

Sprinkler Installation in High Rise Blocks

This briefing is to update Area panels on the works we have been doing on the proposed installation of residential sprinklers to high rise blocks and to explain the next steps.

We have included the responses to our consultation exercise from both Essex Place and St James's House.

Following the adoption of recommendations made to committee for a joint funded project with ESFRS at St James's House and Essex Place we have been going through a process of consultation and procurement.

The consultation has included:

- Letters to all residents at each block;
- A fact sheet including frequently asked questions;
- A public meeting attended by ESFRS and council representatives held at each block;
- A statutory consultation process with leaseholders in each block;
- A door to door survey of each block.

Having received feedback from the first round of consultation we have gone back to the potential supplier and made changes to improve the appearance of the pipework boxing in the common way and added in further control measures in the system to improve the identification of an activation.

Although meetings were well attended we are keen to ensure that we have provided as many residents as possible with the opportunity to comment and therefore we have undertaken a door to door survey to establish the opinion within the two blocks for our proposal. If residents were out when we called we left a form for them to complete and leave in ballot boxes placed in the entrances of each block.

The door to door survey provided the greatest number of responses of any of the methods of resident engagement. All flats were included in the door to door regardless of ownership. The survey asked if residents supported the proposal to install sprinklers in both flats and the common way. If residents indicated they did not we also asked if their lack of support was due to cost, appearance or concerns over leaks.

- In St James's House 61% (74 flats) of residents provided answers to our question of those 50% (37 flats) support the proposal to fit a complete system.
- At Essex Place 46% (59 flats) of residents responded to our question of those 38% (23 flats) support the proposal to fit a complete system.

The greatest concern expressed by residents was the appearance of the system in their flats closely followed by the fear of leaks. Cost was less of a concern but that was to be expected as only leaseholders would be asked for a financial contribution.

Although many residents did not support the instillation of a system in their flat they did support a system in the common ways.

In light of these results and recognising the Committees wish that residents support the scheme we have reviewed our proposal and intend to offer a hybrid instillation. This will be communicated to residents both by letter and at resident meetings to be held at each block.

- A full sprinkler instillation in the common parts and ancillary rooms such as bin stores laundry rooms etc.
- Each resident will be offered a full sprinkler instillation in their flat.
- Residents who do not wish to take up this offer will be asked to accept a single sprinkler head close to the flat entrance door. This is intended to protect the common escape routes and contain a fire within the flat of origin.

Once we have completed the consultation process with St James's House and Essex Place residents we propose to start engagement with residents at Theobald House, Nettleton Court and Dudeney Lodge.

The current scheme of co funding with East Sussex Fire and Rescue will not be extended past the installations at Essex Place and St James's House. The funding was provide to set up this pilot scheme and ESFR are keen to use their funding to influence other landlords and block owners to introduce schemes such as ours. They continue to support our aims for the instillation of sprinkler systems across our estate of High Rise residential accommodation and will continue to attend public meetings and consultations.