

**Report to the Cabinet**

23 February 2026

**Wards:** All**Introduction of a Serious Incident Policy  
for Neighbourhoods & Housing****Report of the Executive Director of Housing and Communities****Report Status:**

This item is not exempt

Therefore exempt reasons are not applicable

This is a key decision. The matter is in the Forward Plan

0055/25

**1. Purpose of the Report and Summary**

- 1.1 Following a leak at a block of high-rise flats in November 2024, Neighbourhoods & Housing Service (N&H) recognised the need to develop its Policy and Procedures in relation to how it deals with serious incidents in its stock.
- 1.2 At the same time, the Grenfell Tower Phase 2 report and associated recommendations was published in September 2024 that built on the Phase 1 recommendations from January 2020.
- 1.3 The overlap between the lessons learnt from N&Hs response to the high-rise flats leak and the Grenfell Tower Fire Phase 1 and 2 recommendations, provided an opportunity to improve how N&H manage all types of serious incidents.
- 1.4 N&H serious incidents are not limited to a fire in high-rise flats and there is no definition of a serious incident, however, certain events are / can become a serious incident, including:
  - A fire in a terraced block / block of flats
  - An explosion
  - A flood in a block of flats
  - A flood from a river or due to a storm or storm surge
  - An environmental issue that impacts air quality
  - The need to evacuate a property, properties in an emergency
- 1.5 Similarly, Hull City Council / the Humber Emergency Forum does not have a definition for a major incident however some N&H serious incidents have a greater potential to

become a Hull City Council / Humber Emergency Forum major incident due to the type of property and the number of people involved.

- 1.6 Due to the potential for a N&H serious incident to become a major incident and with reference to the Grenfell Tower Phase 1 and 2 reports, the N&H Serious Incident Policy attached to this report, has been developed and it is proposed that it is approved and adopted, and that agreement is given for **delegated** authority to be granted to the Executive Director for Housing and Communities in conjunction with the designated Portfolio Holder for future revisions.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 To formally approve / adopt Neighbourhoods and Housing's Serious Incident Policy
- 2.2 To agree that **delegated** authority be granted to the Executive Director for Housing and Communities in conjunction with the designated Portfolio Holder to make future revisions of the N&H Serious Incidents Policy where required for operational efficiency and best practice in delivering services to customers.

## **3. Reasons for Recommendations**

- 3.1 A serious incident in N&H can, on most occasions, be managed within the resources it has at its disposal.
- 3.2 This means that a combination of staff from different disciplines are able to manage the incident effectively, often working with blue light services. One of the lessons learnt from the high-rise flats leak was that greater clarity of staff roles and responsibilities was needed to ensure that each member of staff / cohort of staff can concentrate on the roles and responsibilities and associated tasks allotted to them in the procedures.
- 3.3 Staff involved in serious incidents can differ dependant on the nature of the serious incident, but will always include, property surveyors to, when safe to do so, assess the damage caused by the incident to the property / properties. Staff could also include area and neighbourhoods staff who need to communicate with the effected customers on what is happening and if those effected can stay put. Access and Wellbeing staff will need to be involved to source and allocate temporary accommodation for the effected customers and their families if the property is / properties are uninhabitable.
- 3.4 Other staff who may be involved include anyone who is made aware of a serious incident and who needs to record the details and advise others a serious incident is in progress (most probably Call Centre staff or Housing Facility Officers in high rise flats) and N&H communications staff who may need to work with corporate staff to develop and implement a communications plan. The most significant group of staff who will be involved are N&H's Incident Managers
- 3.5 N&H Incident Managers rely on information and understanding of a serious incident, including who is doing / has done what, to allow them to be assured that the serious incident can be managed within N&H's own resources and therefore they do not need

to advise corporate colleagues that the serious incident is / has the potential to become a major incident.

