

TUESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 2024

## **Surrey Fire and Rescue Service Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase Two Report**

### **Purpose of report:**

To provide an initial update on the outcomes of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase Two Report.

### **Executive Summary:**

1. This report provides an initial update on the outcomes of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI) Phase Two report, published on 4 September 2024. It outlines the key findings and recommendations, focusing on the implications for Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and the steps needed to prevent a similar tragedy.

### **Key Findings**

2. **Building Safety Failures:** The GTI Phase Two report highlights significant failures in building safety, including the use of combustible materials, inadequate regulations, and misleading product testing.
3. **Firefighting Response:** The report underscores the need for improvements in fire and rescue services, particularly in training, communications, and preparedness.

### **Recommendations**

4. **Regulation and Oversight:**
  - Establish a single regulator for all construction industry functions.
  - Review the definition of higher-risk buildings under the Building Safety Act.
  - Merge fire safety functions under one department led by a single Secretary of State.
  - Appoint a Chief Construction Adviser.

5. Legislation and Guidance:
  - Continuously review and update Approved Document B and other statutory guidance.
  - Ensure fire safety strategies are produced by registered fire engineers for high-risk buildings.
  - Recognise and regulate the profession of fire engineering.
6. Fire Safety Strategy:
  - Make it a statutory requirement to submit and review fire safety strategies at key stages of building construction and refurbishment.
  - Increase the number of high-quality fire engineering courses.
  - Building Control:
    - Consider whether building control functions should be performed by a national authority.
7. Response to Recommendations:
  - Maintain a publicly accessible record of recommendations and government responses.
  - Establish a College of Fire and Rescue.
  - Local Resilience and Training:
    - Adopt national standards for training and preparation for emergencies.
    - Train local authority employees to integrate resilience into their responsibilities.

## **SFRS**

8. SFRS has developed a new Risk Based Inspection Programme (RBIP) to prioritise high-risk premises and ensure compliance with fire safety regulations.
9. SFRS continues to enhance its training and operational procedures, to embed lessons from the Grenfell Tower fire.
10. SFRS is actively working with building owners to ensure safety measures are in place and remediation is progressing.

## **11. Current Status in Surrey**

12. High-Risk Residential Buildings (HRRB): There are 91 HRRBs in Surrey, with seven requiring remediation. All have mitigation measures in place.
13. Mid-Rise Buildings: SFRS has identified 14 mid-rise buildings needing further investigation and is working with owners to address risks.
14. Stay Put Policy: SFRS supports the 'Stay Put' policy, with evacuation strategies tailored to each building's fire risk assessment.

## 15. Conclusion

16. The GTI Phase Two report is a critical document that underscores the need for significant reforms in building safety and fire service operations. SFRS is committed to implementing these recommendations to enhance safety and prevent future tragedies. The service awaits further guidance from the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) and will continue to prioritise the safety of Surrey's residents.

## Introduction

17. The purpose of this report is to provide the committee with Surrey Fire and Rescue Services (SFRS) initial response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI) Phase Two report published on 4 September 2024. This report provides an initial overview of the key findings and recommendations. However, the service is awaiting further guidance from the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) who will be working with government and partners across the fire and rescue sector, and wider, to implement what is expected to be significant reform.
18. The GTI was established to examine the circumstances leading up to and surrounding the fire at Grenfell Tower on the night of 14 June 2017. Phase One focused on the factual narrative of the events on the night of 14 June 2017 and the operational response from the London Fire Brigade (LFB).
19. The GTI's final hearings took place in November 2022. GTI Phase Two has examined the causes of the fire, including how Grenfell Tower came to be in a condition which allowed the fire to spread.
20. The following document represents a [thematic update on progress against the GTI Phase 1 Recommendations \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk).

## SFRS's initial response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Report

21. The GTI Phase Two report is a sobering reminder of the devastating fire in 2017 that claimed 72 lives. It is crucial that SFRS understand what this recent

report means for the service and the steps it needs to take to ensure another incident of this nature never happens again.

22. The Grenfell Tower fire exposed serious failures in building safety, regulations, and the firefighting response. The GTI Phase Two report outlines how combustible materials, insufficient regulations, and misleading product testing contributed to the disaster. The GTI Phase Two report also highlights the need for improvements within fire and rescue services, particularly around training, communications, and preparedness.

