



CABINET

Tuesday, 03 May 2022

Subject	HRA Fire Safety Strategy
Report by	Councillor Richard Kerry, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing
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Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable.
Wards Affected:	All Wards

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

This report and the attached Fire Safety Strategy have been developed to set out the way East Suffolk Council's Landlord Services aim to minimise the risk of fires starting and spreading in Housing Revenue Account (HRA) owned and managed properties and how the service will safeguard residents, staff, contractors and visitors in the event of fire.

Although Fire Safety has always been a key priority for the Landlords Service, this is the first formal Strategy, which has been developed and which sets out the Council's proposals to manage fire safety in accordance with best practice, legislation and other relevant internal policies, which enables the safe management of properties.

Options:

There are two options to be considered:

Option 1 - This would see the adoption of the Fire Safety Strategy, which would ensure a robust strategic direction is set to effectively manage the risk of fire spread in Housing Revenue Account properties. East Suffolk Council has committed to ensuring the Health and Safety of our residents is a priority. In order to minimise the risk posed by fire to tenants and to ensure the effective management of Fire Safety in our homes, it is recommended that the Fire Safety Strategy is approved and implemented without delay.

Option 2 – This would see the failure to adopt the Fire Safety Strategy. This would not be a recommended option as it does not set out the standards officers are expected to follow to effectively manage fire using a risk-based approach.

Recommendation/s:

- 1.1 That Cabinet approves the Fire Safety Strategy, attached as Appendix A, which will be implemented by officers immediately.
- 1.2 That Cabinet provides the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing, Head of Housing and the Housing, Health and Safety Board delegated authority to update the Strategy as required.
- 1.3 That Cabinet provides the Head of Housing and the Housing, Health and Safety Board delegated authority to develop all the required policies and procedures to support the implementation of this Fire Safety Strategy.

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

The Housing Health and Safety Board (HHASB) is a strategic leadership forum representing the housing service at East Suffolk Council (ESC), which meets monthly.

The purpose of the HHASB is to ensure the efficient and effective planning, organisation, implementation, monitoring, audit and review of protective and preventative measures

for health, safety and welfare for its Residents and Housing Staff and all those affected by the undertakings of the Council.

This includes the strategic monitoring of compliance and ensuring properties meet all of the required standards set out in Legislation and / or Guidance.

The HHASB will regularly review all relevant policies and procedures, including the Fire Safety Strategy. Policy, Legislation and Good Practice can often recommend changes to Strategies, which the HHASB will review and update as required.

The HHASB will actively and robustly monitor the compliance across all of its c.4,500 housing stock, to ensure it meets and exceeds expected standards.

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

The Housing Service is currently developing a number of new strategies and policies, which will align with the Fire Safety Strategy.

In the Fire Safety Strategy, there are a number of policies recommended for development and adoption. This programme of work will be implemented, following adoption of the Fire Safety Strategy.

Environmental:

There are no direct environmental impacts as a result of the adoption of this Fire Safety Strategy. However, we will take into consideration this strategy when considering environmental improvements to our properties.

Equalities and Diversity:

This Strategy will set out the Councils approach to all of its housing stock. The Strategy has been developed in accordance with relevant legislation, guidance and best practice.

The Strategy focusses on the building's safety, which will also ensure residents safety. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Financial:

There are no direct financial implications from adopting this Fire Safety Strategy.

There is a legal requirement for us to carry out a risk-based approach to fire safety and there are costs involved with conducting Fire Risk Assessments and carrying out the actions, where issues are identified.

There is already a dedicated budget in place for this work, so no additional cost is expected.

Human Resources:

There are no issues, which require HR's involvement within this report and Strategy.

ICT:

There are no issues, which require IT's involvement with this report and Strategy.

Legal:

There are a number of guidance documents and legislation, which set out the steps we should take, as a landlord, to minimise the risk of fire spread in our homes and ensure residents are able to live safely.

