

Committee: COMMUNITY

Agenda Item

Date: June 8, 2006

5

Title: SMOKE DETECTORS IN COUNCIL
DWELLINGS

Author: Russell Goodey, Building Services Manager Item for decision
(01799 510526)

Summary

This report is presented to the Committee, following concerns raised by some Members following a fire that took place in a Council dwelling in Takely a few weeks ago.

Recommendations

- That officers highlight the horror of fire and the Council's policy on the provision of smoke detectors in the next newsletter to tenants.
- That officers carry out an assessment on the impact of the provision of mains operated smoke detectors being installed into all general needs housing on the Planned Maintenance Programme from 2007/8 onwards.

Background Papers

The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

- Planned Maintenance Programme 2006/7.

Impact

Communication/Consultation	There is a need to advise tenants of the Council's policy regarding smoke detectors on a regular basis.
Community Safety	The prevention of fire is a significant factor within communities.
Equalities	N/A
Finance	A significant resource will be needed that will impact on the Planned Maintenance Programme for the Council's stock.
Human Rights	N/A
Legal Implications	N/A

Ward-specific impacts	All of the district
Workforce/Workplace	Would impact on the work of the Building Services section.

Situation

1. It is current Council policy that all the Council's sheltered and elderly person accommodation have both mains and battery operated smoke detectors installed which are maintained by the Council. It is felt that this group of tenants need this facility as they may not for a variety of reasons, be able to adequately make suitable arrangements for themselves.
2. With regard to general needs accommodation the Council provides either Fire Angel smoke detectors or Lithium Long Life battery detectors. Offices have promoted the availability of this service by word of mouth i.e. via the Tenant Newsletter. Whenever a property becomes empty for re-letting, this issue is highlighted by Repairs staff. It is estimated that some 85% of tenants in general need accommodation have these detectors fitted. The Council's policy on this issue is not in breach of any regulation.
3. A few weeks ago a mother and her 2 children were rendered homeless from their Council dwelling in Takely due to fire. The Council took all the required action necessary to assist the family in accordance with its statutory duty. It was ascertained that the dwelling did not have a smoke detector in the house. In different circumstances, the outcome could have been fatal. It would appear that the tenant did not take up the offer of a smoke detector being made available to her. Accordingly Members have requested an opportunity to discuss this policy.
4. If the Council were to install mains operated smoke detectors there would be the initial cost of £100,000, plus ongoing regular maintenance costs of £17,000.
5. Any cost in this context would impact on the Council's Planned Maintenance Programme and in the short term achieving the Decent Homes Standard by next year.
6. It is however accepted that this may be an opportune time for the Council to address whether or not this facility needs to be provided ultimately across all the Council's housing stock. To do this would mean a slowdown in other programmes of work from 2007 onwards.
7. A way forward could be as follows:-
 - (a) Fire Angel/Lithium smoke detectors to be automatically provided at all general needs new lettings.

- (b) That the whole issue of the horror of fire in the home and the Council's policy of free provision of smoke detectors is a main feature in the next tenant newsletter.
- (c) That officers assess the implications on the Planned Maintenance Programme for 2007/8 onwards should Members later in the year wish the provision of mains operated smoke detectors to be provided, in due course, in all of the Council's housing stock.

Targets

- 8. What I am aiming to achieve is to provide tenants with the facility or the opportunity to ensure that the threat of smoke is detected quickly within their homes.

Options

- 9. Carry on with the existing policy but increase the publicity surrounding the whole issue.
- 10. Consider including the provision of mains operated smoke detectors into all general needs properties for all future Planned Maintenance Programmes from 2007/8 onwards.

Risk Analysis

- 11. The following have been assessed as the potential risks associated with this issue.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Actions
All tenants do not have a suitable smoke detector in their home.	High	Medium	Council can increase publicity and is prepared to make available a smoke detector to all tenants.