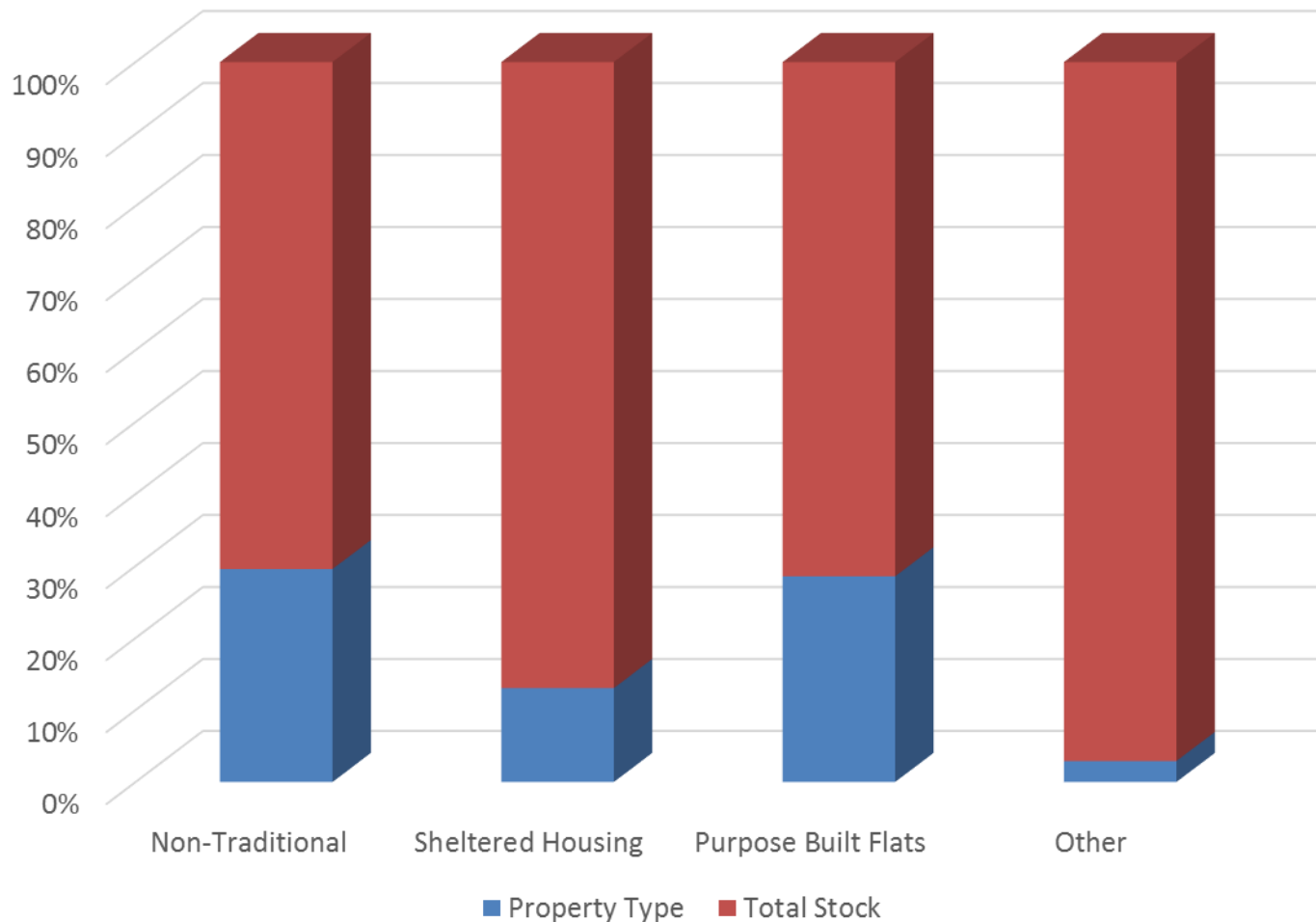




Swindon Borough Council Communicating with residents

Gerry O'Connor & Keith Hooker

SBC Housing Stock



- **10,200 properties** located in a small geographical area
- **42% non-traditional** housing stock
- **15% sheltered** housing schemes
- **40% of stock** purpose-built blocks of flats

