



# **Gravesham Borough Council**

## **DSO Building Management**

### **Fire Safety Policy & Management Plan**

#### **June 2019**

#### **Document Control**

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### **Abbreviations**

<i>HSE</i>	Health & Safety Executive
<i>ACOPS</i>	Approved Codes of Practice
<i>RRFSO</i>	Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
<i>HHSRS</i>	Housing Health & Safety Rating System
<i>FRA</i>	Fire Risk Assessment
<i>AOV</i>	Automated Opening Vent
<i>BS EN</i>	British & European Standard
<i>LGA</i>	Local Government Association
<i>LACoRS</i>	Local Authorities Coordinators of Regulatory Services
<i>KFRS</i>	Kent Fire & Rescue Services
<i>HRRB</i>	High Risk Residential Building
<i>MHCLG</i>	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)
<i>UKAS</i>	United Kingdom Accreditation Service

# Fire Safety Policy

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) has a duty of care under the Health & Safety at Work Act to ensure as far as reasonably practicable the health, safety and welfare of all tenants, employees, contractors and visitors who occupy or access Council buildings. This is supported by maintaining and improving the buildings in a condition such that it is safe, and does not put persons at risk from fire.
- 1.2 Gravesham Borough Council acknowledges its responsibilities under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO) to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that measures are taken to prevent fires within all communal parts of its buildings.
- 1.3 Under The Housing Act 2004, GBC also has responsibility for the common parts of buildings, but unlike the RRSFO this Act covers domestic premises. Section 9 of the Act: The Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) provides a risk-based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against health and safety hazards, potential risks from fire and any deficiencies identified in premises.
- 1.4 The policy defines specific roles with designated responsibilities and forms the basis for monitoring compliance and ensuring accountability at all levels throughout the Council.

## 2.0 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The aim is to ensure Gravesham Borough Council has a strategy that sets out fire safety standards that will be achieved thereby reducing the risks associated with fire.

In meeting this aim DSO Building Management will:

- Undertake suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments and review them at regular intervals as determined by the level of risk identified.
- Maintain fire prevention measures to eliminate or reduce the risk of fire and smoke spreading.
- Provide adequate means of escape and directional signage and ensure it is maintained.
- Ensure all properties have working fire detection and where fire doors are installed door closers are intact and in working order.
- Liaise with Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) and Building Control to ensure compliance with the RRFSO.
- Communicate emergency arrangements and fire safety advice to residents.
- Undertake stock condition surveys for GBC housing stock and take action to rectify identified fire hazards.
- Provide appropriate training for those with delegated roles and responsibilities.

- Maintain appropriate fire safety documentation including servicing and maintenance records.

### **3. Legal and Regulatory Framework**

3.1 This policy is subject to, but not restricted to the following specific regulations, HSE's Approved Codes of Practice (ACOPS) and industry guidelines:

#### **3.2 Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO)**

In England and Wales, the RRFSO applies to the common parts of multi-occupied residential buildings and does not apply to domestic premises themselves. It places onus upon the employers or responsible persons to undertake an assessment of the risks associated with fire and ensure control measures are in place to eliminate hazards including flammable and explosive materials. Where this is not reasonably practicable, risks will be reduced to an acceptable level.

The Fire Authority is the enforcing agency for the RRFSO and failure to comply with the Order may give rise to enforcement and possible criminal action. Non-compliance may also lead to litigation against local authorities in the form of civil claims of negligence, adverse press and a detrimental effect on the organisation's reputation.

For GBC, the Fire Authority responsible for enforcing the RRFSO is the Kent Fire and Rescue Services (KFRS).

#### **3.3 Housing Act 2004**

Under section 9 of the Housing Act 2004, fire safety within domestic premises is assessed by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS). The HHSRS is a risk-based evaluation tool to help local authorities identify and protect against potential risks and hazards to health and safety from any deficiencies identified in dwellings. Twenty-nine categories of potential hazard are considered, one of which is fire.

Although local authorities cannot take statutory enforcement action against themselves, they are expected to use HHSRS to assess the condition of their stock and to ensure their housing meets the Decent Home Standard.

3.4 Details for the following legislation and guidance can be found in *Appendix 1*.

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA)
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmosphere Regulations (DSEAR)
- The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)
- LGA's Fire Safety in Purpose-Built Blocks of Flats
- LACoRS' Guidance on Fire Safety Provisions
- Building Regulations Approved Document B
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998
- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1998
- The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007

## **4. Key Roles & Responsibilities**

4.1 At Gravesham Borough Council the Chief Executive along with Directors, Assistant Directors and Service Managers are collectively responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy, meeting statutory requirements and delivering our fire safety commitments.

