

COUNCIL: 22 MARCH 2018

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES STATEMENT

Additional Fire Safety Checks on Cladding of High-Rise Housing Blocks

Following last summer's tragedy at Grenfell Tower in London, and with tenant safety as our top priority, the Council decided to go beyond the initial review of our cladding systems that checked for ACM (Aluminium Composite Material) to make sure that there were no other issues with the cladding of our high-rise council housing blocks.

The results of these extra tests have established that the cladding on six blocks fail current standards. They show that, whilst the 50mm of insulation in the cladding is fully fire retardant, the veneered, fibrous-hardwood, rain screen panels fail today's combustibility standards. Our checks have also revealed that fire barriers were not built into the cladding system on the exterior of the buildings in question. While this was not required by regulations at the time of installation, today's standards are much higher and we are also taking this into account.

Naturally, everyone living in these blocks will be very concerned by this news, but I want to reassure them that we are working closely with South Wales Fire and Rescue Service to ensure that we follow the latest fire-safety guidance and to decide the best way forward. I believe we are the first council in the UK to carry out these additional checks on cladding; because of this and because of the test results, we have informed Welsh Government and we will also be informing the UK Government's Department for Communities and Local Government.

The high-rise blocks of flats affected are:

- Lydstep Flats, Llandaff North (3 blocks);
- Loudoun and Nelson House, Butetown; and
- Channel View, Grangetown.

Immediate actions that have taken place include:

- Round-the-clock fire warden patrols and increased CCTV monitoring.
- All flats have smoke detectors fitted and these are checked annually as are gas appliances.
- A letter was hand delivered to all residents on Monday 19th March.
- The C2C line was extended on Monday 19th March to 8pm to answer any immediate concerns.
- Information sessions for residents in the affected blocks were provided on Tuesday 20th March.

- It is likely that the cladding on all blocks affected will need to be removed and a small sample has been removed to determine the best way to achieve this.

As had previously been agreed, we are also committed to:

- Upgrading fire doors to above set standards in all our high-rise blocks, replacing the 30-minute integrity fire doors with higher specification 60-minute fire doors. This will be completed by May 2018.
- All high-rise blocks are also set to be fitted with sprinklers.

Give DIFFerently

Members will be aware that the Give DIFFerently scheme was launched in November 2017 and aims to encourage those visiting, and living in, Cardiff to think differently about how they give to those who are begging, homeless or at risk of homelessness. It also aims to end the cycle of homelessness and move people away from rough sleeping by providing meaningful support through small grants that will really make a difference to individuals.

Give DIFFerently was developed by the Council's Homelessness Outreach team, working in partnership with Wallich, FOR Cardiff, Big Issue Cymru, Huggard, Salvation Army, South Wales Police, Public Health Wales and Community Foundation in Wales. The scheme focuses on card payments to ensure that people can give to people they see on the streets in a constructive way, even if they aren't carrying cash. To this end, a 24/7 contactless payment point has been provided at The Hayes and was launched on 12th March 2018 by Wales and British Lions rugby star, Sam Warburton OBE. The donation payment is set at £2 and any contribution made will be doubled by the Four Acre Trust. The contactless payment point will be accepting donations until Sunday 25th March 2018.

The funds raised will be put towards small grants for those currently experiencing or at risk of homelessness and will be distributed through Cardiff's front line services. Addressing rough sleeping and homelessness in the city is a real priority for the Council and by giving DIFFerently, everyone can help us tackle the issue so that some of the most vulnerable people in our society can begin to rebuild their lives.

HRA Business Plan

I am pleased that Cabinet agreed the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2018-19 on 15th March 2018. The Business Plan sets out our purpose and vision as a social housing landlord and communicates how we are going to deliver our ambitious targets and highlights many exciting projects which are planned over the next few years. It covers many areas of work, including maintaining the Welsh Housing Quality Standard, managing our homes, advice and information and our ambition to build new council homes.

I am excited about the delivery of new council housing in Cardiff and I can confirm that I have set officers a challenging target of delivering 2,000 new council homes over a 10-year period, with at least 1,000 being delivered by May 2022.

The vision has become a reality with our major new-build partnership with Wates Residential (Cardiff Living) now well underway. All 10 development sites included

within Phase 1 of this programme have planning permission and we have 4 schemes where work has commenced on site. Phase 1 will deliver 195 new council homes, as well as 291 homes for sale. Our first handovers of council homes through Cardiff Living is planned for October 2018. The concept design work for Phases 2 and 3 of the Cardiff Living programme are being progressed to determine how many new homes these phases will deliver. This long-term partnership is also delivering many initiatives benefitting our citizens through a large scale community benefits package, including local employment, apprenticeships and local community investments.

A long term development programme is in place giving confidence that we have enough land and opportunities to deliver at least 2,000 new council homes on a range of sites, ensuring that we are able to build the right homes in the right places. Some of these sites provide opportunities to make a real step-change in the volume of council homes being built and help regenerate areas of the city.

I am particularly excited about some of the innovative housing solutions that could help us to deliver more homes quicker. We have been successful in applying for Welsh Government Innovative Housing funding for two schemes delivering new temporary accommodation for homeless families using shipping containers and we are working to deliver a factory built volumetric solution that can help us deliver homes quickly and at scale. This works towards our plans and aspirations for housing and communities in Cardiff. Having a good quality home, in a safe and connected community, is important to all of the citizens in Cardiff.

Councillor Lynda Thorne
Cabinet Member for Housing & Communities
21 March 2018