

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet

Date of Meeting:	17 th September
Report of:	Caroline Simpson
Subject/Title:	Notice of Motion - Fire Sprinklers
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Peter Raynes, Finance

1.0 Report Summary

- 1.1 To consider a Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Jacqueline Weatherill at the meeting of full Council held on 18 July 2013. The Notice of Motion stated that:

“The Council recognises the consequences of fire and the benefits of fitting fire sprinklers in properties.

The Council welcomes the decision of Cheshire Fire Authority to assist social landlords by part-funding the retro-fitting of sprinklers in some high-rise buildings.

The Council urges social landlords to complete a programme of sprinkler retro-fitting to all of their high-rise buildings and to act as advocates for the fitting of sprinklers.

The Council instructs its officers to use whatever powers are available to it to secure the fitting of sprinklers by others, where necessary changing Council's own policies and its approach to implementation.

The Council instructs its officers to investigate the fitting of sprinklers in Council-owned properties.

The Council calls on the Secretary of State to legislate for sprinklers as a requirement in all new residential buildings.”

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that

1. the Council lobby local Members of Parliament to promote any change to the Building Regulations to consider further the inclusion of sprinklers within new or adapted buildings;
2. consideration be given to the implementation of sprinklers for all new Council-owned development subject to risk and cost; and

3. consideration be given to suitable fire protection measures in areas of higher risk, for example residential care homes.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 It has been recognised for a number of years that the inclusion of sprinklers in the design of a building enhances safety.
- 3.2 It is considered that the current legislative requirements remain robust and fit for purpose within Cheshire East, and any changes to local policy should be based on assessment of risk linked to cost.

4.0 Wards Affected

- 4.1 All wards are affected by the Notice of Motion.

5.0 Local Ward Members

- 5.1 All Local Ward Members are affected by the Notice of Motion.

6.0 Policy Implications

- 6.1 No implication.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 Until such time as it is determined that, following a suitable risk assessment to assess the costs vs benefit of such installations, to either new build or existing Council owned property no costs will be incurred. However, should such a risk assessment determine that the fitting of sprinklers will be beneficial; the cost implication will be reported as part of the project business case and considered as a part of the future business planning process.

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 Should it be determined that sprinklers should be installed as part of a new build or refurbishment of an existing building, then all works should be carried out under a compliant contract either as part of or in addition to the contract for new construction works or as part of a compliant procurement process to supply and install sprinklers in existing buildings (which process will depend on the scope and value of the works to be carried out).
- 8.2 Currently there is no legislation which enables the council to require sprinklers to be fitted in buildings owned by others, however the council can use its influence and policies to encourage fitting as best practice.

9.0 Risk Management

- 9.1 For Council owned properties a suitable risk assessment should be carried out as to the benefit of such installations together with associated costs, whenever that building is altered or extended.
- 9.2 With regard to any new build for the Authority, a similar risk assessment should be carried out to determine the necessity and cost of inclusion of sprinklers.

10.0 Background and Options

- 10.1 Changes to legislation have brought about a flexible approach to building design which allows the incorporation of both active and passive fire measures within buildings to enable the designers to have more freedom of expression in design.
- 10.2 Currently where a person proposes to build a new property or extend/make alterations to an existing property the "Building Regulations 2012" make specific requirements relating to fire safety and encompass all elements of fire safety, combining both active and passive measures to achieve a satisfactory resolution.
- 10.3 The Building Regulations are intended to ensure that a reasonable standard of life safety is provided in the case of fire and does so through the assessment of the buildings use, construction and location.
- 10.4 Where buildings exceed specific dimensions of floor area, height etc sprinklers are currently specified and where a developer wishes to include the provision of sprinklers together with the applicable requirements of passive fire resistance, this will add to the safety of the building.
- 10.5 There are many stakeholders involved in the use of a building and the Building Regulations only consider "life safety", and does not provide protection for property. Protection of property including the building itself often requires additional measures and insurers will in general seek their own higher standards before accepting the insurance risk.
- 10.6 An example of higher requirements relates to Schools and the associated guidance given within Building Bulletin (100) which requires that a risk assessment be undertaken to decide what physical fire precautions and management arrangements are necessary to ensure the safety of people in premises if a fire is started. This assessment also takes into account the number of recent arson attacks on that particular school.
- 10.7 The recent publication issued by the Cheshire Fire Authority supporting the installation of Sprinklers believes that sprinklers can make a major contribution to improving public safety and limiting the impact of fires

on business and local communities, and this cannot be argued with, however this statement should be taken within the context of Cheshire East and not that of a national picture.

- 10.8 Figures provided within the literature refer to 380 fire related deaths in 2011-12 and are national statistics where as the number for Cheshire East is significantly lower with the following statistics provided by the Fire Authority

Deaths from Domestic Fires where no sprinklers have been fitted in;

2011/12 – 3

2012/13 – 0

- 10.9 National figures suggest that 70% of housing stock which will be inhabited by 2050 already exists.
- 10.10 Building Regulations remain a national requirement and are not always administered by the local authority which may result in alternative solutions within the same geographical area being implemented.
- 10.11 To improve life safety within Cheshire East support should continue in the promotion of the use of sprinklers, including building on close working relationships with the Fire Authority, in addition to the lobbying of Government for the inclusion within the requirements of the Building Regulations.
- 10.12 Should the motion intend to include property protection of personal property then a greater number of stakeholders should be included who have responsibility for property assets, ensuring they work together with the Council where possible.
- 10.13 For Council owned properties a suitable risk assessment should be carried out as to the benefit of such installations together with associated costs, whenever that building is altered or extended.
- 10.14 Where sprinklers are considered necessary as part of a fire fighting regime this too, should be included within appropriate legislation.

11.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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