GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY: PHASE 1 REPORT OVERVIEW

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 publication of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report and facilitate initial discussions/commentary on the wider implications of the Inquiry Chair's recommendations.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

- note the attached Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 Executive Summary report, and the Inquiry Chair's important findings and recommendations (Appendix 1)
- receive further reports having considered the wider implications of the recommendations in relation to Cleveland Fire Brigade
- endorse the Chief Fire Officer to work with the National Fire Chiefs Council to address all of the operational matters raised in the report.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017 took the lives of 71 people, with a further fatality on 29 January 2018, and left hundreds 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 unique challenge for the London Fire Brigade and its partner emergency services who responded on the night.

3.2 Like all incidents, large and small, there will be operational and organisational learning to be identified, disseminated, and acted upon where appropriate. The publication of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 1 report, and the Inquiry Chair's important findings and recommendations provide that opportunity to reflect, learn and plan for the future.

4 GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY'S PHASE 1 REPORT

4.1 Phase 1 of the Inquiry has been 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. Phase 2 will involve a more detailed examination of certain aspects of the management of the LFB (in particular its understanding of modern methods of construction and of the way in which some of the materials currently in use behave when exposed to fire) and the steps that were taken to train its officers to respond to fires in high-rise buildings. However, the Phase 1 evidence was sufficient to enable the Inquiry Chair to recommend a number of improvements can be made both in the way in which high-rise residential buildings are designed, constructed, approved and managed and in the way in which fire and rescue services respond to fires in such buildings.

4.2 The recommendations set out in the attached Executive Summary Report are based entirely on the evidence in relation to the particular issues that were investigated in Phase 1 and on the findings and conclusions reached in this report. They do not attempt to anticipate the evidence to be called in Phase 2 or the conclusions that may be drawn from it, and when deciding what recommendations should be made at this stage the Inquiry Chair has had regard in particular to their capacity for making a significant contribution to the safety of those who live in high-rise buildings.

5. IMMEDIATE ACTION: OPERATIONAL ASSURANCE

5.1 The report is comprehensive and covers a range of operational issues including communication, training, policy and guidance, incident command and leadership. It finds that there were significant failings, both in the construction and design of the building, and in the emergency response to the fire. Whilst most of the recommendations on operational matters are addressed to the London Fire Brigade (LFB), many have wider application. The Chair has addressed a number of the recommendations to the fire and rescue service as a whole and not just LFB.

5.2 To fully consider the wider implications and the operational learning, the Operational Assurance Team (OAT) within the Brigade, has been commissioned to understand the circumstances of the incident and to what happened on the night, identify operational and organisational lessons to be learnt, and to disseminate that learning, and recommend any improvements where appropriate.

5.3 Upon completion of the internal assessment, Cleveland Fire Authority Members will be requested to consider the wider implications of the Inquiry recommendations to this fire and rescue service and the Chief Fire Officer will continue to work with the National Fire Chiefs Council to address all of the operational matters raised in the report.

The full report can be found at: https://www.grenfelltowerinquiry.org.uk/

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