

## CRITICAL INCIDENTS UPDATE: GRENFELL TOWER & MANCHESTER ARENA

### REPORT OF THE CHIEF FIRE OFFICER



**For Information**

#### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to inform Members of the Fire Authority of the progress of the recommendations stated within the published reports of both the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (Phase 1 and Phase 2) and Manchester Arena Inquiry.

#### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

- Note the name change of the action group from Grenfell/Manchester Arena to Critical Incidents
- Note the progress against Grenfell Action Plan and Manchester Arena Action Plan

#### 3. GRENFELL: BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017 took the lives of 72 people, with a further fatality on 29 January 2018, and left many more with both physical and psychological injuries. Whilst fire and rescue services are trained to respond to fires in residential high rise buildings, the incident on the 14 June 2017 was of a scale and rapidity that was exceptional; preceded and precipitated by an apparent complete failure of the building's fire safety measures to perform effectively. Those failures created a set of conditions not previously experienced by the Fire and Rescue Service and provided a formidable challenge for the London Fire Brigade and its partner emergency services who responded on the night.
- 3.2 Phase 1 of the Inquiry was released in October 2019 and was concerned with investigating the cause of the fire, its subsequent development and the steps taken by the LFB and the other emergency services in response to it and set out several recommendations, upon which CFB created an internal Action Plan to address and improve our response to high rise incidents. In February 2020, a report was taken to ELT Policy recommending the devolution of the management of the Grenfell Action Plan due to the size, complexity and likely duration of the Plan. It was also decided that ELT would have strategic oversight of all Grenfell related decision making and resource allocation in addition to the scrutiny provided by internal Operational Assurance.

- 3.3 In March 2020 the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) circulated its report on operational policy, which was based on a request for information from Services of current and planned activity to address the recommendations made, which resulted in the production of an NFCC Delivery Against Recommendations Report which was circulated in August 2020.
- 3.4 The Grenfell Action Group, chaired by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, Director of Service Delivery, meets quarterly. All actions within the NFCC recommendations, under the control of CFB have been met, with many other organisational and operational learning incorporated into policies and procedures.

#### **4 GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY'S PHASE 2 REPORT**

- 4.1 The Phase 2 report, released in February 2025 contained seven volumes with over 1,500 pages. There were 58 recommendations setting out actions for each involved agency to consider.
- 4.2 CFB, through the Operational Assurance team and Grenfell Action Group examined the recommendations and identified operational learning to be incorporated into future training. These recommendations were built into a new Action Plan, containing the following learning:
- Phase 2 Enquiry Recommendations
  - NFCC recommendations from an insight report
  - Learning from the High-Rise exercise (Nightflare) conducted by CFB in January 2025
- 4.3 The original Action Plan from the Phase 1 Inquiry contained 248 recommendations, across a range of priorities including:
- Collaboration
  - Command and Control
  - Debrief
  - Compartmentation
  - Competence
  - Consistency
  - Equipment
  - Evacuation
  - Fire Survival Guidance
  - JESIP
  - Premise Information

All but three (which have been rolled into the new Action Plan) were completed.

- 4.4 The status of the Grenfell Action Plan is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Grenfell Master Action Plan Progress

	Complete	In Progress	Pending	Deferred*	Total
High	7	18	1	0	26
Medium	4	29	14	2	49
Low	5	9	2	40	56
Total	16	56	17	42	131

\* Deferred items will be discussed during the Fire Authority Meeting e.g. recommendations allocated to HM. Government

## 5 **GRENFELL ACTION GROUP FINANCE**

- 5.1 In 2020, CFB received a grant of approximately £91k from the Government to use to implement some of the recommendations. In addition, CFB, from 2020/2021 underspend, created a reserve for Grenfell related projects of approximately £197K. These funds combined have been used to fund staffing costs, the purchase of smoke hoods, training and ICT software investment. The current balance is approximately £89k.