## **Key Recommendations from the GTI Phase Two Report**

### **Regulation**

23. It is recommended that the government draw together, under a single regulator, all the functions relating to the construction industry referred to in the GTI report.
24. The definition of a higher-risk building for the purposes of the Building Safety Act should be reviewed urgently.

### **Government**

25. It is recommended that the functions relating to fire safety currently exercised by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Home Office and the Department for Business and Trade are merged into one department under a single Secretary of State.

### **Chief Construction Adviser**

26. It is recommended that the Secretary of State appoint a Chief Construction Adviser with a sufficient budget and staff to provide advice on all matters affecting the construction industry.

### **Legislation and Guidance**

27. Approved Document B is a part of the UK building regulations that provides guidance on fire safety measures in buildings. The document is divided into two Volumes; Volume 1: Dwellings and Volume 2: Buildings other than dwellings. It covers various aspects such as:
  - Means of escape: Ensuring there are adequate routes for occupants to safely exit a building in case of fire.
  - Fire spread: Measures to prevent the spread of fire within the building and to adjacent buildings.

- Means of escape: Ensuring there are adequate routes for occupants to safely exit a building in case of fire.
  - Fire spread: Measures to prevent the spread of fire within the building and to adjacent buildings.
28. It is recommended that Approved Document B must be kept under continuous review, with the other Approved Documents, and amended annually or promptly whenever developments in materials or building methods make that desirable. The statutory guidance generally, and Approved Document B, in particular, be reviewed accordingly and a revised version published as soon as possible.
  29. A revised version of the guidance should contain a clear warning in each section that the legal requirements are contained in the Building Regulations and that compliance with the guidance will not necessarily result in compliance with them.
  30. A stay put strategy in response to a compartment fire will be acceptable only if there is negligible risk of fire escaping into and spreading through the external wall. Calculating the likely rate of fire spread and the time required for evacuation, including the evacuation of those with physical or mental impairments, are matters for a qualified fire engineer.
  31. As far as possible, membership of bodies advising on changes to the statutory guidance should include representatives of the academic community as well as those with practical experience of the industry (including fire engineers) chosen for their experience and skill and should extend beyond those who have served on similar bodies in the past.

### **Fire Safety Strategy**

32. It is recommended that it be made a statutory requirement that a fire safety strategy is produced by a registered fire engineer to be submitted with building control applications (Gateway 2) for the construction or refurbishment of any higher-risk building and for it to be reviewed and re-submitted at the stage of completion (Gateway 3). Such a strategy must consider the needs of vulnerable people, including the additional time they may require to leave the building or reach a place of safety along with any additional facilities necessary to ensure their safety.

### **Fire Engineers**

33. The profession of fire engineer should be recognised and protected by law and an independent body be established to regulate the profession, define the standards required for membership, maintain a register of members and regulate their conduct. It is also recommended that the government take urgent

steps to increase the number of places on high-quality masters level courses in fire engineering accredited by the professional regulator.

34. The government, working in collaboration with industry and professional bodies, should encourage the development of courses in the principles of fire engineering for construction professionals and members of the fire and rescue services as part of their continuing professional development.

### **Building Control**

35. The government should appoint an independent panel to consider whether it is in the public interest for building control functions to be performed by those who have a commercial interest in the process and that the same panel consider whether all building control functions should be performed by a national authority.

### **Response to Recommendations**

36. It is recommended that it be made a legal requirement for the government to maintain a publicly accessible record of recommendations made by select committees, coroners and public inquiries together with a description of the steps taken in response. If the government decides not to accept a recommendation, it should record its reasons for doing so. Scrutiny of its actions should be a matter for Parliament, to which it should be required to report annually.

### **Pipeline Isolation Valves**

37. Pipeline isolation valves are a critical part of the gas distribution network because they are intended to enable the supply of gas to be shut off quickly in an emergency. It is recommended that every gas transporter be required by law to check the accessibility of each such valve on its system at least once every three years and to report the results of that inspection to the Health and Safety Executive as part of its gas safety case review

### **College of Fire and Rescue**

38. The GTI report recommends that the government establish a College of Fire and Rescue as identified in the white paper Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service (2023) immediately.

### **The Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004**

39. It is recommended that the CCA 2004 is reviewed, and consideration given to granting a designated Secretary of State the power to carry out the functions of a Category 1 responder in its place for a limited period and be amended to

require Category 1 responders to establish and maintain partnerships with the voluntary, community and faith organisations.