Purpose Built Flats

Approximately 4,200

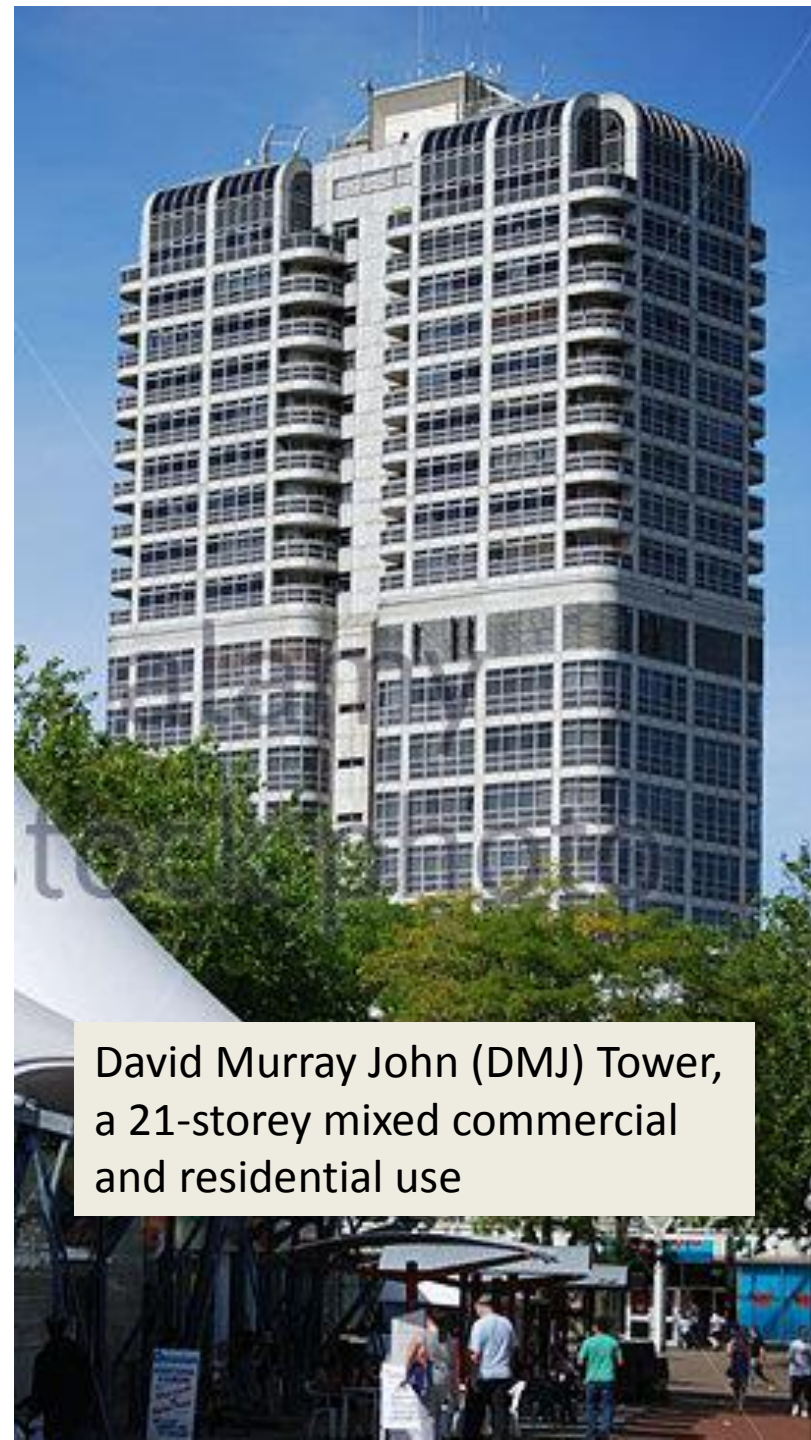
- David Murray John (DMJ) Tower, a 21-storey mixed commercial and residential use
- Six 10-storey general-purpose blocks
- An 8-storey sheltered scheme
- 90 medium-rise blocks of flats
- 500 low-rise 2 storey blocks of flats



SBC's high-rise blocks of flats



Upavon Court
1 Six 10-storey general-purpose blocks
Photo taken during SBC/DWFRS training exercise



