

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Tenant Services Management Board –15<sup>th</sup> March 2011

### Fire safety action planning for council housing blocks of flats

#### Report of Stephen Boland – Housing Services Lead

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

#### 1.0 Executive Summary

Report provides information to Tenant Services Management Board on the actions and progress made in relation to fire safety for council housing blocks of flats.

#### 2.0 Background information

Work has been carried out by the Tenant Empowerment Team, Estate Management and the Property Services Section within Taunton Deane Borough Council, following the recent arson attack at a block of flats in Dorchester Road.

The Fire Service is supportive of the 5 key action areas:-

- Doors and windows in communal hallways;
- Waste and recycling;
- Risk assessment and training;
- Safety, security and storage; and
- Communications and involvement.

(Appendix A provides information on the progress to date in each of the key action areas).

#### 3.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that the Tenant Services Management Board:

- Note the actions and progress achieved to date.

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## Taunton Deane Borough Council

### Draft Fire Safety Action Plan for Council Housing Blocks of Flats

<b>1. Doors and Windows in Communal Hallways</b>					
<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Funding Sources</b>
1.1	To develop a costed and prioritised plan to assess and where necessary replace internal windows and doors opening into communal hallways within blocks of flats.	Tim Haynes	31/01/11	<p>Properties have been identified where the blocks are of a similar design to that where the fire occurred in Dorchester Road. In addition, surveys have been completed to identify any further blocks that may have a window opening onto the communal hallway.</p> <p>Surveys have also been completed to identify where flats with a pvc front door open onto a communal hallway. This has identified that there are a number of properties, the majority in private ownership, where the door is pvc and does not comply with the necessary regulations. Letters have been sent to the residents advising of our findings and the need for the doors to be changed. Where residents refuse to comply, we would suggest a Fire home safety visit is carried out and will liaise with the Service over this.</p>	HRA & other sources to be identified to implement the plan.

				Identified that there are 24no. windows in North Taunton and 37no. elsewhere. 61no. in total. 2no. windows are programmed for replacement as part of the insurance works.	
	Exercise to carry out cost comparison between replacement ½ hour fire rated windows and 'pyroglass'	Tim Haynes	Ongoing 31/3/11	Further surveys will be undertaken on timber doors opening onto communal hallways during our 8-yearly cyclical maintenance programme.	HRA planned maintenance.  To be determined.


<b>2. Waste &amp; Recycling</b>					
<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Funding Sources</b>
2.1	Work with Somerset Waste Partnership to identify tailored solutions for safe storage of household waste and recyclables, initially for the 12 blocks of flats similar to Dorchester Road. Solutions to be consistent with a 'clear hallways' approach (see also 5.2)	Tracy Vernon	28/02/2011  On Target	The Somerset Waste Partnership has been sent a copy of the Fire Report in December 2010. Convenient dates have been requested to carry out a joint visit to each block, with a view to undertaking a feasibility study. The practicalities and associated costs for changes to the communal garden areas will then provide an estimate of costs. It is envisaged that a surveyor, the estates officer and tenants' champions will also be present. Any changes carried out will have a significant impact	HRA DEFRA Grant Others to be determined.

				on both tenants and leaseholders, in particular a rise in service charges.	
2.2	Provide advance notice of a programme of 'community clean up days' during 2011/12, targeting residential areas with blocks of flats	Stephen Boland with Scott Weetch	28/02/2011 and prior to each clean up day	Jayne Hares is working currently on the list of Community Clean Ups to be undertaken this year. In every case she will liaise with the Housing Officer for the area. Where areas have blocks of flats that have been covered before, an update will be given as to the results of those days.	Officer time within existing resources


<b>3. Risk Assessment and Training</b>					
<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Funding Sources</b>
3.1	Revised generic fire risk assessment for blocks of flats agreed and in place	David Woodbury	31/12/10	Draft risk assessment has been developed.  Based upon the comments received we will continue to work with and develop this assessment process.	Officer time within existing resources
3.2	Key officers identified and trained in fire risk assessment of housing stock	James Barrah	Review 31/07/2011	James Barrah investigating the situation.	Officer time within existing resources
3.3	Programme of fire risk assessment of housing blocks published.	David Woodbury	Ongoing	Linked to work Tracy is doing. Final decision on officer training not yet made. – ongoing	Officer time within existing resources

