

Fire Remedial Work Programme Report

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Purpose of the Report

This report provides an updated position to the Tenant Strategic Group for the main landlord health and safety property compliance fire remedial actions/works following Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) and validation surveys.

Background

The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly impacted upon our ability to progress with a number of the required actions. As well as resourcing issues (both internally, and for contractors), obtaining access from some vulnerable tenants who have been shielding or are anxious about allowing people into their homes during the latest lockdown continues to create difficulties in maintaining compliance in some areas. However, we have continued to validate our activities throughout the latest lockdown and have made considerable progress in many categories and areas of fire remedial actions.

A review of all compliance areas, including fire safety, against every property for which Somerset West and Taunton Council has property compliance responsibility has been undertaken. This review has led to improved data, resulting in an updated property compliance database which provides an improved monitoring capability for this activity, and an increased level of assurance on performance.

Fire Risk Assessments

Article 9 of the RRFSo2005 requires that a responsible person must make a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to which relevant persons are exposed for the purpose of identifying the measures they need to take. To satisfy this requirement, we undertake fire risk assessments to all properties deemed as non-domestic, including the communal areas of domestic buildings.

A programme of new Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) has recently been completed and resulting recommended remedial actions logged. In addition, following recommendations within FRA's to undertake further validation to check compliance of existing fire doors, these have been undertaken and have established a need to develop a further programme of replacement doors.

The following table provides an update of the current position in relation to fire risk assessments:

Property Account Type	Number of Properties	Number Inspected	Percentage Compliant
HRA - Blocks	323	323	100%
HRA – Meeting Halls	18	18	100%
HRA – Guest Rooms	10	10	100%
HRA - Commercial	4	4	100%

Internal Audit

An internal audit on Housing Compliance Governance and Reporting Processes has recently been carried out. This had an objective 'To provide assurance that housing compliance governance and reporting processes are adequately designed and operating effectively'. This provided an Assurance Opinion of 'Reasonable', with seven priority actions to be completed. We are developing a plan to undertake these actions, however none of them directly relates to fire safety concerns, indicating a robust approach is being taken to ensuring fire safety for our residents.

Fire Safety Actions

Considerable progress has been made in relation to fire safety actions in the past year, despite the difficulties outlined above due to the Covid pandemic. At the beginning of 2020 there were 5421 outstanding fire safety actions and, as can be seen in the table below, this has now reduced to 1968. However, it should be noted that the number of outstanding actions changes as the recommended remedial actions from the latest FRA's are received, as these will supersede previous FRA's. As works are undertaken to resolve existing remedial actions, and potentially additional recommended remedial actions are added from new FRA's (e.g. due to changes in legislation or best practice), then this becomes, in effect, a moving target.

Remedial actions have been grouped into themes/fire risk categories as reported in the table below and this depicts the current position of action outstanding and overdue:

Remedial Action Type	Number of Outstanding Actions	Number of Overdue Actions
Bin Store	1	1
Communal Fire Doors	191	97
Compartmentalisation*	167	18
Compliance Management	57	12
Detection and Alarm	228	5

Electrical Improvement	259	80
Emergency lighting	160	8
Fire Signage	151	18
Flat Entrance Fire Doors	403	127
Flat Store Fire Doors	27	9
Flooring	21	21
Housekeeping	1	1
Means of Escape	16	0
Repairs, Testing and Maintenance	120	10
Tenancy Management	166	15
Total	1968	422

* A fire compartment is a building or part of a building comprising one or more rooms, spaces or storeys constructed to prevent the spread of fire to or from another part of the same building or an adjoining building. This is achieved through the provision of fire resisting walls and floors and will include special measures to address any openings in the compartment lines, such as doors, glazing, service penetrations and ductwork. The wall or floor must remain functional for the duration of the designed fire resistance period. The compartment wall or floor should not crack or develop holes that allow flames, smoke or hot gases to pass through it. Fire compartmentation is required for both life safety and property protection purposes. It is required for life safety purposes when protecting or sub-dividing escape routes. Fire compartmentation provides occupiers of the building additional time to evacuate before escape routes are potentially compromised by the spread of smoke and fire. It will also decrease the danger which the Fire and Rescue Services may be exposed to. It is required for property protection purposes as it will limit spread and attempt to contain the fire to the location it has originated. In some instances, automatic fire suppression systems such as a sprinkler system may be provided where necessary to reduce the rate and growth of fire which may also impact on permitted maximum compartment sizes. Fire compartmentation is achieved by use of fire resisting construction and cavity barriers, with any fire stopping if necessary.