David Murray John (DMJ) Tower,
a 21-storey mixed commercial
and residential use



George Hall Court
Sheltered Accommodation
8 Storey, Commercial Ground Floor

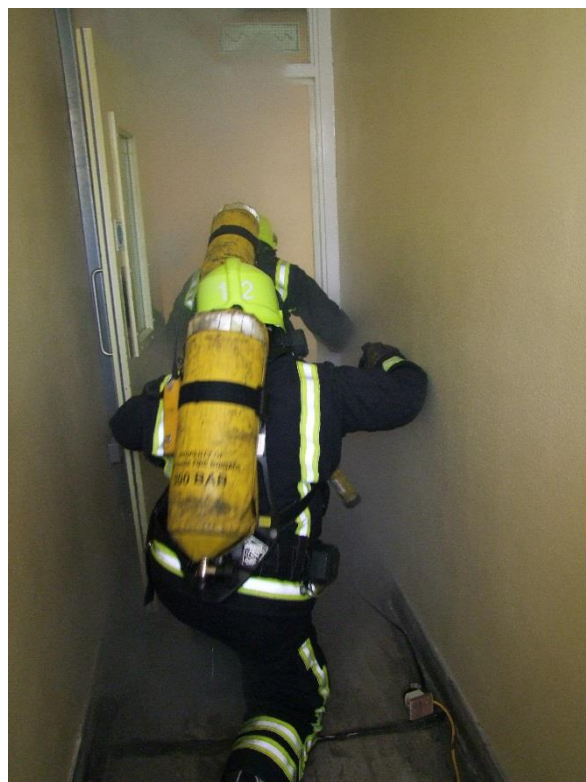
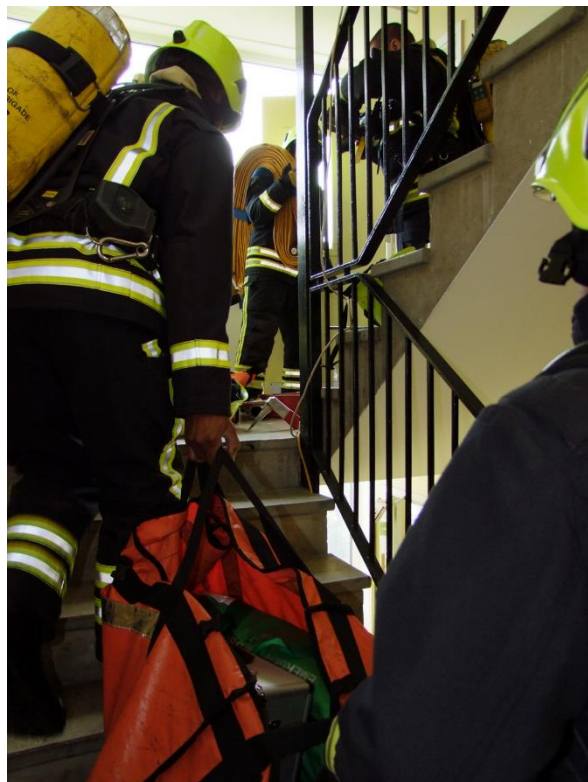




90
medium
-rise
blocks of
flats







Training
with
DWFRS



What happened immediately following the Grenfell Tower fire?

14th June 2017

Grenfell Tower fire

- Review of fire safety measures that we have in place for our high-rise blocks of flats
- Press release by Cabinet Member for Housing and Public Safety – extending our deepest sympathies to all those affected and to give reassurance about the fire safety measures that we already have in place

15th June 2017

- Article in Swindon Advertiser with headline – Residents are assured over high-rise fire safety
- Review of Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) for six 10-storey residential blocks of flats

16th June 2017

- Letter sent to all residents living in high-rise blocks to reassure them about fire safety measures that we already have in place
- Review of FRA for George Hall Court, 7-storey sheltered housing scheme

19th June 2017

- Return to notify Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) on number of residential high-rise blocks of flats owned and managed by the Council
- Confirmation that SBC do not have Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) external cladding fitted to the external façade of their residential high-rise blocks of flats

20th June 2017

- Letter sent to all tenants and leaseholders living in high-rise block in the south of town to give them with an opportunity to raise any concerns that they may have about fire safety to their home with Council Officers, DWFRS, Ward Councillors and Robert Buckland MP
- Safe & Well leaflet issued to all tenants and leaseholders

21st June 2017

- Letter from Homes & Communities Agency (HCA) to remind all social housing providers of their duty under the regulatory Home Standard to “meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of occupants in their homes²
- Requirement to notify the HCA in the event of non-compliance

22nd June 2017

- Review of Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) for David Murray John (DMJ) tower, with 72 residential flats

23rd June 2017

- Fire safety visit to all council-owned and managed residential high-rise blocks in the south of the town with Council Officers, DWFRS, Ward Councillors and Robert Buckland MP
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Safe & Well leaflet issued to all tenants and leaseholders that took part in the visit
- FAQ's posted on Council website

24th June 2017

- Article in Swindon Advertiser led by Robert Buckland MP with headline – High rise residents given assurance

26th June 2017

- Review and log of issues raised by tenants and leaseholders following site visit to blocks in the south of the town with Ward Councillors and Robert Buckland MP

27th June 2017

- Letter sent to all tenants and leaseholders living in high-rise blocks in Penhill to give them an opportunity to raise any concerns that they may have about fire safety to their home with Council Officers and DWFRS
- Safe & Well leaflet issued to all tenants and leaseholders
- FAQ's posted to all tenants living in the six 10-storey high-rise blocks of flats

28th June 2017

- Full fire alarm test with DWFRS to all six to all 6 10-storey high-rise blocks of flats
- DWFRS notified the Council that some tenants have removed the overhead door closer to the individual front door to their flat

29th June 2017

- Fire safety visit to council-owned residential high-rise blocks in Penhill with Council Officers, DWFRS, Ward Councillors and Justin Tomlinson MP

3rd July 2017

- Review of Govt. briefing paper dated 30th June 2017
- Discussion with Building Control in relation to LGA guidance document and reference to new code of practice CP3 chapter IV part 1
- Site visit to HRA high-rise blocks to check kitchen and lounge doors

4th July 2017

- Fire Safety Group meeting held to review actions from fire safety site visits etc.