### **4.2 Responsible Person**

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO) anyone who has control of premises or anyone who has a degree of control over certain areas or systems may be deemed a 'responsible person'. In most circumstances the owner, employer or occupier of the premises is responsible for ensuring and maintaining correct fire safety and procedures. In GBC properties a number of people will have these responsibilities.

### **4.3 Chief Executive**

The Chief Executive has the ultimate responsibility and accountability regarding fire safety at board level and is considered to be the 'Duty Holder.'

### **4.4 Assistant Director (DSO Building Management)**

The Assistant Director is responsible for service strategy and quality of services provided by DSO Building Management. The Assistant Director also has overall budget responsibility for fire safety management and ensures adequate resources are made available to both develop and implement the Fire Safety Management Plan.

### **4.5 Asset Manager**

The Asset Manager is responsible for procurement, and selection of competent Service Providers to undertake fire safety management related works within GBC's managed properties. The Asset Manager is also responsible for service delivery, staff training and ensuring that the Fire Safety Policy and Management Plan continues to be robust and effective.

### **4.6 Compliance & Projects Manager**

The Compliance & Projects Manager is responsible for putting in place and monitoring arrangements to ensure that the systems and procedures outlined in this Management Plan are carried out. The Manager (Compliance & Projects) will monitor and action Service Provider performance and ensure fire safety compliance is achieved in all areas of the service.

### **4.7 Surveyor (Compliance & Projects)**

The Surveyor (Compliance & Projects) has day to day operational responsibilities to ensure Service Providers conduct their work as per the terms and conditions of their contracts.

## **5. Resident Responsibilities**

The actions of residents may affect the fire safety of a building and all its occupants. Housing Management will ensure that residents are fully aware of their responsibilities under the tenancy agreement or lease, and how they can access fire safety advice.

They will brief all new tenants on fire safety measures specific to their new home at sign up and be advised to contact KFRS who offer a free home safety check.

Resident's responsibilities include:

- Complying with the terms of their tenancy agreement or leases in all matters that may have a bearing to fire safety.
- Regular testing of smoke alarms within the property and reporting faults to Responsive Repairs.
- Requesting written permission from Housing Management before commencing any significant changes to the property. This will be refused if the fire integrity of the property is likely to be adversely affected.
- Providing reasonable access as per the tenancy agreement to allow GBC to complete all safety checks.
- Not storing refuse, mobility scooters, bicycles or other possessions in communal areas is not permitted as they will obstruct means of egress.
- Not installing additional security to doors and windows and leaving refuse items in communal areas that may prevent a means of escape.
- Not propping open or damaging fire doors, and obstructing designated fire exits.
- Reporting faults or damage to flat entrance doors including self-closing devices, letter boxes and damaged smoke seals to Responsive Repairs.
- Not interfering with fire detection equipment, emergency lighting, alarms and signage.
- Not storing gas canisters and only storing oxygen cylinders following permission from Housing Management.

Information publicising the importance of fire safety to residents will be provided via the GBC's website, tenant handbooks and Fire Safety leaflets.

## **6. Policy Review**

- 6.1 This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure its continuing suitability, adequacy and effectiveness or as required by the introduction of new legislation, regulation and guidance that impacts on the fire safety management obligations of Gravesham Borough Council.

## Management Plan

### 7. Introduction

- 7.1 The Management Plan describes how DSO Building Management effectively manages requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRFSO) for communal areas.
- 7.2 It provides clear specific guidelines, processes and procedures for day to day operations and ensuring the safety of residents, employees, contractors and visitors from the risk of fire within Council buildings.
- 7.3 DSO Building Management will ensure the installation, inspection, testing and maintenance of fire detection and fire suppression systems, are carried out within appropriate timescales and maintained to ensure the Council's legal compliance.

### 8. Fire Risk Assessments

- 8.1 A fire risk assessment is a process involving the systematic evaluation of the factors that determine the hazard from fire, the likelihood that there will be a fire and the consequences if one were to occur. It will include measures to reduce or eliminate the risk of fire, and identify persons at risk.
- 8.2 DSO Building Management will arrange for suitable and sufficient fire risk assessments to be carried out by a competent person (Fire Risk Assessor). Assessments will be provided for all communal areas and shared facilities within sheltered accommodation, and blocks.
- 8.3 Tower blocks of 10 storeys or more are classified as multi-occupancy Higher Risk Residential Buildings (HRRBs), however for the purpose of this Management Plan, DSO Building Management's classification is for all blocks five storeys or over.
- 8.4 The RRFSO is not prescriptive and does not define how often fire risk assessments should be reviewed. However, as a minimum DSO Building Management will review these at a frequency identified by the initial assessment and completed as outlined below.