- 3.6 Conversely, information and understanding of a serious incident allows the Incident Manager to advise corporate colleagues as early as possible that a serious incident that is currently being managed by N&H staff could become or is a major incident. For example, a fire or flood in a block of flats may spread or have the potential to effect more than just the occupants of one house or flat.
- 3.7 It has been agreed that certain types of serious incidents have a greater potential to become major incidents and therefore Incident Managers will advise corporate colleagues of the serious incident automatically. This places other corporate services on standby should their support be needed. This would include the implementation of corporate communications protocols.
- 3.8 These incidents are detailed below

Type of Incident	Fire	Flood	Explosion	Environmental / Biohazard
Type of Property				
Individual property but could affect others	☒	☒	☒	☒
More than one property affected (not High Rise)	☒	☒	☒	☒
More than one property affected (High Rise)	☒	☒	☒	☒

- 3.9 The Serious Incidents Policy and in particular the associated procedures are vital to ensure that there is a systematic process for reporting, managing and learning from serious incidents and that is clear on roles and responsibilities and gives clarity to what is a N&H serious incident and what Incident Managers need to do and when they need to seek support to declare a major incident.
- 3.10 To help embed the Policy and in particular the associated procedures, there will be a training session for key personnel focused on their individual and the collective response to a N&H serious incident and the actions relating to ensuring resident safety in the case of an evacuation.

#### 4. **Key Organisational Impacts**

##### 4.1. Impact on other Executive Committees (including Area Committees) and decision makers:

- 4.1.1 No anticipated impact due to no significant changes in process or procedure at this stage. This is a local N&H process that required updating and amendment to give clarity of roles and responsibilities with regard to lessons learnt and the applicable Grenfell Tower Phase 1 and 2 recommendations.

#### 4.2. Contribution to the delivery of the Community Plan, the Council Plan and/or Area Plans:

4.2.1 This decision supports the following Community Plan ambitions:

Ambition 1: Safe and Welcoming Neighbourhoods

Provide opportunity for community engagement and financial investment that puts residents, their homes and their neighbourhoods first.

#### 4.3. Impact on other key strategies/business plans:

4.3.1 This decision will also support the Neighbourhoods and Housing Business Plan 2021-2026. In particular:

- Promoting and delivering building safety
- Protecting vulnerable residents
- Setting clear service standards and managing customer expectations.
- Communicating effectively
- Embracing new legislation
- Professionalisation of our workforce

#### 4.4. Equalities Impact Information

4.4.1 A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached to this report.

### 5. Consultation

5.1 This Policy is not subject to consultation in and of itself due to the wide range of serious incidents that could occur outlined at 1.4 and 3.8 above, but other Policies that refer to certain serious incidents are being consulted upon, in particular the High-Risk Building Safety Policy.

### 6. Background

6.1 In the aftermath of the severe leak at a block of high-rise flats in mid-November 2024, a number of lessons were learnt highlighting the need to review N&H's Serious Incident Procedures as well as update the associated Policy. The leak at the block of high-rise flats was managed, but not as effectively as it could have been, and it was recognised that the outcome of the serious incident (two people needed to move into temporary accommodation for one night) could have been different if the serious incident type was different and it was colder than it was.

6.2 Lessons learnt included:

- Clearer roles and responsibilities for staff / staff cohorts, including updated flowcharts
- Formalising roles and responsibilities rather than continuing the reliance on an element of staff goodwill
- The need for checklists to ensure all actions are completed within each role that can be used by all staff including Incident Managers

- Having the right mix of on-site and office-based staff undertaking their roles and responsibilities both during and after a serious incident
- Improving communications with those affected and being clear on what is happening and what support can be offered to those affected
- The need to ensure N&H serious incident procedures dovetail with corporate major incident procedures and allow Incident Managers to undertake their role effectively
- Train staff on their roles and responsibilities and what information they need to record on the checklists

6.3 The Grenfell Tower fire on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2017, resulted in seventy-two people losing their lives, the public enquiry that followed produced two reports, Phase 1 and Phase 2.

6.4 Phase 1 recommendations covered a number of relevant areas for N&H such as fire risk assessment, resident safety, communication and engagement and training and awareness.

6.5 Phase 2 recommendations covered the wider role of local authorities in, preparing for emergencies, the role of Local Resilience Forums and action for local authorities generally.