5th July 2017

- Send DWFRS revised FRA's for high-rise blocks of flats and notify them of activities undertaken in response to Grenfell Tower fire

6th & 7th July 2017

- Responding to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests from media about external cladding and fire safety measures in place



Facebook Page: Swindon Housing Tenants 891 Followers
1 Member of staff & Total 1 Staff days responding to comments

Post Details



Swindon Housing Tenants

Published by Donna Liggins [?] · 16 June · 🌐

A letter to all residents in our eight (8) High Rise blocks of flats is being hand delivered today by Swindon Borough Council Officers, it reads:



Fire Safety Letter to tenants in High Rise Blocks | voicetheyourviews

A letter to all residents in our six (6) High Rise blocks of flats is being hand delivered today by Swindon Borough Council Housing Officers. Below is a copy of

VOICEYOURVIEWS.CO.UK

3,076 People Reached

103 Reactions, comments & shares ⓘ

11 Like	3 On post	8 On shares
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1 Wow	0 On post	1 On shares
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76 Comments	59 On Post	17 On Shares
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15 Shares	14 On Post	1 On Shares
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647 Post Clicks

0 Photo views	260 Link clicks	387 Other Clicks ⓘ
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NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

1 Hide Post	0 Hide All Posts
0 Report as Spam	0 Unlike Page

One of two posts made. 16 June 2017 **3.1k Reach** (people who had opportunity to see it), **647 clicks** (to web link/document, read full content), **103 comments/shares** (reactions)



Post Details



Swindon Housing Tenants

Published by Donna Liggins [?] · 22 June · 🌐



Following the delivery of a letter to residents in our high rise blocks of flats, a Frequently Asked Questions document has been put together in collaboration with Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service. The questions raised are taken from our tenants feedback to date. Please read and share with family and friends. A printed copy of this document will be delivered to all residents in the eight high rise blocks managed by [Swindon Borough Council](#).



FAQs: Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks | [voiceyourviews](#)

Following the delivery of a letter to all of our residents in our eight high rise blocks, a Frequently Asked Questions document has been put together in collabo...

[VOICEYOURVIEWS.CO.UK](#)



Get more likes, comments and shares

When you boost this post, you'll show it to more people.



1,307 people reached

Boost Post



Emma Faramarzi, Shirley Fitzgerald and 2 others

3 Shares



Like



Comment



Share

1,307 People Reached

13 Likes, Comments & Shares ⓘ

7

Likes

4

On Post

3

On Shares

0

Comments

0

On Post

0

On Shares

6

Shares

5

On Post

1

On Shares

119 Post Clicks

0

Photo views

35

Link clicks

84

Other Clicks ⓘ

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

0 Hide Post

0 Hide All Posts

0 Report as Spam

0 Unlike Page

Reported stats may be delayed from what appears on posts

Two of two posts made. 22 June 2017 **1.3k Reach** (people who had opportunity to see it), **119 clicks** (to web link/document, read full content), **13 comments/shares** (reactions)



www.swindon.gov.uk/housing

Fire Safety in High Rise Flats

Please
take time
to read
this Fire
Safety
leaflet -
it could
save your
life!



Housing



SWINDON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Help us reduce the risk of fire in communal (shared) areas of flats

Housing takes fire safety very seriously, and we regularly do fire risk assessments on communal areas of buildings where we have flats. We need your help to ensure your flat and the communal areas of your building stay risk free. This leaflet lists the most common fire dangers in communal areas and how to prevent them.

Don't use communal areas for storage

Anything stored in a communal area is a fire risk. In flats, the staircase is one of the main escape routes from a building, and people could trip over objects left on or under staircases; including the Fire and Rescue Service Team which will be trying to assist you.

Items should not be stored under or on stairs and landings, as they may cause or feed a fire. Only store items in designated storage areas.



with your safety in mind. Please take time to read it. speak to your Neighbourhood Housing Officer.

Communal Areas - Evacuate

(Corridors, Stairways, Bin Areas, etc.)

All residents, guests, staff and contractors in communal areas during a fire alarm activation are to evacuate the building immediately and make their way to a safe place or evacuation point.



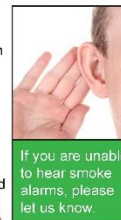
Residents must not return to their flats until WFRS have said so.

Keeping you safe...

As a tenant of a flat, you are probably already aware of the work Housing has been doing, supported by Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service, to enhance fire safety in communal areas such as hallways, staircases, landings and corridors.

We are certainly very grateful to the huge number of residents who have co-operated with us by removing various obstructions and combustible materials from these communal areas. Please read our safety tips (pg5) to help keep you safe.

Housing has a running programme of Fire Safety Risk Assessments, in all of our buildings that have communal areas, including sheltered housing and all other high and low rise blocks.