Risk Level	Property Type	Review of existing FRA
Low Risk	Low & Medium rise blocks – no more than four storeys above ground	Every 3 years
Medium Risk	Sheltered Housing Accommodation	Annually
High Risk	HRRBs and blocks of five storeys or higher	Annually

A new fire risk assessment will be required in the event of the following:

- A fire, near-miss or threat of arson.
- Whenever there has been any structural or material change to the building or its use.

- 8.4 The risk assessment will be completed by competent persons as recommended by the Health and Safety Executive.

The risk assessment will incorporate information on the following:

- General property information
- Fire hazards and ignition sources
- Means of escape in case of fire
- Emergency escape lighting
- Signs and notices
- Fire alarm and warning arrangements
- Fixed and portable fire extinguishing equipment
- Management of fire safety
- Access for fire-fighting and fire fighter safety
- Emergency evacuation plans
- Photographs
- Action Plan

In addition, the risk assessment must also address the requirements of the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR) with regard to the presence and storage of flammable and explosive substances.

- 8.5 On receipt of the risk assessment, the Administration Team will upload the document to GBC's asset database. The Surveyor (Compliance & Projects) will evaluate hazards identified and:

- Refer remedial works to Responsive Repairs or Specialist Contractors, for action within appropriate timescales.
- Refer recommended actions to Housing Management
- Record remedials/recommendations in an action plan with agreed timescales for completion.
- On completion the actions plan will be updated and filed with the risk assessment as an auditable record.
- All fire risk assessments will be kept under review to ensure all identified action points are dealt with.

Where a particular hazard has been identified by the Fire Risk Assessor as a serious and immediate risk to life, it shall be reported immediately to the Surveyor (Compliance & Projects) who may seek further advice from KFRS and/or Building Control, and instruct remedial works be implemented without delay. Such defects must not be left until the risk assessment report is submitted.

## **9. Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)**

- 9.1 The HHSRS is linked to ongoing stock condition surveys which are managed by DSO Building Management. They assess 29 categories of housing hazards. Each has a weighting which will help determine whether the property is rated as having category 1 (serious) or category 2 (less serious) hazard.
- 9.2 DSO Building Management engages a Consultant to carry out a programme of HHSRS assessments on all the properties that it manages as part of stock condition surveys. The



Consultant will use the formal scoring system within HHSRS to demonstrate the seriousness of hazards that can cause harm.

- 9.3 The HHSRS determines the threat from fire and associated smoke within properties by evaluating possible factors of its cause such as:
- Sources of ignition (cooking appliances/space heaters/electrical equipment).
  - Solid fuel as main fuel leads to a higher likelihood of fire although with a lower fatality rate than from gas/electric space heaters.
  - Electrical distribution equipment in poor condition.
  - Nature of harm influenced by presence/absence of automatic fire detection/alarm systems.
- 9.4 The assessment will also evaluate preventive measures that could have an effect on likelihood and harm outcomes such as:
- Safe siting for cookers, away from flammable materials.
  - Properly designed/installed/serviced/maintained space heating.
  - Sufficient/appropriately sited electric socket outlets.
  - Properly installed/maintained/regularly checked and tested distribution board and wiring.
  - Residual Current Devices.
  - Fire and smoke permeable resistant materials in design of the building where possible.
  - Fire stops to cavities including ventilation and heating systems.
  - Design and construction of the building to limit the spread of fire/smoke.
  - Properly constructed/fitted internal doors with self-closers where appropriate.
  - Furniture to comply with current regulations (the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988) in furnished accommodation.
  - Detectors/smoke alarms properly designed/sited/maintained/regularly tested.
  - Appropriately sited extinguishers and fire blankets (especially kitchens).
  - Means of escape from all parts of dwelling/building, e.g. openable door/window/protected staircase (depending on height of building).
- 9.5 Any fire hazards identified as category 1 (serious) or which result in a failure of the assessment are referred to the Surveyor (Compliance & Projects) for immediate action. These hazards are determined according to their severity and likelihood of a fire starting.
- 9.6 Where appropriate, particular fire hazards identified will be notified to Housing Management and KFRS, including the presence of stored oxygen or Liquid Propane Gas appliances in a property. As a result, KFRS may arrange for its officers to conduct a familiarisation visit.

