt with correctly when all stakeholders play their part, which includes tenants, maintenance contractors and all Housing Services staff.

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- 6.5 All staff shall ensure that they are aware of and follow recognised procedures for fire safety. They shall inform their manager or team leader of any concerns regarding fire safety, and participate in fire safety training as agreed with their manager / team leader.

7 Management Procedures

- 7.1 For Extra Care Scheme properties it is necessary to have Appointed Person(s) to take ownership for the completion of relevant fire safety checks and management of the WCC Housing Fire Safety Logbook.
- 7.2 The Appointed Person is required to ensure that the routine Fire Safety checks are carried out within and around their building, although this can be achieved by delegation to other team members.
- 7.3 Planned monitoring is carried out by Sheltered Housing Officer's (and other Housing staff), on a weekly and monthly frequency. Property Services shall ensure that competent maintenance contractors undertake the necessary statutory checks, for emergency lighting, fire detection and alarm systems, dry risers and local extinguishers. The attached Housing Service *Roles and Responsibilities* document (see Appendix) give details on specific duties.

8 Fire Risk Assessment

- 8.1 The Compliance Officer leads on the Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) programme, and reviews the reports for Housing Services buildings which have communal areas. The annual review of the fire risk assessment will in most cases just require a simple assessment of the changes that have occurred to the building (if any), and how the building is used as a workplace, or how care is provided. If there have been no building changes, and the staffing working patterns and type of use has not changed then the FRA will remain fit for purpose. Resources are prioritised on the high risk properties such as the extra care schemes.
- 8.2 High risk properties will have an annual FRA completed by the Compliance Officer, with the update report being sent to the relevant senior manager/ appointed person. The report will be sent through as soon as possible, and ideally within 10 working days;
- 8.3 Remedial actions: the Senior Manager/ Appointed Person with responsibility for the relevant building shall review the Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) when it is provided to them by the Property Services Compliance Officer. In addition a review shall be carried out where there are any significant changes (to the building or occupant type), or if there is any reason to suspect that it is no longer valid. It is likely that significant changes will require the completion of a new FRA to be organised by the Compliance Officer.
- 8.4 Any high or medium risk remedial works/ improvements detailed within the FRA remedial action plan relating to building structure, or detection and alarm systems will be implemented by the Property Services Section as part of a rolling programme of works. Management actions will be the responsibility of the relevant tenancy team, e.g. Temporary Accommodation. Justification for not actioning non-compliances within the FRA action plan must be recorded.

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9 Fire Safety Logbook

- 9.1 In order to assist Appointed Persons there is a WCC Housing Fire Safety Logbook, which contains a series of generic processes and templates which should be adapted to render it 'site specific'. The sections of the logbook to be completed depends upon the size, complexity and use of the building, and those employees and type of tenants who will use the building.
- 9.2 The Appointed Person must ensure the *relevant parts* of the Fire Safety Logbook is readily available for inspection by any authorised officer of the HFRS or appropriate WCC staff, or equivalent documentation may be used and stored on document management system (currently Sharepoint).

10 Fire Detection and Alarm Systems

- 10.1 It is the policy at WCC Housing Service that all dwellings are fitted with a smoke detector.
- 10.2 Each site will be considered on a case by case basis for a whole property (communal areas) Fire Detection and Alarm System, but are only likely to require installation where it is designated for Temporary Accommodation, or as a Sheltered Scheme;
- 10.3 Fire Detection Standards: Guidance has been produced by central government such as the *Fire safety risk assessment: Residential care premises* (Fire Safety Employers Guide), which gives guidance on the way fire risks should be managed and fire detection systems designed. Regards will be given to this guide and relevant British Standards (e.g. BS 5839-1:2002, A2:2008) when fire safety provisions are reviewed as part of the Fire Risk Assessments.
- 10.4 The standard of the fire detection and alarm system may vary from one scheme/property to another because it is dependent upon the complexity of the building, the occupying tenants, and the emergency escape strategy for that building (which may be a Stay Put Policy) which the FRA will review.

11 Evacuation Plans

- 11.1 With the assistance of the Compliance Officer, an Evacuation Plan will be considered, taking into account the local environment and complexity of the premise which can be considered a workplace, e.g. extra care scheme. This may include the designated Fire Assembly Point.
- 11.2 The Senior Manager/ Appointed Person must ensure as a minimum, an emergency evacuation procedure addresses:
- Actions taken upon discovering a fire;
 - Actions upon hearing the alarm;
 - Actions by competent persons, e.g. *Housing Support Officer*;
 - Evacuation of persons with special needs/ reduced mobility;
 - Collection of the Fire Safety Documents Folder/ pack, where applicable.

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11.3 The range of WCC sheltered and supported housing schemes means a single Evacuation Plan cannot fit all sites, however, the Fire Safety Logbook provides a versatile template.