Don't put furniture in communal areas

We understand you want your building to look attractive, but please do not put rugs, pot plants or furniture in communal areas.

They can be a fire risk, and may make it difficult for residents to escape during a fire.



Don't store flammable items in communal areas

Flammable materials and liquids such as fuel, paper, domestic waste and furniture can speed up the spread of fire and hinder your escape.

Don't smoke in communal areas



Don't wedge open communal area doors

Communal or meter cupboard doors left wedged open can help a fire to spread and hinder your escape.

Don't fit locks on communal doors

Residents should not fit any locks on communal landing doors. Fitting unnecessary locks can prevent escape and hinder a rescue by the fire service.

Page 19



"Wiltshire is by far one of the safest counties to live in nationwide and this is in no small part due to the close working relationship maintained between Swindon Borough Council, Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service and the tenants who reside within."

Fraser Drummond,
Fire Safety Inspector.

Think about safety!

Help us keep you, your family and your neighbours safe from the risk of fire.

You can obtain a FREE Home Safety check from Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service by phoning Tel: 0800 389 7849 or visit: www.wiltshire.gov.uk

If you have any concerns or queries please speak to your Neighbourhood Housing Officer or Neighbourhood Wardens.

Tel: 01793 445503

Email: Housing@swindon.gov.uk

This information is available on the internet at: www.swindon.gov.uk/housing
It can be produced in a range of languages and formats (such as large print, Braille or other accessible formats) by contacting the Customer Services Department.
Tel: 01793 445500 Fax: 01793 463331 Email: customerservices@swindon.gov.uk

Fire Safety in residential high-rise blocks of flats

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: How many high-rise residential blocks of flats does the Council own and manage?

A: The Council has eight (8) residential high-rise blocks of flats:

- Six (6) 10 storey blocks with tenant and leaseholder (private) flats. Three (3) of the blocks of flats are located in the Parks (Milverton Court, Torrington Court and Hatherleigh Court) with the other three (3) in Penhill (Upavon Court, Cleverton Court and Seagry Court)
- A seven (7) storey sheltered housing scheme, George Hall Court located in Park South
- A 21 storey high-rise tower with commercial use to the lower part and residential area with tenant and leaseholder (private) flats located on floors 11 to 19, David Murray John (DMJ), located in the Town Centre



Image above: George Hall Courts, Park South taken on an annual housing tour with tenants.

Q2: When were the Council's high-rise blocks of flats built?

A: All the blocks were built in the 1960's apart from the DMJ which was built in 1975.

Q3: How many flats are there in each high-rise block?

A: 41 flats to each 10 storey block in Parks and Penhill, 32 flats in George Hall Court and 72 flats in the DMJ. A total of 350 flats.

Q4: How many residents live in each block of flats?

A: We know the tenancy details for each flat, but the family make up may change over time; therefore we do not know the exact number in each block.

Q5: How many leaseholders live in the Council's high-rise blocks of flats?

A: We have 29 leaseholders across the eight high-rise blocks of flats.



Image: Hatherleigh Court CCTV

Q6: How many blocks have been refurbished with the same cladding system used at the Grenfell Tower?

A: None. The Council's 10 storey blocks have brick external walls, George Hall Court has external wall insulation directly fitted to the existing brickwork walls without a cavity. The DMJ tower has the original aluminium and glazing curtain walling system. The construction type for each of the Council's high-rise block of flats prevents the external spread of flames.

Q7: How do you know that the fire will not spread quickly like at the Grenfell Tower?

A: The Council has not used the same external cladding system. The design for fire safety of blocks of flats is based on containing a fire through fire resisting construction (compartmentation for up to 1 hour), which contains the spread of flames in the event of a fire.

The Council's high-rise blocks have been constructed to prevent the spread of flame between compartments. Each flat has fire resisting walls, floors and ceilings to form its own compartment to prevent the spread of flame to another part of the building. The front entrance door is a vital part of the compartment to your flat. Your front entrance door is fitted with a door closer to ensure that it shuts immediately after being opened to maintain the compartmentation of the building.

Q8: How do you know that the compartmentation will operate as designed and contain the spread of flames in the event of a fire?

A: The Council undertakes Fire Risk Assessments to its high-rise blocks of flats annually to assess the risk and record recommendations to ensure compliance with fire safety legislation, which includes checking the fabric of the building, fire doors and fire-stopping to service ducts to maintain the compartmentation, which prevents the spread of flame in the event of a fire.

Q9: Have you had any fires in the Council's high-rise blocks of flats and was the fire contained?

A: Yes, we have had domestic fires to our 10 storey and DMJ blocks of flats which have been contained whilst Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS) have extinguished the fire.

Q10: What fire safety precautions do the buildings have in place and are they fully up to date?