## **10. Fire Detection Systems**

- 10.1 Building Regulations recommend fire detection systems are provided in accordance with the relevant recommendations of BS 5839-6, all alarms should be interlinked to ensure audibility throughout the property and smoke alarms positioned in circulation areas should be of optical type (or multi-sensor type incorporating an optical sensor).
- 10.2 BS 5839: Pt.6 grades fire detection systems from Grade F up to Grade A. Generally speaking, the greater the fire risk and the more comprehensive the system needs to be.
- 10.3 Within the A - F grades, the standard identifies three different categories of protection (see figure 1):

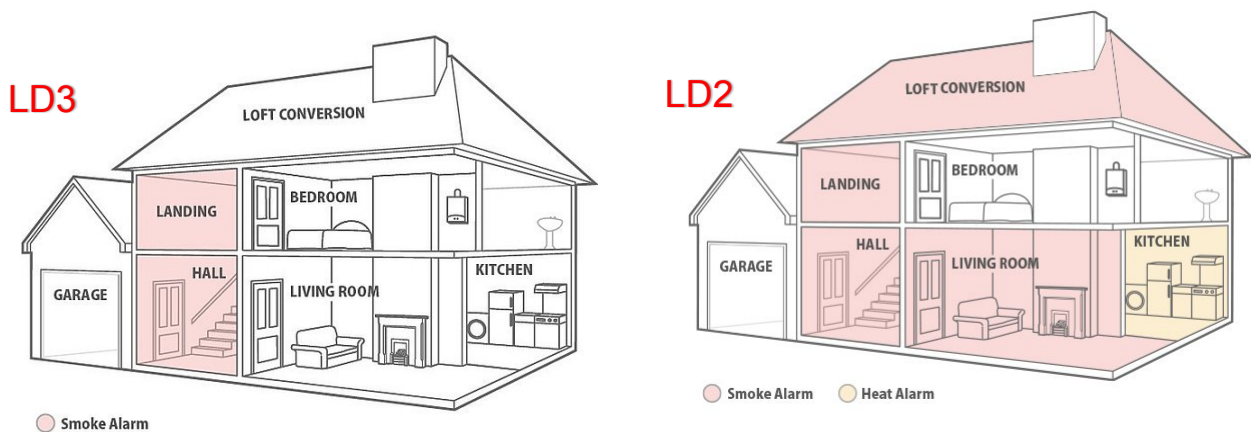
- LD1 - A system installed throughout the dwelling, incorporating detectors in all circulation spaces that form part of the escape routes from the dwelling, and in all rooms and areas in which fire might start, other than toilets, bathrooms and shower rooms.
- LD2 - A system incorporating detectors in all circulation spaces that form part of the escape routes from the premises, and in all rooms or areas that present a high risk of fire to occupants.
- LD3 - A system incorporating detectors in all circulation spaces that form part of the escape routes from the premises. This system is intended to protect escape routes for those not directly involved in the fire and may not save the life of anyone in the immediate vicinity of the fire.

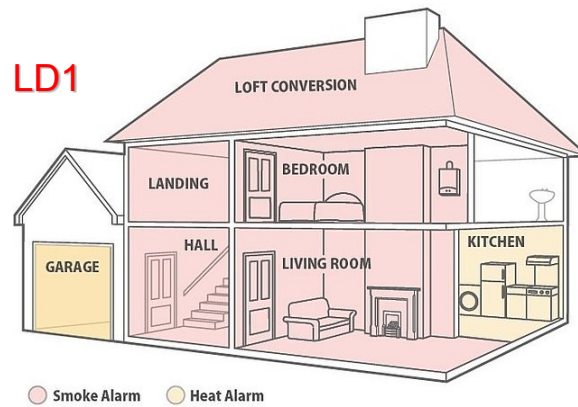
Only by quoting Grade and Category can a meaningful and effective alarm system be specified, e.g. Grade D, Category LD2.

10.4 In England, the minimum requirement for fire detection to meet building regulations is as follows:

- All dwellings should be provided with an alarm system to at least Grade D2, Category LD3 (see figure 1). The grade relates to system engineering and category relates to level of protection provided.
- Position optical or multi-sensor mains powered alarms with an integral backup power supply within the escape routes of the property (i.e. hallways and landings)
- Have at least one smoke alarm on every storey
- Install a heat alarm in any kitchen areas where the kitchen is not separated from the circulation space or stairway by a door.
- All alarms must be interlinked.

Figure 1: Level of Protection





## 10.5 General Accommodation (Non-Sheltered)

All council owned properties (excluding leasehold) will have at least Category LD3 mains operated linked fire detection (smoke alarm) system installed. Alarms will have a ten year life expectancy and maintained as follows:

- Annual Inspection and bleep test during the Gas Safety Check. The gas engineer records details of the smoke alarm on the Landlord's Gas Safety Record (LGSR). If the smoke alarm has been removed, missing, faulty or expired, the Surveyor (Gas) is notified and a job order raised to Responsive Repairs to install a replacement.
- When the property is void, the smoke alarms will be inspected and tested. If the smoke alarm has been removed, missing, faulty or expired, it will be replaced during void works.
- The alarm will be also be replaced as part of the periodic five year electrical testing programme if it has been removed, missing, faulty or expired.