6.6 Phase 1 and 2 recommendations were reviewed to ensure the Serious Incident Policy and associated procedures took account of recommendations.

6.7 The Building Safety Act 2022 came into force 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and introduced duties for the management of fire and building safety in high rise residential buildings.

6.8 The Act places residents at the heart of building safety and introduces standards to ensure the competence of all persons responsible for overseeing, managing, and delivering works in high-rise residential buildings.

6.9 Whilst not all serious incidents will be because of a fire in a high rise residential buildings, the good practice that comes from the Grenfell Tower Phase 1 and Phase 2 recommendations that led to the Act are relevant and built in as appropriate to the Serious Incident Policy and procedures.

## **7. Issues for Consideration**

7.1 N&H needed to review its existing Serious Incident Policy and associated procedures, failure to do so could result in financial and reputational damage to the Council.

## **8. Options and Risk Assessment**

8.1 N&H require a Serious Incident Policy and associated procedures. However, it is important to note that the content of the Policy is based on the existing Policy that has been updated. Existing practices needed to be reviewed and to be formalised in documented procedure. Therefore, there are no known risks in introducing a policy.

## **9. Comments of the Monitoring Officer (Town Clerk)**

9.1 The report and draft policy are noted. The adoption of a clear policy will help to ensure that the Housing Service meets both its legal and regulatory obligations as

well as providing clarity as to roles and responsibilities in the event of a serious incident (SL)

#### **10. Comments of the Section 151 Officer (Director of Finance and Transformation)**

10.1 The Director of Finance and Transformation notes the report. There are no direct financial implications. SC.

#### **11. Comments of the Assistant Director OD & HR and compliance with the Equality Duty**

11.1 The content of the report is noted. There are no staffing or equality issues arising for the council from this decision. KH

#### **12. Comments of Overview and Scrutiny**

12.1 This report will be considered by the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Commission on the 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026. Any comments or recommendations agreed by the Commission, will be submitted to Cabinet for consideration alongside the finalised report. (Sc8984 – AS)

#### **13. Comments of the Portfolio Holder for Economic Renewal, Housing and Organisational Development**

13.1 It's important the Council has plans in place should the unfortunate possibility of a serious incident occur in one of its residential buildings. I support the adoption of this Serious Incidents Policy which puts down on paper the protocols that must be followed and by whom. (PF1062)

Contact Officer: Debbie Akester Telephone No.: 01482 613795

Officer Interests: None

Background Documents: -

- Serious Incidents Policy
- Equality Impact Assessment

## Implications Matrix

**This section must be completed and you must ensure that you have fully considered all potential implications**

This matrix provides a simple check list for the things you need to have considered within your report

If there are no implications please state

I have informed and sought advice from HR, Legal, Finance, Overview and Scrutiny and the Climate Change Advisor and any other key stakeholders i.e. Portfolio Holder, relevant Ward Members etc prior to submitting this report for official comments	No No Implications
I have considered whether this report requests a decision that is outside the Budget and Policy Framework approved by Council	No No Implications
Value for money considerations have been accounted for within the report	No No Implications
The report is approved by the relevant Director/Assistant Director	Yes
I have included any procurement/commercial issues/implications within the report	No No Implications
I have considered the potential media interest in this report and liaised with the Media Team to ensure that they are briefed to respond to media interest.	No No Implications
I have included any equalities and diversity implications within the report and where necessary I have completed an Equalities Impact Assessment and the outcomes are included within the report	Yes
Any Health and Safety implications are included within the report	No No Implications
Any human rights implications are included within the report	No No Implications

I have included any community safety implications and paid regard to Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act within the report	No No Implications
I have liaised with the Climate Change Advisor and any environmental and climate change issues/sustainability implications are included within the report	No No Implications
I have considered how the decision may contribute or impact on culture and heritage within the city.	No No Implications
I have included information about how this report contributes to the Community Plan/ Area priorities within the report	Yes
I have considered the impact on air quality, carried out an appropriate assessment and included any resulting actions or opportunities necessary to improve air quality in the report.	No No Implications