A: The Council's fire alarm systems have been fitted to detect a fire in high-rise blocks of flats (in communal areas as well as individual flats), and dry or wet risers assist DWFRS with tackling the spread of fire. CCTV systems installed to bin stores, lifts and fire panels provide extra fire detection. The Council's high-rise flats have been constructed with compartments to prevent the spread of fire within communal areas and between flats.

Q11: Why haven't the Council fitted sprinklers to its high-rise blocks of flats?

A: The Council's Fire Risk Assessments have identified that the construction of its high-rise blocks of flats is adequate to prevent the spread of flame in the event of a fire. We will review any lessons learned from the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry to improve our fire safety to high-rise blocks of flats.



Housing

SWINDON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Q12: Is the Council now carrying out an urgent review and if so are you planning to change any of your procedures as a matter of urgency?

A: The Council already has robust procedures which are constantly under review. We are not planning to make any urgent changes to procedures, but will clearly review any lessons learned from the fire at the Grenfell Tower.

Q13: What fire risk assessments are carried out on the buildings and how often do these take place?

A: The Council undertakes a Fire Risk Assessment on an annual basis to ensure that its high-rise blocks of flats are compliant with the current fire safety legislation. The Council has an agreed fire evacuation strategy with DW-FRS and holds bi-monthly meetings with them to discuss fire safety matters and best practice and review lessons learned from all fires to its housing stock.



Image: Swindon Borough Council Housing and Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service training event using Upavon Court in Penhill

Q14: What are the fire alarm arrangements and how often are they tested?

A: The Council has fitted fire alarms to communal areas and all flats in its high-rise blocks of flats.

The fire alarm sound in the DMJ is constant on the floor where a fire has been detected. An intermittent fire alarm sound is activated on the floor immediately below and above the incident which is used to inform tenants and leaseholders to prepare to evacuate.

A fire action notice is displayed on each floor of all the Council's high-rise blocks of flats, which advises tenants and leaseholders on what they should do in the event of a fire.

All fire alarm detectors are fitted with a flashing beacon so that anybody that is hard of hearing is notified that the alarm has been raised.

All fire alarms to high-rise blocks of flats are linked to the Council's Control Room which is operated 24 hours a day. When a fire is detected a message is automatically sent to the Control Room to indicate what alarm has activated and where it is located. The Control Room immediately ring 999 to notify the Fire Service to attend an emergency incident.

CCTV is installed to bin stores, lifts and communal areas by fire panels which are monitored 24 hours a day. Any sign of a fire or smoke in these areas is immediately reported to the Fire Service by ringing 999 for them to attend an emergency incident.

Fire alarms to high-rise blocks are tested weekly to ensure that they function correctly and a more thorough test is undertaken by a specialist contractor on a quarterly basis. Fire alarms record any specific fault or detection to a specific point within the Council's high-rise blocks of flats. The locks to the main entrance communal doors default to allow access when the fire alarm goes off in the Council's high-rise blocks of flats.

Q15: How often do the buildings carry out fire drills and who is responsible in each building for conducting these?

A: In line with common practice for high-rise buildings in the country, drills in the Council's high-rise blocks of flats are carried out on an ad-hoc basis. However, in the light of the fire at Grenfell Tower, the Council is reviewing its fire drill schedule and aims to carry out drills with residents in all its high-rise blocks in the next few weeks.

Q16: Following the fire, what information did the Council provide to residents to reassure them?

A: A Council statement was issued to local media straightaway, and a letter was hand-delivered within a few days of Grenfell Tower fire, to reassure residents and the Swindon community about fire safety in its high rise buildings.



Image: Tenants and Housing Officers visit Hatherleigh Court, Parks on an annual Housing tour

Q17: If a fire occurred in one of the Council's high-rise blocks; do you have procedures in place to find emergency accommodation for those affected?

A: Yes, we have emergency teams on standby and would find emergency accommodation for anybody that was affected by a fire, where needed.

Q18: Has the Council made any adjustments to fire safety arrangements in the light of any immediate comments received from residents, particularly in relation to the following issues:

- **Installation of sprinkler systems** – we are awaiting further guidance before deciding on whether to fit sprinklers and will include these in any refurbishment works if needed
- **Supply fire blankets extinguishers, and rope ladders** – these are not required and could potentially place residents at increased risk of injury from fire.
- **Clarity over stay put/evacuate procedures** – the Council's fire safety policy recommends:
 - Tenants and leaseholders should evacuate their home only if it is directly affected by smoke or fire – closing all windows and internal doors if safe to do so. It is very important that the front door to the flat is closed fully;
 - if your flat is not involved in fire, residents are recommended to 'stay put' until directed to evacuate – be prepared to move
 - Details are displayed on fire action notices located on each floor of the building
- **Frequency and quality of inspections** – the Council's inspection frequencies are adequate but we will clearly review any lessons learned from the fire at the Grenfell Tower



Please refer to your 'Fire Safety in High Rise Flats' leaflet for 'Stay Put' and 'Evacuation' procedures, as well as hints and tips on how to help keep you, your family and neighbours safe.