Regular maintenance and replacement during these work activities not only ensures the resident is protected, but reduces call-out visits by Responsive Repairs to replace batteries.

## 10.6 Sheltered Accommodation

Fire detection in Sheltered Accommodation is currently being upgraded to Category LD2 (see figure 1) which provides more protection to our most vulnerable residents. This provides higher protection than LD3 and includes:

- Smoke alarms installed in all circulation areas/ escape routes and high risk areas
- At least one smoke alarm in every circulation space on each storey (such as hallways and landings)
- Have at least one heat alarm installed in every kitchen.
- All alarms interlinked.

Fire detection is linked to the Warden Control system and tested and serviced on an annual basis. Additional alarms and bespoke equipment are added to the system to meet the needs of residents who have been identified as having an increased vulnerability such as hearing impairment to ensure they are alerted in the event of fire.

DSO Building Management will ensure that all sheltered housing properties and communal areas are appropriately equipped with fire protection equipment, emergency lighting, fire doors, and safety signs as advised by the fire risk assessment.

In sheltered housing schemes where furniture is provided in common areas furniture will be fire retardant in compliance with the current regulations. Furniture will be inspected quarterly by the Scheme Officers (Housing Management). Existing non-compliant furniture will be replaced where identified.

#### 10.7 High Risk Residential Blocks (HRRBs) & Sheltered Scheme Communal Areas

Where it is deemed appropriate in the recommendations of site-specific fire risk assessments, communal areas of Sheltered Schemes and HRRBs are installed with mains operated fire detection systems.

Maintenance of all systems will be carried out six monthly for Sheltered Communal Areas and quarterly for High Risk Blocks by competent fire alarm contractors. Fire detection in Sheltered Communal Areas is also linked to the Warden Control system.

### 11. **Fire Suppression Systems**

- 11.1 Fire Suppression Systems are primarily intended for the protection of life in event of fire and have additional benefits for property protection, environmental benefits, sustainability of buildings and firefighter safety.
- 11.2 DSO Building Management is introducing Fire Sprinkler Systems to high risk buildings to fight fires and protect the surroundings. These operate primarily by wetting and cooling the surfaces of the fuel and the immediate area, thereby suppressing and controlling the fire. These systems are being installed by competent fire sprinkler contractors.
- 11.3 Installations will meet the main British Standard covering fire sprinklers in this country, BS 9251. It provides guidance for the design, installation, components, water supplies and back flow protection, commissioning, maintenance and testing of fire sprinkler systems installed for life safety purposes. Additional benefits include property protection in residential and domestic occupancies.
- 11.4 Installations will be serviced and maintained by competent engineers on an annual basis. Residents will be provided with guidance leaflets to ensure their actions do not compromise the effectiveness of the system.

### 12. **Emergency Lighting**

- 12.1 In general artificial lighting is provided where buildings are used during the hours of darkness and therefore emergency lighting will need to be installed. It is provided on escape routes, in open areas used as escape routes, all open areas larger than 60 square metres and to illuminate exit signs.
- 12.2 The minimum standard for escape emergency lighting is one hour duration which once discharged requires twenty four hours to fully recharge, before re-occupation. However emergency lighting within GBC buildings have three hour duration, therefore if the main fails, for example for just one hour, there is still two hours duration remaining in the battery, allowing an immediate re-occupation of the premises.
- 12.3 DSO Building Management ensures that all emergency lighting located in communal areas of all buildings will be maintained in good condition and working order to assist means of escape in an emergency.
- 12.4 Under BS EN 50172 emergency lighting will be serviced and tested as follows:

- Daily – Scheme/Estate Officers will visually inspect all emergency lighting and indicators are showing healthy.
- Monthly – A Competent person will test each luminaire and exit sign for a period sufficient to check each lamp operates, using the test facility provided.
- Annually – A Competent person will test all luminaires and exit signs for a full rated duration (3 hour burn). Restore to normal after tests and check that indicators show normal charging.

Monthly and annual testing results to ensure compliance will be recorded within the job scheduling system and any remedial actions taken as necessary.