## 6 **MANCHESTER ARENA: BACKGROUND**

- 6.1 On 22 May 2017, A suicide bombing was carried out by Salman Abedi, a 22-year-old British citizen of Libyan descent, at Manchester Arena (one of the largest indoor venues, hosting an Ariana Grande concert). He detonated a homemade explosive device packed with shrapnel in the foyer area (City Room) as concertgoers were leaving.
- 6.2 Twenty two people lost their lives including children and teenagers. Over 1,000 were injured, many with life-changing physical and psychological trauma.
- 6.3 Emergency services responded, but coordination issues led to delays and a re-evaluation of counter-terrorism and public safety protocols.
- 6.4 In 2018, the Kerslake Report was released (commissioned by the Mayor of Greater Manchester). Its purpose was to review the preparedness and response of emergency services and public agencies and focus on lessons learned, not on assigning blame or investigating the cause of death.
- 6.5 Key findings included a lack of coordination between emergency services, communication failures and support for victims and families. The following recommendations were set out:
- Improve multi-agency training and real-time communication systems.
  - Embed mental health support into emergency planning.
  - Strengthen incident command structures and ensure clarity of roles.
  - Promote community resilience and better support for survivors.

- 6.6 Following the release of the Kerslake Report, CFB conducted a gap analysis and created an action plan to address the above recommendations (21). Progress of the actions were reported through the Grenfell Action Group with all 21 actions completed.

## **7 MANCHESTER ARENA INQUIRY**

- 7.1 The statutory public inquiry ran for two years (2021-2023), chaired by Sir John Saunders with the outcomes released in three separate volumes.

### **Volume 1: Security at the Arena**

Found serious failings by:

- Venue operator (SMG),
- Security contractor (Showsec),
- British Transport Police.
- Missed opportunities to challenge Abedi, who was seen acting suspiciously.

*Recommendations:*

- Mandatory terrorism risk assessments for large venues.
- Enhanced training and vigilance for security staff.

### **Volume 2: Emergency Response**

- Highlighted critical delays and lack of coordination.
- Fire service's late arrival was a major concern.

*Recommendations:*

- Better joint training and real-time communication.
- Clearer command structures during major incidents.

### **Volume 3: Radicalisation and Preventability**

Explored Abedi's radicalisation and MI5's prior knowledge.

- MI5 missed opportunities to act on intelligence.

*Recommendations:*

- Improved intelligence sharing.
- Reforms to the Prevent programme.
- More proactive counter-radicalisation efforts in communities and schools.

- 7.2 Following the release of Volume 2 (Emergency Response) in November 2022, using the same methodology as Grenfell, CFB carried out a further gap analysis, against both current policies, procedures and arrangements and all 21 completed actions from the Kerslake report.

- 7.3 In addition, CFB are a member of a Regional Strategic Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) Multi Agency Group, during which the actions from Manchester are reported and opportunities sought for regional training and collaboration, for e.g. a multi agency exercise was held in early 2025 at Newcastle Arena. Triage equipment was bought regionally, ahead of other services in the country.

- 7.4 The status of the Manchester Arena Action Plan is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Manchester Arena Action Plan Progress

	Complete	In Progress	Not started	Total
High	11	1	0	12
Medium	1	3	0	4
Not allocated	16	6	3	25
Total	28	10	3	41

## 8. **MANCHESTER ARENA FINANCE**

- 8.1 No grant has been received, or budget specifically allocated, to the Manchester Arena recommendations. If the implementation of recommendations has involved training, or the purchase of equipment, this has been financed from existing budgets, e.g. the purchase of 'Ten Second Triage' bands, funded from the equipment budget.

## 9. **CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

- 9.1 It has been decided to change the name of the Grenfell Action Group to the 'Critical Incidents' Group. It has to be acknowledged that other large scale incidents will occur nationally, which have result in implications for all Fire and Rescue Services, with subsequent inquiries, as in the case of Grenfell and Manchester and it therefore would be prudent to encompass all actions under the banner of Critical Incidents.

## 10. **CRITICAL INCIDENTS PROGRESS**

- 10.1 Members will be regularly informed of the continued progress of the Critical Incidents Group.

**PETER RICKARD**  
Chief Fire Officer

**KRISTINE WARD**  
ACFO - Director of Strategic Planning, People & Resources

**SIMON WEASTELL**  
ACFO - Director of Service Delivery