12 Training

12.1 The Fire Safety (Regulatory Reform) Order 2005 requires that all persons at work undergo appropriate information and instruction on local fire safety precautions. Line managers shall also ensure that new staff complete the mandatory Fire Awareness training, on the WCC e-learning zone, and received appropriate refresher training.

12.2 As part of the staff induction process, new starters shall receive emergency evacuation instructions for their workplace by their line manager.

12.3 All other staff shall receive basic Fire Awareness training, followed by refresher training 3 yearly, using e-learning. It is the responsibility of individual line manager to ensure that staff attend or undertake the above, and that this is recorded as part of their 1 to 1 process.

13 Arson Prevention

13.1 Consideration should be given to taking measure to reduce the likelihood of arson occurring on site. Local measures can be taken to reduce the likelihood of arson which must be followed as an integral part of the local Fire Policy, e.g. *management of the wheelie bin storage*.

13.2 Consultation with Police, Neighbourhood Wardens, and other agencies may be beneficial. Useful information is available on the HFRS arson webpages www.hantsfire.gov.uk/keeping-safe/arson/ , or further guidance can be provided by the Council Insurance Officer.

14 Audit

14.1 All supported and sheltered accommodation must be able to demonstrate compliance with the relevant parts of this Policy, particularly the documents noted in section 3.

14.2 The Compliance Officer shall audit compliance to these standards, currently on an annual basis, for the higher risk schemes (as determined by the FRA's).

14.4 If non-compliance issues are raised, the reporting process is as follows:

- 1) Remedial Action Plan to be produced to highlight priority work to be actioned;
- 2) At an agreed date the Compliance Officer may re-audit the building/ scheme site;
- 3) If, after the agreed date, there are still outstanding concerns then these will be reported to the Chief Housing Officer.

15 Review of Policy

- 15.1 The Compliance officer in consultation with the Corporate Health and Safety Adviser shall continue to develop and monitor Fire Safety Policy implementation. And as a minimum, this policy will be reviewed every two years or whenever there are changes to relevant legislation.

Appendix to Policy.

- 1. Fire Safety Logbook;**
- 2. Fire Extinguisher Protocol;**
- 3. Fire Safety Responsibilities.**

APPENDIX D**Fire Extinguisher Protocol****Scope of Protocol**

Winchester City Council (WCC) Housing Service is committed to the provision of safe workplaces, and safe communal areas for tenants which includes appropriate fire protection measures, e.g. fire doors. This protocol is focused on the provision and use of fire fighting equipment – *fire extinguishers* – which will be required in some of our schemes.

Fire extinguishers will be provided if identified by the buildings Fire Risk Assessment, which is a requirement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, and where there are staff onsite to use them.

National Guidance such as the *Local Government Association Fire Safety in Purpose-built blocks of flats* (2011) has stated that fire extinguishers are 'not normally necessary' in common parts of flats. It is also accepted that heavy fire extinguishers should not be used by frail residents, or those who do not understand the different category types of fire extinguishers and which fires they should be used on.

Operational

Fire extinguishers will normally be located in conspicuous positions on escape routes, next to exit doors. Wherever possible, fire-fighting equipment should be grouped to form fire points. Fire extinguishers should only be used by trained staff and not in a way that puts them at harm.

Government guidance states that fire extinguishers can help to *reduce the risk of a small fire developing into a larger one*, as long as the appropriate extinguisher is used. Graphic symbols are on the extinguisher body to assist identification of the type of fire it can be used on.

Tests and inspections

Fire extinguishers in WCC Housing Service properties will be covered under a Maintenance Term Contract, which is currently with *CFS Ltd*, to undertake the relevant testing and inspection regime for fire extinguishers and other fire safety equipment, e.g. dry risers. Fire extinguishers are checked every 12 months under the contract in place.

Training

Relevant staff will be trained for the use of fire extinguishers, for example Sheltered Support Officers and care staff. Those who do not have any training to use an extinguisher are not expected to use them.

It is a legal requirement for Winchester City Council to keep records of the frequencies of inspections, fire tests and staff training, which will be kept on site or held on the Housing Services document management system. In addition, the *Weekly/ Monthly Fire Safety*

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Monitoring form in the logbook is used to monitor extinguishers and other fire safety equipment.

Audit and Review

The provision of fire extinguishers will be regularly reviewed as part of the properties fire risk assessments, and any significant changes will be recorded.

Diagram 1. Extinguisher Categories

			
WATER	POWDER	FOAM	CARBON DIOXIDE (CO₂)
For wood, paper, textiles and solid material fires	For liquid and electrical fires	For use on liquid fires	For liquid and electrical fires
DO NOT USE on liquid, electrical or metal fires	DO NOT USE on metal fires	DO NOT USE on electrical or metal fires	DO NOT USE on metal fires