

SCRUTINY & OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING - 06 JULY 2017

AGENDA ITEM 8: UPDATE ON BUILDING CLADDING AND FIRE RELATED ISSUES

Following the opportunity to answer questions at Scrutiny & Overview Committee on Thursday evening I am circulating, as I said I would, some additional information about cladding used on South Cambs' properties.

To recap:

- The Council has no tower blocks
- Its flatted blocks are no more than 3 storeys
- None of its flatted blocks are clad with rain screen systems
- An ongoing programme to externally insulate poorest performing Council houses and bungalows has been in progress for the last 6 years
- To date about 800 of the programmed properties have been upgraded in this way
- Houses and bungalows offer different emergency evacuation options to those which applied at Grenfell Tower.
- All external wall insulation installed by the Council conforms to British Standards and is approved by the British Board of Agreement [BBA]
- The systems have fire resistance and are compliant with Building Regulation B4
- The contractors installing the systems are PAS2030 accredited [Government standard]
- In May 2017 a company called Safesmart Limited, specialists in fire risk assessment, was commissioned to carry out a full fire safety inspection of the Council's flatted blocks and sheltered housing communal rooms
- The inspection commenced on 06 June 2017 and will conclude 20 July 2017
- The Council will receive a full report for each block structure and communal room inspected and will take any action that is recommended

What does it mean when we say that the wall insulation systems used on Council properties conform to British Standards and are compliant with Building Regulation B4?

- The systems being used on Council properties are rated as Class 0
- 0 is a classification from the Building Regulations 1991 - Fire Safety, Approved Document B
- To achieve this rating a system must achieve a Class 1 fire rating from BS476 Pt 7 - surface spread of flame
- Class 1 protects the surface from the spread of flames
- Class 0 protects the surface from the spread of flames **AND** limits the amount of heat released from the surface during a fire

For peace of mind Officers carried out their own simple test on the insulation in isolation to see how it reacts to fire. They observed that the material just shrinks away due to its design and fire resistance properties. As soon as the heat source is removed it doesn't burn or accelerate in any way.

Cedar Cladding

A question was asked about cedar cladding. Further review with Officers shows that the Council does have 12 semi-detached houses constructed and clad with timber known as Swedish as well as some properties that have small amounts of decorative timber panels that were incorporated at time of build and are compliant with regulations and standards of the day. Should the fire regulators issue guidance or requirements applicable to social housing the Council will abide by them.

The Council is not complacent. It will follow the investigation into the fire at Grenfell Tower and make any review to its policies and procedures that may be indicated as necessary or advisable as the details of this tragic event are revealed. In the meanwhile the Housing Service is reviewing its procedures for dealing with crisis events and more generally the Environmental Service under the leadership of Cllr Mark Howell and its Director, Mike Hill is reviewing with external partners and agencies its emergency procedures. The Council is a member of the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Resilience Forum and that body will be co-ordinating the review. The emergency plans already developed by many of our villages form a key part of an effective response to an emergency. These are particularly important in providing information about vulnerable residents. Any village that does not currently have such a plan should be encouraged to consider developing one. The Council can offer a template and support/advice to parish councils on this. Interested parishes should contact Myles Bebbington, myles.bebbington@scambs.gov.uk or 01954 712922.