### **13. Fire Doors**

- 13.1 Effective fire doors are essential to ensure that occupants can evacuate a burning building quickly and safely, avoiding potentially fatal consequences. Escape routes in buildings require significant protection and fire doors are probably the single most important element in giving occupants time to safely evacuate a building.
- 13.2 A fire door is not just the door leaf, it is a complete assembly. It comprises the frame, any glazing, intumescent fire and smoke seals and all the ironmongery that is used on the door, such as hinges, door closers, latches, locks, letter plates and spy holes.

The role of a Fire Door is to:

- To restrict the initial development of a fire – A correctly fitted and functioning fire-resisting door can help to suppress a fire by restricting the amount of oxygen available to it.
- To restrict the spread of fire – A closed fire-resisting door is designed to endure direct attack by fire for a specified period of time. This should restrict the spread of fire through the building, gaining time for evacuation of the premises and for active fire protection resources such as sprinklers and fire fighters to perform their functions.
- To protect escape routes – The provision of protected escape routes is a requirement of Building Regulations. Any door opening on to an escape route or operating across an escape route is likely to be designated as a fire-resisting door, to ensure that persons using the route have protection from fire while they escape.

The role of a Fire Exit Escape Door is to allow people, in the event of a fire, to escape the building and to reach a place of safety.

- 13.3 All new composite fire door sets (FD30s) will meet bi-directional UKAS testing initiated by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). All new fire doors will also comply to BS 476 Part 22 or BS EN 1634 and the appropriate certification provided.
- 13.4 All new doors will be installed and subsequent repairs will be completed by third party accredited installers who can evidence competence to ensure the doors are fitted to manufacturer's instructions.
- 13.5 Existing communal and flat entrance doors will be visually inspected during Fire Risk Assessments to ensure the door set including door closer do not show signs of wear or damage which may affect its fire integrity. Doors that need replacing will be highlighted to the

Surveyor (Compliance & Projects), who will instruct a replacement to be installed following the above requirements for new fire doors.

## **14. Fire Fighting Equipment**

14.1 Fire extinguishers located in GBC buildings are serviced by a competent engineer via Kent County Council (KCC) on an annual basis under BS 5306-3. The service procedure involves a thorough check of the fire extinguisher for corrosion and partial or complete discharge.

The engineer will:

- Visually inspect the fire extinguisher for corrosion and damage.
- Check that the extinguisher has not been used, by checking the following:
  - Safety pin and tamper seal are in place.
  - Pressure gauge reading (indicating needle should be in the green area. This is not applicable for CO2 fire extinguishers)
- Check that the operating instructions on the extinguisher are clear and legible.
- Remove the discharge hose and check for blockages and corrosion.
  - Once the discharge hose has been removed replace the 'O' ring.
- Weigh the extinguisher and record on the service label.
  - If there is more than a 10% weight loss, investigate and recharge.
- Wipe down the extinguisher.
- Ensure that the wall mountings are secure and in good condition before replacing the appliance back on the wall.

14.2 Fire hose reels are also serviced by a competent engineer via Kent County Council (KCC) on an annual basis under BS 5306 -1. The hose reels are fully unwound and subjected to normal operating pressure. The integrity of the drum gland nuts and internal operating valve are checked, together with the condition of the hose and valves/nozzles. After the service, the pressure is released and the hose reel is rewound.

## **15. Automatic Opening Vent Systems (AOVs)**

15.1 Automatic Opening Vent systems are incorporated in to the original design of some of GBC's HRRBs. AOV systems are used mainly to control the ventilation of smoke in a fire. When a detector or call point is triggered an AOV system will open actuators, windows or vents to create ventilation. This clears smoke for people leaving the building and vents smoke out of the area that has been triggered.

15.2 DSO Building Management engages competent engineers to maintain and service the equipment on an annual basis. Where a window replacement programme is identified for a HRRB, a specialist consultant is engaged to provide a specification and guidance to ensure the new AOV system is fit for purpose.

## **16. Gas and Electrical Safety Checks**

16.1 Gravesham Borough Council (GBC) has a duty of care to its tenants to ensure that no tenant's health and safety is put at risk through the use of its gas appliances and installations. The Council also has a responsibility under the Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 which require landlords to adequately and competently install, maintain and service all

gas installations, appliances, flues and installation pipe work under their liability, specifically installations within its Housing stock.

- 16.2 A gas explosion and fire can occur when there is a gas leak combined with an ignition source. DSO Building Management's Gas Servicing and Maintenance Provider will perform an annual gas safety check on all GBC owned gas appliances and relevant flues/chimneys. A tightness test will be carried out on the gas carcass and an inspection of the pipework.
- 16.3 All electrical installations deteriorate with age and use. Therefore a Periodic Electrical Inspection is carried out every five years on all properties to check whether they are in a satisfactory condition for continued use. The inspection will identify (in order of priority) any deficiencies and remedial works needed to rectify the faults, thereby reducing the risk of fire from electrical installations.
- 16.4 In addition all communal areas and offices where portable electrical appliances are provided, regular checks and testing will be carried out in line with the Portable Appliance Testing procedure by Housing Management.
- 16.5 Residents are provided with safety information leaflets advising on good practice and how to protect themselves from the dangers of gas, electricity and using out dated or poorly maintained appliances to reduce the risk of possible fire and explosion.

