

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Resources and Performance
Date September 2025



GRENFELL INQUIRY PHASE 2 UPDATE REPORT

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NON-KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide an update to Cabinet on the Council's response to the public inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire. The public inquiry concluded in September 2024 with the publication of the phase 2 report.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Cabinet acknowledges the action being taken by the Council to strengthen its resilience position, including working in partnership with other Hertfordshire Local Authorities and other Category One Responders to ensure that emergency and business continuity plans across the county are current and robust.
- 2.2 That Cabinet backs a comprehensive review of reception centres and support for individuals that may be impacted by local incidents. This review will incorporate the introduction of digital processes to improve information capture and situational awareness and will explore ways to strengthen regional coordination during emergencies.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Grenfell Public Inquiry report makes a series of recommendations, covering a wide range of organisations including regulators, emergency services, the construction industry, local authorities and social housing providers.
- 3.2 The full report is around 1,700 pages with a more accessible overview paper (Background Document 1) containing the key findings and recommendations. Phase 1 of the report made 46 recommendations which as had a significant influence on both the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2024 and the Building Safety Act 2022. Phase 2 of the report has 58 recommendations. Annex 1 to this paper provides a summary of the recommendations within the phase 2 report that have implications and recommendations for local authorities and social housing providers.
- 3.3 The report made significant criticism of the speed and quality of the emergency response from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and concluded that their emergency planning arrangements and their capacity to respond to a major incident were inadequate. The report stated that:
- In the first week after the fire at Grenfell Tower the response of the government and RBKC was muddled, slow, indecisive and piecemeal.
 - Certain aspects of the response demonstrated a marked lack of respect for human decency and dignity and left many of those immediately affected feeling abandoned by authority and utterly helpless.
 - The response to the disaster was inadequate principally because RBKC did not have an effective plan to deal with the displacement of a large number of people from their homes
 - RBKC emergency planning and staff training and capacity were well below the level required for such an event
 - RBKC made little use of local community or community groups in the response. In particular, the report states “Those who emerge from the events with the greatest credit, and whose contribution only emphasised the inadequacies of the official response, are the members of the local community.
- 3.4 The Grenfell report recommendations relating to emergency planning are relevant to all local authorities. Although resource pressures on local government are a factor, the costs and risks of not properly preparing for a major emergency, both for the council, its partners and the local community are significant.
- 3.5 On the 26th of February 2025 the Government published its formal response to phase 2 of the inquiry’s recommendations. The Government accepted all of the inquiries findings and responded with its intended course of action for each of the recommendations. This provides clarity on the how the Government’s plans to respond to the inquiries findings and there will be further updates or guidance that will confirm the most suitable course of action.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 Stevenage Borough Council is both a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and a Registered Social Landlord. The inquiry report makes significant recommendations that relate to both of these functions of the Council.

Building Safety

- 4.2 The Council's Executive in 2021 agreed a response plan following publication of the Phase 1 report in 2019. Most of the relevant Phase 1 recommendations have now been completed by the Council. These principally relate to the Council's Building Safety and Property Management Service and the fire safety arrangements in place for the Council's tower blocks. The recommendations were assigned into 19 workstreams, 12 workstreams are completed whilst the remaining 7 workstreams are progressing with current mitigation arrangements in place as required.
- 4.3 While the Grenfell Phase 2 report includes several recommendations that are primarily directed at the construction industry and its regulatory framework, these remain relevant to the Council due to our role as a housing provider and commissioner of new developments. The recommendations focus on improving regulatory oversight, strengthening fire safety design and testing processes, and enhancing accountability within the construction sector. Key themes include the need for clearer statutory guidance, more robust fire safety strategies, improved testing of external wall systems, and greater responsibility placed on designers and contractors to ensure buildings meet safety standards.
- 4.4 Although these recommendations do not require direct action from the Council at this stage, they have been considered in our updated self-assessment (see Annex 1). We will continue to monitor developments in these areas, particularly in relation to the Building Safety Act 2022 and any future legislative or regulatory changes that may impact our commissioning practices. This approach ensures that we remain aligned with national expectations and are prepared to respond appropriately should any of these sector-specific recommendations translate into obligations for housing providers or commissioning authorities.

Emergency Planning

- 4.5 The Phase 2 report includes ten new recommendations relevant to the Council's role as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. These recommendations focus on strengthening local authority preparedness, improving training and coordination, and ensuring effective support for individuals affected by emergencies.
- 4.6 Currently, the Council does have emergency plans in place and has responded well to previous emergencies in the borough.
- 4.7 The Council is an active partner in the Hertfordshire Local Resilience Forum and joint work arrangements across the county are well established. A cross Hertfordshire local authority working group has been established to review the recommendations and work through these and to share best practice. A

summary of the key findings of this self-assessment and associated actions can be seen below:

- 4.8 The below table shows a summary of the resilience recommendations. This starts at recommendation 47 due to the previous 46 recommendations not requiring direct actions. In the attached table we have extracted all the relevant actions so these can be monitored as they are progressed.