All remedial actions raised from FRA's are validated and all required works actioned by the Property Compliance team, Housing Property team and the Housing team. These actions have been added to a programme of works which are being actively progressed.

The following chart demonstrates this year's performance on FRA remedial actions:



Note: The number of outstanding Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's) actions has increased by 1242 following the recent accelerated programme of FRA's undertaken. However, the number of overdue actions has decreased by 311 despite this, due to a redeployment of resources within our Housing Property team during the recent lockdown period.

The remedial actions within each category are placed into work streams and delivered via various internal departments, procured specialist contractors and/or major capital investment programmes. As an example there are approximately two thousand fire doors (safety devices) within our housing portfolio, which will be subject to a comprehensive capital replacement programme. There are currently 621 fire doors which require some form of remediation as identified by our FRA programme, which will be incorporated in to a procured capital replacement programme due to its large scale specialist nature and required accreditation.

The changes to current fire and building safety legislation and revised testing requirements of fire rated products has led to a national review post-Grenfell. As a responsible social landlord we have, and continue to, survey and validate current arrangements, including product reviews to ascertain we continue to meet the required changes.

The table below has been aligned to the remedial categories applied to the work-streams and a wider investment programme:

Work Streams	Number required	Current Status
Bin Store	6	Feasibility Study
Communal Fire Doors – Capital works programme	300	Procurement of Specialist
Compartmentalisation	167	Procurement of Specialist
Compliance Management	57	Review – Landlord and Compliance Specialist
Detection and Alarm	228	Specialist Contractor
Electrical Improvement – Capital Works	259	Procurement
Emergency lighting – Capital Works	160	Procurement
Fire Signage	151	Maintenance team
Flat Entrance Fire Doors – Capital works Programme	1561	Procurement of Specialist
Flat Store Fire Doors – Capital works Programme	200	Procurement of Specialist
Flooring – Capital works programme	339	Procurement Contractor
Housekeeping	1	Tenancy Management Team
Means of Escape	16	Review – Landlord and Compliance Specialist
Repairs, Testing and Maintenance	120	Maintenance Team/Contractors
Tenancy Management	166	Tenancy Management Team
Total	3726	

As indicated above the majority of current actions relate to legislative changes for example: electrical improvement and emergency lighting works have occurred due to Wiring Regulations and changes within the Regulatory Reform Fire Safety Order 2005 where plastic fastening clips and conduit are no longer approved due to the potential of melting in the event of fire and impeding means of escape. These works have been grouped and procured to be delivered in a wider capital investment programme as part of the housing blocks refurbishment works. This procurement is currently out to tender.

The same has been applied to all fire doors (safety devices) within the housing portfolio, hence why there are 1510 more door actions taking account of the wider capital programmes of delivery than those identified within fire risk assessments.

An initial pilot programme of composite fire door installations has been undertaken. This programme identified an issue of the non-availability of a BSEN1634 certified composite door small enough for installation to a number of our door openings and also the related need to the ‘close off’ the door cavities. The full programme has therefore now changed the specification to the supply and installation of timber doors.

Timber doors are considered to future proof the Council due to the 'nominal' status of the doors. They also enable the doors to be maintained by the council's maintenance team presenting an opportunity to reduce the future cost of maintenance/replacement. The requirement for Secure by Design standards has been maintained as has the aesthetic need for a visually attractive front door design. The fire door programme has been procured and a contract programme for 2021/22 is being agreed with the contractor.

Other categories are also included, for example the delivery of flooring replacements within our communal areas, following previous fire actions in removing floor coverings under fire safety. We have 21 fire actions to be included in the capital investment programme where we have a requirement of an additional 318 for replacement.

Other works have been identified for specialist contractors, primarily due to the type of work required, accreditations and competences required within each specialist field.

Summary

The outstanding FRA actions remain an important priority for the Compliance team to progress and work is being undertaken across all of the required work-streams. Remedial actions in the capital programme will be progressed during 2021-22. We will report progress on their completion to the internal weekly compliance meetings, quarterly update reports to the Audit Committee and to this group as required.