## **17. Emergency Evacuation Procedure**

### **17.1 General Accommodation**

All general needs accommodation has Fire Action Notices affixed where appropriate providing information and evacuation advice on discovery or suspicion of a fire. The evacuation advice in the notice is based on the recommendations of the Fire Risk Assessment.

If a fire occurs in a common area, any persons in that area should leave the building and call the emergency services. The remainder of the building's occupants should follow Housing Managements' Evacuation Plan for their building unless directed to leave by the Fire Service.

### **17.2 Sheltered Accommodation**

Every sheltered housing scheme has an evacuation plan which details how the building will be evacuated in the event of a fire.

In line with guidance, in some schemes it may be decided that the least risk to a resident with particular needs is to stay in their property in the event of a fire. This will be established by an Individual risk assessment being carried out by the Scheme Officer.

Escape routes identified should be:

- Suitable
- Easily, safely and immediately usable at all times.
- Adequate for the number of people likely to use them.
- Usable without passing through doors requiring a key or code to unlock.
- Free from any obstructions, slip or trip hazards.
- Well-lit by normal or emergency escape lighting and signage provided.
- Available for access by emergency services.

Effective management arrangements need to be put in place for those who need help to escape, including:

- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans as needed.
- Refuge points.
- Ensuring there are adequate escape routes adapted for use by disabled persons.
- Consideration of the need for specialist evacuation equipment.
- Appropriate staffing levels.

Evacuation plans should be tested by carrying out a practice evacuation annually (or more frequently if judged necessary), and whenever the evacuation plan changes.

## **18. Performance and Monitoring**

- 18.1 Monthly contract meetings between DSO Building Management and Contractors will form the basis for measuring performance and maintain a high standard of service. The Contractor will provide full details of recorded key performance indicators against targets for specified servicing, maintenance and refurbishment programmes, as stated in their contract.
- 18.2 The Contractor will provide an effective monitoring system of Health and Safety incidents and measures to address causes during all contractual activities. GBC's Compliance and CDM Officer will carry out random Health and Safety Inspections on a range of servicing, maintenance and refurbishment work activities. Health and Safety inspection reports will be provided and reviewed at contract meetings.
- 18.3 To improve compliancy and further reduce risk, DSO Building Management and stakeholders will resolve access issues for servicing and maintenance through regular communication and meetings.
- 18.4 Residents who are dissatisfied by the service provided are able to complain in accordance with GBC's complaints procedure. A copy of the Complaints Policy and Procedure is available upon request or via the GBC website.

## **19. Competencies and Training**

- 19.1 All DSO Building Management staff will receive training appropriate to their duties under the RRFSO.

In addition, further training is provided by Housing Management to staff with responsibilities for fire safety in any premises, including:

- Those with delegated responsibility for fire safety including Sheltered Housing Scheme Officers, Estate Management Caretakers and Housing Officers.
- Fire Wardens
- Those with responsibility for carrying out site visits and inspections.

Training for those with responsibility for fire safety should be provided by those who are qualified and suitably competent (as defined in the RRFSO).

- 19.2 Fire Risk Assessments will be carried out by persons who can evidence competency by having the knowledge, qualifications, experience to carry out the role and be a member of a recognised professional or certificated body. Regardless of who carries out the fire risk



assessment the Duty Holder retains the responsibility for ensuring the adequacy of that assessment.

- 19.3 DSO Building Management will validate competency of all Contractors carrying out installation, servicing and maintenance work to all fire detection, protection and suppression systems.

## Appendix 1 – Legislation/Guidance

### Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (HASAWA)

There are two sections of the Health and Safety at Work, etc. Act 1974 particularly relevant to this policy:

- *Section 2 (1)*  
*“It shall be the duty of every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all his employees.”*  
This is supported by specific reference to maintaining the workplace in a condition such that it is safe, and does not put employees at risk.
- *Section 3 (1)*  
*“It shall be the duty of every employer to conduct his undertaking in such a way so as to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, that persons not in his employment, who may be affected thereby, are not thereby exposed to risks to their health or safety”*

Gravesham Borough Council, in the context of this policy therefore, shall (so far as is reasonably practicable) ensure its housing stock and third parties or premises (its business activity) does not cause harm to its tenants.

### Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

In general terms, Gravesham Borough Council must:

- Assess the risk to Health and Safety of all employees and to anyone who may be affected as a result of work undertaken.
- Endeavour to provide comprehensive information, instruction, training and supervision with the aim of ensuring, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of every employee or person so affected.
- Assess the risk of all work activities.

- Record risk assessments on their database
- For any new work activity, risk assessments should be carried out by the appropriate party but in all cases the assessments are to be held jointly and reviewed annually for any changes in legislation.
- Have a competent person to advise in respect of these regulations such as a Health and Safety Advisor.

#### Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmosphere Regulations 2002 (DSEAR)

DSEAR provides for the protection against risks from fire, explosion and similar events arising from dangerous substances used or present in the workplace, and sets minimum requirements for the protection of workers from fire and explosion risks related to dangerous substances and potentially explosive atmospheres.

DSEAR is concerned with the harmful physical effects from thermal radiation (burns), over-pressure effects (blast injuries) and oxygen depletion effects (asphyxiation) arising from fire or explosions.

#### The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER)

The Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations (PUWER) place a duty on employers to ensure the work equipment they own, operate, and have control over is safe to use at all times.

In practice, PUWER regulations require employers to:

- Ensure all work equipment is maintained in good condition and efficient working order.
- Keep an up-to-date maintenance log for each work equipment.
- Ensure that all people operating work equipment on-site are provided with adequate levels of training regarding the correct use of the equipment as well as clear and detailed health and safety information.
- Take all necessary measures to prevent or control any risks associated with the operation of work equipment.

#### LGA's Fire Safety in Purpose-Built Blocks of Flats

This guide aims to ensure adequate fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats. It offers practical advice on how to assess the risk from fire and how to manage fire safety in such buildings. The document also includes case studies based on the commonly found issues in blocks of flats, with suggested fire safety solutions.

The guide will help landlords, managing agents, enforcing officers and those undertaking fire risk assessments to understand the legislative requirements relating to blocks of flats and to apply them in a consistent and reasonable manner

This guide is particularly aimed at those who manage, give advice on and enforce standards in purpose-built blocks of flats. This includes those undertaking fire risk assessments of such buildings by social housing providers.

## LACoRS' Guidance on Fire Safety Provisions

The guidance has been developed by LACoRS in conjunction with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) and the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA). Officials in Communities and Local Government (CLG) have also provided considerable technical support.

The guidance applies nationally and covers certain existing residential accommodation including single family dwellings, shared houses, bedsits and flats. It is not aimed at new housing built to modern Building Regulations.

The guidance adopts a risk based approach to fire safety that will satisfy both the Housing Act 2004 and the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. It includes guidance to landlords on how to carry out a fire risk assessment.

The guidance is equally relevant to landlords, managing agents, local councils and fire and rescue authorities. The guidance applies to both the private and social housing sectors

## Building Regulations Approved Document B

This part is split into a number of sections to cover fire safety related matters within and around buildings other than dwelling houses. This includes: the satisfactory means of giving warning and means of escape in case of fire; stopping the spread of fire over internal and external linings; ensuring the stability of buildings in the event of a fire; and to ensure satisfactory access for fire appliances to buildings and facilities within buildings other than dwelling houses.

## Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998

The regulations cover requirements for the safe installation and maintenance of gas appliances, flues, meters and pipework etc. Landlords and letting agents should be aware both of the general provisions in the Regulations (e.g. concerning installation of all new gas pipework and appliances) as well as specific provisions relating to rented property.

## Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 1994

The Regulations require all electrical equipment to be safe including protection against risks of death or injury to humans or domestic animals and damage to property. Electrical equipment must satisfy the requirements of the Regulations, have "CE marking" affixed to it, or its packaging and information sheet etc. A written declaration of conformity containing specified information and certain technical information must be compiled and kept available for 10 years after manufacture of that particular equipment has ceased.

## Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1998

The Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988 are UK law and are designed to

ensure that upholstery components and composites used for furniture supplied in the UK meet specified ignition resistance levels and are suitable labelled. There are six main elements contained within the Regulations:

- Filling materials must meet specified ignition requirements
- Upholstery composites must be cigarette resistant
- Covers must be match resistant
- A permanent label must be fitted to every item of new furniture
- A display label must be fitted to every item of new furniture at the point of sale
- The first supplier of domestic upholstered furniture in the UK must maintain records for five years to prove compliance.

#### The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007

Under The Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 companies and organisations can be found guilty of corporate manslaughter as a result of serious management failures resulting in a gross breach of a duty of care.

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