These include:

- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

- Local Government Association Fire Safety in purpose-built blocks of flats
- National Fire Chiefs Council Specialised Housing Guidance
- Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating system
- Fire Safety Act 2021
- PAS 9980:2022 Assessing the External Wall Fire Risk in Multi Occupied Residential Buildings
- PAS 8671 Standard for the Built Environment Competence Programme
- Proposed Building Safety Bill

Risk:

If we fail to have robust mechanisms in place to effectively manage the risk posed by fire, then we could be placing our residents, staff or assets at risk. Therefore, it is vital we adopt an appropriate strategy to enable us to manage these risks effectively.

External Consultees: None

Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the Strategic Plan which are supported by this proposal: <i>(Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)</i>		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
T01	Growing our Economy		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T02	Enabling our Communities		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T03	Maintaining Financial Sustainability		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T04	Delivering Digital Transformation		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
T05	Caring for our Environment		

P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
XXX	Governance		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
How does this proposal support the priorities selected?			
East Suffolk Council has made a commitment that the Health and Safety of residents will be a priority. This Strategy will ensure that in relation to Fire Safety, their safety is prioritised and that our assets are effectively managed.			

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background facts	
1.1	This Fire Safety Strategy applies to all residential properties under the management of East Suffolk Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA), this includes Leasehold, General Needs and Retired Living Scheme properties and some properties used as Temporary Accommodation as defined under the s188 and s193(2) Housing Act 1996 for those owed a duty under Homelessness legislation.
1.2	This is the first Fire Safety Strategy for ESC Housing. Previously, officers have made decisions and set up work programmes to ensure fire safety is prioritised and managed, but it would benefit from an over-arching strategy, which sets out clear parameters for officers to follow. This reduces the risk of any key information being lost when officers leave the organisation.

2 Current position	
2.1	An in-depth three-month review of compliance, including Fire Safety was conducted October 2021 – January 2022.
2.2	The review identified that more robust mechanisms needed to be put in place to ensure we could evidence that we were compliant with the requirements set out in different legislations and guidance, including Fire Safety.
2.3	Following this, East Suffolk Council has made a self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing for potential non-compliance with the Home Standard.
2.4	In January, ESC entered into a contract with a competent Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) company, who are currently conducting a programme of FRA's across any of our HRA properties, which have communal living areas in shared accommodation or communal stairwells. This includes Retired Living Schemes, General Needs Blocks of Flats and some dwelling we lease out including commercial units.
2.5	By the end of June 2022, all of the stock that is required to have an FRA completed, will have been carried out.
2.6	As part of this programme of FRA's, we have been able to develop an on-going work programme, which means properties will have another FRA either annually, bi-annually or every three years, depending on the risks identified. For example, a Retired Living Scheme would be considered a high-risk property due to the

	number of potentially vulnerable people living there, whereas a low-level general needs block of flats with a communal hallway may be assessed as low risk and only require an FRA every 3 years.
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3 How to address current situation

3.1	By implementing this Fire Safety Strategy, East Suffolk Council shall ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that fire safety management arrangements comply with The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Housing – Fire Safety Guidance - Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services (LACoRS) and other appropriate regulations.
3.2	Relevant Government guidance will be followed, for example the Local Government Association Fire Safety in Purpose-built blocks of flats (2011), and the National Fire Chiefs Council Fire Safety in Specialised Housing which is applicable to Retirement Living Schemes.
3.3	<p>The purpose of this Fire Safety Strategy is to ensure the Council’s primary focus is on the life, safety and welfare of our residents and staff and to ensure the council’s assets are protected from the spread of fire and interruption of business and protect the general public.</p> <p>It will also ensure we meet our legislative duties as landlord and ‘responsible person’ and ensure that suitable resources are in place to prevent the cause and spread of fire and if/when they occur to minimise their impact within communal areas and individual properties.</p>

4 Reason/s for recommendation

4.1	This Fire Safety Strategy will set the Strategic Direction, which will ensure relevant policies and procedures can be developed which align to this Strategy and enable the Council to effectively manage the HRA stock, which will ensure residents are able to remain living safely in their homes.
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Appendices

Appendices:

Appendix A	Draft Fire Safety Strategy
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Background reference papers:

None