## **Guidance**

40. Regard for humanitarian considerations should be expressly recognised by making it the ninth principle of effective response and recovery.

## **Local Resilience Forums (LRF)**

41. LRFs should adopt national standards to ensure effective training, preparation and planning for emergencies and adopt independent auditing schemes to identify deficiencies and secure compliance. And that a mechanism be introduced for independently verifying the frequency and quality of training provided by local authorities and other Category 1 responders.
42. In response to this recommendation an item titled 'Initial Recommendations from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry' is scheduled for the Surrey LRF Executive meeting taking place on 3 October 2024.

## **Local Authorities**

43. It is recommended that local authorities should train all their employees, including chief executives, to regard resilience as an integral part of their responsibilities.
44. The Surrey County Council (SCC) Corporate Resilience Group will be discussing the GTI report recommendations on 7 November 2024.

<b>GTI Recommendations being incorporated into SFRS and/or reflecting the findings of HMICFRS in their most recent report</b>
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45. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) have advised fire and rescue services to develop action plans as part of a fire and rescue sector wide response. However, there are a few areas from the SFRS Inspection Improvement Plan (IIP), established after the last inspection by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue (HMICFRS) in Spring 2023, where current activities already align with the recommendations in the report.
46. The last HMICFRS inspection of SFRS contained a Cause of Concern and 24 recommendations for areas of improvement. The Cause of Concern related to the service's Risk-Based Inspection Programme (RBIP):

**Cause of Concern** – The service can't assure itself that its RBIP prioritises the highest risks and includes proportionate activity to reduce risk.

**Recommendation 1:** Review its RBIP to make sure it identifies its highest risk premises and meets its own targets.

**Recommendation 2:** Make sure all its staff are aware of the expectations on them in the management of the RBIP.

47. Immediate action was taken, and an action plan was created. The service developed a new RBIP to ensure all buildings were identified accurately. The Fire Safety Inspection Programme was reviewed, and the services planning model and fire safety work was peer reviewed.
48. SFRS uses its RBIP to allocate regulatory activity to its Fire Safety Inspectors in order to carry out a range of work, which aligns to the required qualifications laid out in the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Competency Framework.
49. This all supports the services aim to reduce the risk and subsequent impact from fire and other emergencies to individuals, communities and businesses within Surrey. The RBIP sets out how all businesses and organisations are regulated via alternative methods, dependent on their level of risk, to either life safety or firefighter safety. This is achieved by prioritisation of the most at-risk premises, supported by intelligence-led data to target and allocate appropriate levels of Business Safety engagement and regulatory activity.
50. To support the ongoing RBIP and High-Rise Residential Building (HRRB) programmes, the Protection (Fire Safety) team continues to develop and train staff to ensure they are competent and accredited Fire Safety Inspectors and Fire Safety Advisors. This is achieved through compliance with the NFCC Competency Framework for fire safety regulators, the Local Authority Building Control (LABC) Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and formal channels around HRRB risk and enforcement. SFRS has additional High-Rise training scheduled to take place in the coming training year for its Inspection Team.
51. The service continues to work alongside the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) which sits under the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and was established under Building Safety Act 2022 to:
  - Regulate higher-risk buildings
  - Raise safety standards of all buildings
  - Help professionals in design, construction, and building control, to improve their competence.
52. HMICFRS monitored progress against the action plan and carried out an Inspection Revisit in February 2024 that solely focused on the Cause of



Concern. The outcome letter from the revisit was published on 12 April 2024 and stated the following: *We were pleased to see the significant steps the service had taken in response to the cause of concern we issued. We are pleased that the service has improved its RBIP and the way in which it is managed. We recognise the considerable work that the service has carried out to support these improvements. As a result, we now consider this cause of concern to be discharged.*