If fire safety equipment, such as a smoke alarm or hose is damaged or seems to have been tampered with, please **report it immediately to Housing on 01793 445503**

Do check smoke detectors regularly

Do remain vigilant and report suspicious behaviour to your Neighbourhood Housing Officer or Neighbourhood Warden

Do keep your front access door closed at all times, even in hot weather.

Local Press Articles

Thursday, June 15, 2017

Residents are assured over high-rise fire safety



■ The fire at Grenfell Tower in London yesterday

FIREFIGHTERS in Wiltshire have issued a reassurance to residents about its response arrangements for high rise buildings following the incident at Grenfell Tower in London early yesterday morning.

The law requires building owners or managers of high rise buildings to ensure that appropriate fire precautions are in place to safeguard people living or working there.

In some cases, this may require the fitting of sprinklers, rising mains, ventilation or fire alarm systems, although fire alarms are not necessarily required in the common areas of all buildings.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Mick Stead said: "Our thoughts are very much with all those affected by the tragedy in London, which we now know has resulted in loss of life.

"Our colleagues in London Fire Brigade have been working incredibly hard and our thoughts are with them as well. I would like to reassure local residents that we have established processes in place for ensuring the safety of both residential blocks and commercial premises."

Anyone living in Wiltshire can request a free Safe & Well visit from the Fire and Rescue Service – call 0800 038 2323 or visit www.dwfire.org.uk/safe-and-well-visits. If you have a fire safety concern about a high rise building, please contact the Fire Safety team on 01722 691717 or email fire.safety@dwfire.org.uk

Anybody wanting to give clothes or other essential items to those affected by the Grenfell Tower fire can do so at the Adver's reception at 100 Victoria Road, Swindon SN1 3BE

Tenants told they need not fear fire

Thomas Haworth

thomas.haworth@newsquest.co.uk
@Admiral_Tom

PEOPLE living in high rise apartments need not fear a repeat of the Grenfell Tower disaster, the council has claimed.

Following the horrific fire that gutted the North Kensington apartment block earlier this week, Swindon Borough Council has urged residents living in similar buildings not to panic.

After paying tribute to all those who had been affected by the tragedy, Councillor Cathy Martyn, Swindon Borough Council's cabinet member for Housing and Public Safety, said: "I would like to reassure our tenants that we have robust fire safety arrangements in place for our high-rise properties, which include regularly updated fire risk assessments and monthly inspections of all our fire doors and dry risers to ensure they are in full working order."

The death toll following the fire has reached 17, although that figure is expected to increase as the investigation continues.

It is thought that several hundred people, including children, would have been in the building when it went up in flames.

Coun Martyn said that the council tests the fire alarm systems of apartment blocks on a weekly basis and routinely monitors communal entrance doors and passenger lifts.

"The external facade of all our high-rise blocks is also made of non-combustible material," she said.

Despite the harrowing images in the media, people who live in high-rise buildings seem unworried.

One 46-year-old woman, who has been living Swindon's David Murray John Tower for the past couple of years, said: "I'm not scared. There's no reason to be scared at all."

"These things happen and you never really know when. Crossing the road is more dangerous than living in a building like this."



■ The Grenfell Tower.

Council monitors safety in all high-rise homes

Coun Martyn said: "We have a close relationship with Dorset And Wiltshire Fire And Rescue Service and have a clear evacuation strategy for our tenants."

"A letter is being sent out today to all residents in our high-rise blocks of flats to reassure them about the safety measures that we have in place and to remind them about their responsibilities."

"The Fire and Rescue Service offer free Safe And Well visits, and any tenants who would like one can contact them on 0800 038 2323."

In January 2016 The Labour Party tabled an amendment to the Housing And Planning Bill with the intention of forcing

private landlords to make their homes "fit for human habitation."

South Swindon MP Robert Buckland was one of the 312 MPs who voted against the proposed amendment. Explaining his reasons for doing so, he said: "The amendment did not add strength to existing laws protecting tenants' rights and creating legal rights to take action against landlords for defective premises. This amendment was not necessary."

Items for donation to those who lost their homes in the London fire can be dropped off at the ATHS Shop State Warehouse, in Newcombe Drive, before 9pm on Saturday June 17.

An advertisement for Uni's Journey promotion. It features a hand holding a smartphone displaying a game interface. The text reads: "UNI'S JOURNEY", "One Lucky customer will every day to win a free", "All customers are automatic your car via our", and "DOWNLOAD OUR".

UNI'S
JOURNEY

One Lucky customer will
every day to win a free

All customers are automatic
your car via our

DOWNLOAD OUR

After Grenfell Tower, fire safety is top of the agenda

High rise residents given reassurance

POLITICIANS sought to reassure the residents of high rise buildings across South Swindon on Friday in the wake of the Grenfell Tower disaster.

