

Petition 1719 - Review of fire safety stay-put policy

Re: Committee Meeting 8/01/2020

1. The Grenfell tragedy caused alarm and anxiety, not just in residents but also in those people and agencies responsible for fire safety in high rise buildings. Actions in direct response include the Scottish Government launching a public consultation about fire safety in high rises inviting, in particular, the views of residents; SFRS launching new guidance including a leaflet for residents which no longer claims that high rises are almost fire-proof and Housing Associations upgrading dry risers, installing sprinklers in bin rooms and introducing good housekeeping rules regarding, for instance, the storage of furniture or other items in common areas for any reason. This petition was submitted in February 2019 and became public, May 2019.

2. The stay-put policy has been in operation since 1960s; however, over the last 20 years or so various alterations that include refurbishment and the addition of cladding to external walls have altered the status of high rise buildings. Measures of the policy's efficiency, when confined to this period, show lives lost in fires in Irvine, 1999; Gorbals, Glasgow, 2009 and in London, Lakanal House, 2009 and Grenfell Tower, 2017.

3. The Scottish Government's Practical Fire Safety Guidance for Existing High Rise Domestic Buildings, December 2019, states the necessity for smoke detection in escape routes (S30) and also for cladding that is able to resist fire spread (S28). The lack of such smoke detection was referred to in the Petitioner's Submission, September, 2019, and Professor Torero's advice that, even if consisting of non-combustible materials, cladding will conduct fire from floor to floor was referred to in Additional Comments, December 2019.

4. There is no suggestion whatsoever anywhere in the petition that the stay-put policy should be stopped: rather it is argued that it should be expanded or extended to include an evacuation strategy (as opposed to the either/or suggestion in SS21–23 of the Practical Guidance referred to above) in recognition that unforeseen or unforeseeable problems may arise leading to the fast spread of fire and smoke and a need for evacuation. Given the errors of Grenfell, it is further argued that this decision should not be left to the discretion or the on-the-spot judgement of any

individual. In support of this argument, and for the Committee's convenience, below is a 'copied and pasted' extract of the recommendation from the Grenfell Inquiry. These recommendations are neither interim nor dependent on the outcome of Phase 2.

Evacuation

There were no plans to evacuate Grenfell Tower available. Sir Martin Moore-Bick, chair of the Grenfell Inquiry, recommended:

- The development of national guidelines for carrying out partial or total evacuations of high-rise buildings – including protecting fire access routes and procedures for evacuating people who require assistance
- Fire services develop policies for partial or total evacuation of high rises
- Owner and manager be required to draw up and keep under review evacuation plans, with copies provided to local fire and rescue services and placed in an information box on the premises
- All high-rise buildings be equipped with facilities to enable the sending of an evacuation signal to the whole or a selected part of the building
- Owners and managers be required by law to prepare personal evacuation plans for residents who may struggle to do so personally, with information about them stored in the premise's information box
- All fire services be equipped with smoke hoods to help evacuate residents down smoke-filled stairs

With respect,

Rachel Gibson, on behalf of tenants Cartcraigs Road, Glasgow

NB. I am not aware of any issues with fire doors.