53. There are also three AFI's that were identified in the inspection report that align to the recommendations in the GTI:
- AFI 8: The service should ensure it has an effective system for learning from operational incidents.
  - AFI 10: The service should make sure it is well prepared to form part of a multi-agency response to major incidents. It should make sure its procedures for responding are understood by all staff and are well tested.
  - AFI 12: The service should make sure it has an effective method for sharing multiple fire survival guidance information with multiple callers and has a dedicated communication link in place.
54. Significant progress has been made regarding a digital platform to manage shared Fire Survival Guidance information, from Joint Fire Control to the incident ground and the evacuation scene. Utilising the research conducted by London Fire Brigade in the development of their digital platform and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS), who are both leading the research and delivery of shared systems, Joint Fire Control are now testing a model based on the MFRS system. This allows for real-time, auditable, evacuation information and resident details to be shared to the scene and vice versa. Multiple exercises to test and shape the collation of evacuation data with Joint Fire Control and live high-rise evacuations have been conducted to test systems and processes.
55. The development of the National Operational Guidance (NOG) product suite for Tall Buildings is being integrated into SFRS in collaboration with East and West Sussex Fire and Rescue Services (FRS). This operational procedural document set will allow for greater training consistency and exercising opportunities with other FRS's. The procedural suite will ensure that SFRS work to the National best practice and most current guidance, allowing Joint Fire Control to have consistency in response protocols between services.
56. The Operational Response systems, equipment, and procedures were tested to good effect at two significant High-Rise incidents within Surrey in May/June of 2024. Both incidents required close working with other FRS's to extinguish the

fire and manage an evacuation. The debriefs from these incidents recognised a highly effective tactical approach, that maximised public safety, firefighter effectiveness and prioritised evacuation. Exercises have also been conducted to test large scale evacuation at live high-rise buildings utilising smoke hoods for residents and Fire Survival Guidance collation.

57. Monthly meetings with our HMICFRS Service Liaison Lead (SLL) continue to take place with the aim of discussing IIP progress whilst also providing an opportunity for the service to highlight any relevant key service activity and ask questions around upcoming inspection themes.

#### **Update on the current high-risk buildings in Surrey and actions taken since 2017**

58. Following the tragedy at Grenfell Tower in 2017, the government banned combustible materials in the external walls of HRRB of 18 metres and over. SFRS began an inspection programme to immediately identify Aluminium Composite Material (ACM). Four buildings in total were found in Surrey, clad either with a different type of ACM to Grenfell Tower or with High Pressure Laminate (HPL) cladding. SFRS worked with the owners to ensure that both remediation and interim safety measures were in place.
59. By December 2019 the definition of dangerous cladding was extended to include buildings between 11 and 18 metres. In spring 2020 the use of Expanded Polystyrene Systems (EPS), was also identified nationally by the NFCC as a potential risk. SFRS immediately began a targeted Building Risk Review inspection programme.
60. There are 91 HRRB in Surrey, seven of which are between 7 and 24 stories, which require remediation. This is less than 10% of the 91. All of these have mitigation measures in place, such as communal alarms and waking watches. A waking watch is where a building is patrolled on all floors and outside the building to raise the alarm in the event of a fire. Each of these buildings are also in the Government's [Cladding Safety Scheme](#) (CSS), which is a fund that will meet the cost of addressing life safety fire risks associated with cladding on residential buildings.
61. One of the HRRBs has ACM cladding, the same cladding that was used on Grenfell Tower. However, it is not fitted in the cassette manner, which leads to violent burning. This building also does not have flammable insulation underneath; it is fully sprinkled, has a fully automatic fire system and is in the remediation scheme. One building has had cladding removed and three others are in progress.
62. SFRS has sent letters to all HRRB owners reminding them of their responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Fire

Safety Act 2021 and Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022. All buildings have been revisited in last 18 months and the service is in regular contact with the Responsible Person for the premises. SFRS will also be revisiting all 7 buildings again, in the next 3 months.

63. SFRS has sought legal advice to confirm what actions are available due to the timescales for remediation. The legal opinion is that the current mitigations of risk are sufficient to make enforcement currently unsuccessful.

### **Mid-Rise Residential Buildings**

64. Data provided by the then Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) identified 163 mid-rise properties in the county. SFRS has matured the data provided and has visited 277 mid-rise buildings to check for External Wall Systems (EWS), otherwise known as cladding.
65. Of the 277 mid-rise buildings SFRS have visited to check for cladding, 14 were identified as needing further investigation. The service has contacted these building owners to establish what actions are being taken.
66. These buildings, along with the high-rise concerns, will be flagged as having cladding on our mobile data terminals, available on frontline appliances, so that crews are prepared in the event of a fire.