<b>4. Safety, Security &amp; Storage</b>					
<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Funding Sources</b>
4.1	To develop a costed and prioritised plan to install door entry systems on blocks of flats with communal hallways throughout Taunton Deane. Initial focus to be on 12 blocks similar to Dorchester Road. Note: 4 blocks already have a door entry system installed.	Tim Haynes	31/3/11	New 'fob' entry system has been identified as providing enhanced security. Meeting has been held with supplier and specification of works has been received. This system will provide monitoring of access and ease of use for those with a disability. Prices to be obtained for installation.	HRA & others to be identified to implement the plan.
4.2	To communicate to all tenants the importance of locking internal and external storage areas.	Stephen Boland	28/02/2011 On Target	Letter to be sent to all tenants in the 12 blocks, advising on the importance of locking storage areas. Estates Officer made aware.	Officer time within existing resources
4.3	To review options for the storage of mobility scooters outside of communal areas. Initial focus to be on 12 blocks similar to Dorchester Road, with lessons learned for wider application.	Tracy Vernon	28/02/2011  Deadline change to end of March 2011	Item 2.1 to be established in the first instance, prior to completion of item 4.3, Tenant Champions will assist in formulating the plan. Assistance from David Woodbury and further best practice research required on use of mobility scooters, to include consultation with occupational therapists.	Officer time within existing resources.  HRA and other sources to be identified to fund implementation.
4.4	To work with the Police and Fire Service, Community Development Team and Estate Management to record 'hotspots' where arson or high levels of anti-social behaviour	Scott Weetch	28/02/11	TDBC are part of an anti-social behaviour forum that covers hotspot areas and individuals on a quarterly basis. Additional work will be undertaken with the DSFRS to	Officer time within existing resources

	occur			ensure that free home fire safety checks are completed as appropriate and other partnership work complementing this plan.	
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<b>5. Communications and Involvement</b>					
<b>Ref.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Progress</b>	<b>Funding Sources</b>
5.1	To establish a network of tenant/leaseholder fire safety 'champions' – one for each of the 12 blocks similar to Dorchester Road.	Tracy Vernon	31/01/11 Completed	<p>Following the consultation with tenants and leaseholders carried out in October 2010, volunteers were contacted with a view to setting up tenant champions. A change in the Estates Officers patches resulted in a loss of rapport with tenants prior to December 2010. A consultation campaign was undertaken during January 2011 in conjunction with the newly assigned Estates Officer. Flyers were sent to all residents in the blocks, encouraging involvement in recycling and security issues. The deadline for volunteers is 28<sup>th</sup> January 2011. To date 2 'champions' are willing to assist with the consultation.</p> <p> U:\Depot\DLO Documents\Fire.pdf</p>	Officer time within existing resources

5.2	To work with identified 'champions' to pilot a 'Clear Hallways' (ie zero tolerance) approach to storage of items in communal hallways, aimed at 12 blocks initially, with review of lessons learned for wider application. Approach to be built into tenancy agreements and procedures.	Tracy Vernon	31/03/2011 On target.	Further work with Estates Officer required to identify an effective approach and marketing of changes.	Officer time within existing resources
5.3	To carry out fire safety awareness sessions for 'champions' in partnership with the Fire Service	Tracy Vernon	31/03/2011 On target.	If insufficient take up of champion volunteers, consider wider resident based fire safety awareness.	Officer time within existing resources
5.4	To produce a fire safety article in the Deane Housing News	Stephen Boland	October 2010 Completed	Autumn 2010, Issue 12 of Tenants Talk included full pages on Gas Safety Checks and Fire Safety in the Home (copy awaited)	
5.5	To revise the fire safety content of the welcome pack given to new tenants	Stephen Boland	October 2010 Completed	<p>Welcome Pack for New Tenants now includes Fire Safety information (Section 7. Page 84) – This is given to all new tenants and available on the TDBC website (Copy attached)</p> <p>In addition the post tenancy visit questionnaires carried out by Estates Officers 4-6 weeks after the tenant moves in, asks the tenant if they have read the fire safety details and whether they require any further information.</p>	

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5.6	To report the action plan and progress made on a regular basis to the Tenant Services Management Board	Stephen Boland	Jan 2011 On target	On March agenda for TSMB– Draft report to be presented for circulation prior to board meeting in March 2011.	Officer time within existing resources
5.7	To report the action plan and progress made to portfolio/shadow portfolio holders on a regular basis	James Barrah/Stephen Boland	Ongoing	Members to be briefed at housing briefing.	Officer time within existing resources