MP Robert Buckland joined a delegation of council officers, the cabinet member for housing, Cathy Martyn, opposition councillors and representatives from the fire service.

The group called in at all Hatherleigh Court, Milverton and Torrington Court, George Hall Court, and the David Murray John Tower.

On Thursday, Swindon Borough Council confirmed that none of its high rise buildings were clad using the sort of material that looks likely to have been the cause of such a rapid spread of the fire in North Kensington ten days ago.

Nevertheless, the residents of similar structures were in need of reassurance around other issues such as smoke alarms, fire containment and evacuation procedures.

Earlier this week the council wrote to tenants outlining further information around fire safety and the arrangements in place locally.

During Friday's visit, they were able to meet the delegation of officials to ask questions and seek clarification around any outstanding areas of concern.

Tenants have been issued with a fire safety fact sheet as well as been given the option to take up free Safe And Well checks from the fire service.

Coun. Renard said: "Immediately after the terrible fire in London the council reviewed

Chris Humphreys

chris.humphreys@newsquest.co.uk
[@Adver_Chris](#)

all its high rise buildings and contacted tenants to reassure them about the steps we were taking to keep them safe.

"We were very pleased to visit our high rise buildings and meet tenants in South Swindon, accompanied by Mr Buckland, to explain that their safety is our priority.

"I was pleased to see that tenants took the opportunity to ask questions during the visit and that we were able to offer some reassurance."

Robert said: "I have been able to see for myself the measures that are in place to combat the risk of fire in some of the high rise buildings we have in Swindon.

"This is mostly reassurance to show that our existing measures are strong enough and I was glad to see the emphasis on the importance of fire doors and creating a sterile environment in the main staircase.

"These steps are essential and the message that came out of today is that these measures are simple but if followed they can make the difference between life and death."

Robert said he had been particularly impressed with the alarm systems in place, in both communal and domestic spaces, which are linked to the council's central control room rather than being standalone systems.

A similar delegation will visit high rise buildings in North Swindon next week, accompa-



■ Robert Buckland at George Hall Court, Cavendish Square Picture: DAVE COX

High rise residents get reassurance and advice visit

RESIDENTS of high rise blocks in Penhill say they have been reassured by the council's actions in the wake of the fire at Grenfell Tower in London.

North Swindon MP Justin Tomlinson accompanied ward councillors, council officers and the fire service on a reassurance visit.

In addition to offering comfort to the towers' occupants, the event was also aimed at informing the area's elected representatives about fire preparedness.

Justin Tomlinson said: "Both the housing team and the fire service have been extremely proactive and it was clear that residents were reassured - both with the safety of the buildings and the information and support available.

"It's a real credit to all the work that has been done."

In the days following the terrible fire in London, the council distributed information leaflets to tenants.

The fire service is also offering 'safe and well visits' to those who would like additional reassurance.

High up on the agenda is emphasising that the construction of Swindon's tower blocks is not the same as the Grenfell Tower - there is no external cladding and the flats are still able to contain a fire without it spreading.

One of the main messages that the fire service want residents to take onboard is that the 'stay put' policy is still the safest approach for residents and the 'perfect storm' of circumstances that was seen in London should not lead them to ignore that advice in the event of an emergency.



Left to right, Coun Teresa Page, Fraser Drummond (DWFRS), Justin Tomlinson MP, Mike Ash (SBC) and Coun Mark Dempsey

Key activities

- Review of existing fire safety measures in line with LGA documentation
- Rationale for fire safety improvements
- Reports Council Members
 - Cabinet Member Advisory Group
 - Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee
 - Cabinet
- Diversity Impact Assessment
- Prioritisation of work activities
- Project plan for delivery

Improving fire safety in blocks of flats

DMJ – new front entrance fire doors, additional hard-wired smoke detectors and intumescent grills (£150,480)

Six 10-storey general purpose blocks of flats – new internal fire doors, passive protection to protected shafts (escape stairway) and intumescent grills (£525,000)

George Hall Court – installation of fire suppressive system Medium rise blocks of flats – emergency escape lighting Appointment of a consultant to undertake a sample of intrusive type 4 fire risk assessment surveys (one-off cost of £50,000)

Temporary post to manage fire safety activities (one-off cost of £40,000)

- Type 3 fire risk assessment surveys to be blocks of flats (annual cost £20,000)

Lessons learned

- Importance of fire safety visits
- Listen to residents and advise on fire safety procedures
- Build strong relationships with local Fire Service
- Ensure that you gain wider support across your organisation
- Extra capacity to manage activities
- Frequently Asked Questions and Fire Safety leaflet
- Reiterate message about Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) panels
- Timeliness to get ACM panels tested
- Risk register
- Enforce fire safety policy for contractors
- Specialist training for staff
- Clarity on existing programmes of work

Thank you

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