

UPDATE ON FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS (Sept 2017)

Fire Safety Procedures and Risk Assessments Generally

We can confirm that the council has 85 fire risk assessments covering the communal areas of residential properties, serving blocks of flats and sheltered schemes. These have been carried out by an external expert in this area. There are also fire risk assessments for one community facility (at Boulter Crescent) and all office bases, carried out by the same external expert.

A review was carried out to ensure all relevant buildings were included. This identified one residential scheme where there are shared facilities but these are all outside rather than within the building. We are not certain this falls within the fire safety reform order (and had not been considered to do so since 2005) but have now added this to the schedule of properties and have had a fire risk assessment carried out by the external expert.

The Council's approach is compliant with good practice and involves undertaking independent fire risk assessments at least every 5 years or earlier if triggered by changes in circumstances. In the intervening period internal reviews are carried out by a competent person which in most instances over the last five year cycle has been Don Rudd; these have generally been on a 2 yearly cycle unless prompted by a change of circumstances or an event.

It is intended to move to a three yearly cycle of FRA's carried out by an external expert with two internal annual reviews carried out by a competent person i.e. properties visited and reviewed every year.

A check was made to ensure all FRA's were up to date. 4 schemes were found to be out of date having last been completed in 2012 and 6 schemes were due for new FRA's in 2017. The out of date ones were completed immediately and the others have been undertaken since.

An improved monitoring system has been introduced and this will be used to manage the move to a three year cycle

Specific checks that were undertaken

- A visit was made to every site to check all recommendations and internal reviews are up to date.
- All signage was checked (e.g. self adhesive warnings that had been removed) and replaced where necessary
- Any outstanding recommendations are being implemented – these are usually lower risk items that had not been flagged as high priority for immediate action.
- A check was made that all locations had up to date evacuation procedure notices in place and any found to be missing were replaced.
- The biggest jobs undertaken have been fitting / replacing smoke seals to doors, increasing emergency lighting, safety checking and upgrading some landlord's electricity supplies.
- Review of procedures and responsibilities

Capital investment in relation to fire safety

The council has an ongoing programme of capital investment which is aimed to bring schemes up to or as close as possible to those standards required as if they had been built today. In the current financial year there are projects to increase fire safety at the Junction Rd / Maromme Sq / Burgess St scheme and at Marriot House. These generally include replacing original fire doors and other associated works. This is a programme that is well advanced with major schemes such as Boulter Crescent, Bennett Way, Elizabeth Court having been completed in recent years.

Were any specific concerns identified?

The need to upgrade the landlord's electricity supplies and replace the existing fire doors in the leasehold flats above the shops on Brabazon Road was identified. The electrical upgrade was completed as a matter of urgency and consultation is currently taking place regarding replacement of the fire doors to complete in the current financial year. Similarly we are consulting with leaseholders at the Welford Rd / Newton Lane scheme in order to replace the fire doors. These are very similar in design to the ones at Junction Road mentioned above and will also be replaced in the current financial year.

The age condition and accessibility of the incoming landlord and tenants electrical supplies (belonging to the network provider, the energy suppliers meters and landlords switchgear) has also been identified as an issue. This is more from an electrical safety point of view but also has potential fire safety implications. As indicated above the most urgent one at Brabazon Rd flats above the shops has already been addressed and a scheme is currently being drawn up and priced to carry out improvements at Elizabeth Court. This will deal with the most immediate concerns. High level star key locks have been fitted to the shared electric meter cupboard doors at Boulter Crescent to reduce the risk of children accessing these.

We can also confirm

- Recent independent fire risk assessments are in place for all offices (2016/17)
- All alarm systems and extinguishers are on current service contracts
- Alarm system testing in general needs blocks (Elizabeth Court) is on contract
- Alarm tests in offices are carried out by staff – backed up by service contracts

Work is underway to consider what policy and procedure changes are needed.

Visits with the Fire Service

There have been two very positive visits with the fire service, to Chartwell House and a block on Burgess Street. It is understood there will be an ongoing programme of these visits.

Housing Management

Housing Officers continue to ensure common areas are kept clear of bikes and pushchairs etc. and have been checking to ensure personal evacuation plans for people who need assistance are in place where needed. Fire boxes have been fitted at the three sheltered schemes to hold fire information for when the fire service come on site.