Workstream Description	Status	Current Position	Next Action
Recommendation 47: Adoption of national standards for emergency training and independent auditing.	In Progress	Training matrix developed; gold/silver training delivered to SLT and 4th tier. Emergency awareness training planned for all staff.	Align training matrix with National Qualifications Framework once published.
Recommendation 48: Independent verification of training quality and frequency.	Awaiting Guidance	Awaiting government update.	Review and align with updated National Resilience Standards once released.
Recommendation 49: Embed resilience responsibilities across all staff levels.	In Progress	Covered under Recommendation 47.	Continue rollout of awareness training.
Recommendation 50: Improve systems for recording displaced persons' information.	Planned	Reception centre review scheduled; digital processes to be introduced.	Align with forthcoming government guidance.
Recommendation 51: Ensure access to temporary accommodation that meets personal, religious, and cultural needs.	Ongoing	Existing processes in place using hotels, temporary units, and general needs stock.	Strengthen links with neighbouring districts to share accommodation availability and contacts.
Recommendation 52: Provide immediate financial assistance during emergencies.	Awaiting guidance	Countywide working group reviewing options.	Await government guidance and integrate into local plans.

Workstream Description	Status	Current Position	Next Action
Recommendation 53: Plan for key worker availability and continuity of support.	Awaiting guidance	Emergency and Business Continuity Plans in place.	Maintain and review plans regularly.
Recommendation 54: Ensure communication with those needing assistance in appropriate formats and languages.	Awaiting guidance	Existing communication plans in place.	Review as part of reception centre project.
Recommendation 55: Use modern communication methods to inform the public during emergencies.	Awaiting guidance	Covered under Recommendation 54.	Review and update communication tools and channels.

- 4.9 The more detailed assessment can be seen in annex 1 which also includes the actions from the phase 1 inquiry. These continue to be worked on and monitored through to completion. They are also monitored due to the continuing updates that are still being made in relation to building safety. This includes the potential review of the thresholds for buildings in-scope for the building safety act, most notably the potential lowering of the height threshold down to buildings over 11m versus the current limit of 18m.
- 4.10 Alongside the countywide response the Council has undertaken several internal actions, with further work planned to implement the recommendations from the report.
- 4.11 The recommended actions are designed to ensure the Council remains compliant with evolving national policy and guidance on emergency preparedness and resilience. Taking a proactive approach will help maintain a high standard of preparedness and ensure that staff at all levels are equipped with the knowledge and skills required to respond effectively to emergencies.
- 4.12 The planned review of reception centres and support for individuals reflects the need to modernise and streamline our potential response in line with emerging best practices. By incorporating digital processes and improving data capture, the Council can enhance its ability to manage incidents efficiently and provide timely support to affected individuals. Collaboration with neighbouring districts on accommodation availability and key contacts will also strengthen regional resilience and improve coordination during large-scale or cross-boundary incidents.

- 4.13 While individually these may be small changes collectively, they represent a significant strengthening of the Council's emergency planning arrangements. This is also combined with wider changes to the governments approach to national resilience where it is prioritising the countries preparedness to a range of risks will mean there is a greater expectation that local authorities have robust and well-integrated emergency response plans and that these are focused on known risks, local populations and suitable means to manage an effective response.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 Currently there is a budget of £5,000 for resilience training and preparedness which will cover the costs to train our staff and purchase any equipment that may be required to incorporate a digital process into our reception centres.

Legal Implications

- 5.2 This report provides Cabinet with a comprehensive summary of the findings of the Grenfell Phase 2 report. The relevant legislation is referred to in the body of the report with revision to the Civil Contingency's Act expected in the near future.

Risk Implications

- 5.3 The Council's corporate risks currently include reference to the need for the Council to be effectively prepared for a major emergency. This report identifies further actions to improve the Council's emergency planning arrangements, and the current mitigations are set out in the councils Emergency Plan and the action plan attached with this report.

Policy Implications

- 5.4 Following a review of the reception centres the council's emergency plan will need to be updated.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.5 The recommendations will require the council to ensure that it has considered the needs of all individuals. As part of the review of reception centres there will be a need to ensure the Council have considered all of the equality and diversity requirements and ensure the councils plans can best accommodate any specific needs.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 1.1 All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:**

BD1 Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report Overview

APPENDICES

- A Annex 1 – updated Self-Assessment – Grenfell Phase 1 and 2 Recommendations