### **Guidance for residents in the event of a fire – is ‘Stay Put’ still valid?**

67. SFRS continues to support HRRBs and Mid-Rise buildings to ensure that they are compliant with the various legislative requirements, including completion of a fire risk assessment and evacuation strategy. Responsibility for producing these documents sits with the Responsible Person as defined by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the Accountable Person (AP) as defined by the Building Safety Act 2022.
68. Fire risk assessments should identify the most appropriate evacuation strategy for the building which must then be adopted by the Responsible Person. Evacuation strategies may include a ‘Stay Put’ policy. The introduction of a ‘Stay Put’ policy is adopted on the reliance that each flat is compartmentalised to prevent fire spreading into other areas of the premises for a maximum of 60 minutes. However, the changing of a ‘Stay Put’ policy at an operational incident is at the discretion of the FRS Incident Commander. The [NFCC’s position on the 'Stay Put' policy](#) remains the same.
69. Residents should ensure they are familiar with the escape plan or strategy for their building in the event of a fire. The managing agent or building owner should provide this information.

**Recommendations from the GTI report which are particularly relevant to Surrey as a county:**

70. A review of long-term resilience in the UK will be undertaken by the Government between September 2024 and spring 2025. It will inform the Government's response to the first module of the Covid-19 inquiry in January 2025 and will incorporate the response to the GTI Phase 2 report. This part of the review is currently scheduled to begin in February 2025. The results of the review will set out the Government's strategic approach to resilience.
71. The review will set the direction for the resilience system and the wide variety of bodies involved; including Local Government, and ensure appropriate structures and frameworks are in place to deliver national and local improvements to resilience. It will also ensure the needs of communities and individuals, particularly the vulnerable, are better addressed.

**Conclusions:**

72. The Grenfell Tower tragedy was a turning point for fire safety in England. The service has a responsibility to take these lessons to heart and make the changes needed to protect the communities it serves. SFRS is committed to meeting those responsibilities.
73. SFRS is awaiting guidance from the National Fire Chief's Council (NFCC) on how to implement the GTI Phase Two report recommendations. The latest message to Chief Fire Officers, on 6 September 2024, states that the NFCC will: "need to take time to consider and understand the report in full, and each of the recommendations, to give them our thorough consideration, and to work with Government and partners across and beyond the sector as we continue to pursue significant reform".
74. London Fire Brigade (LFB), which was given 29 recommendations, has indicated that they will be carrying out a period of public consultation prior to developing an action plan. These recommendations focused on various operational aspects such as improving firefighter training, updating equipment, enhancing communication, and refining processes for managing major incidents. Therefore, it will be some time before actions arising for SFRS from these recommendations will be known and their impact fully understood.
75. Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner is in the process of writing to Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) Chairs asking them to support the delivery of local remediation accelerated plans. The aim of the plan is to articulate how the pace of remediation can be increased at a local level. Local remediation acceleration plans should explain how FRA's will:

- work with the fire and rescue services and other regulators to assure the safety of buildings awaiting or undergoing remediation.
- work with the department to identify buildings that are failing to progress to remediation sufficiently quickly.
- support local authorities and fire and rescue authorities to coordinate activity with the Building Safety Regulator.
- work with regulators to increase the pace of remediation at affected buildings, using soft pressure, regulatory engagement and, where needed, enforcement action.
- facilitate effective data sharing between regulators and monitor the success of activity in increasing pace.
- identify barriers to delivery, and work with the department to overcome them.

76. The reference to 'All Regulators' for Surrey would likely be Local Housing departments who enforce the Housing Act 2004.

77. SFRS, and the fire and rescue sector, has undergone significant transformation following the initial GTI report and its 46 recommendations. The final report underscores the importance of continuing to prioritise the Phase One recommendations as the sector addresses those in the Phase Two report. In addition to the recommendations there are a number of suggested actions and activities within the narrative of the report that the service will be looking to include in its action plan.

78. In the coming months SFRS will be re-evaluating the GTI Phase One recommendations already implemented, to ensure that each recommendation is thoroughly reviewed and assessed in light of the Phase Two Report. The service will also continue to prioritise the remaining outstanding actions in the HMICFRS IIP.

<b>Recommendations:</b>
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79. a) That the Committee note the report.

<b>Next steps:</b>
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80. SFRS suggests that a further update is provided to the CEH Select Committee in April 2025.

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**Sources/background papers**

- [Phase 2 report | Grenfell Tower Inquiry](#)
- [GTI Phase 2 Report - NFCC Summary](#)
- [Thematic update on progress against the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 1 Recommendations \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Stay Put Policy - NFCC](#)