

## **Report to the Cabinet**

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 1 February 2018

## **Report of the Head of Asset Management**

### **Part II**

Electoral Divisions affected:  
All

## **Preliminary Review of the County Council Policy on Fire Suppression Measures in Schools ahead of Government Direction** (Appendix 'A' refers)

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### **Executive Summary**

The current policy on fire suppression measures in schools was agreed by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools in April 2016. It was planned that it would be reviewed in 2021. A preliminary review has however been undertaken due to the recent Grenfell Fire Tragedy and an understanding that Central Government is reviewing national policies and guidance on such systems.

This is deemed to be a Key Decision and the provisions of Standing Order No. 25 have been complied with.

### **Recommendation**

The Cabinet is recommended to approve an amendment to the current policy and consider all future schools Capital building schemes on a case by case basis for the inclusion of fire suppression measures, pending further Government direction following its review of Building Regulations and recommendations for school building design.

### **Background and Advice**

A report setting out a review of fire suppression measures to be implemented in schools was considered at Scrutiny Committee on 8 April 2016. The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools at that time responded to the final report of the Fire Suppression Measures Task Group having consulted with officers and Headteachers with regards to the installation of fire suppression systems in

school buildings. A couple of amendments were requested to be made to the review recommendations by the Cabinet Member which in turn were agreed to be implemented and form the policy.

As outlined in Appendix A, the current policy position can be summarised as:

- All brand new schools developed by LCC have a sprinkler system considered as part of their safety strategy.
- Sprinkler systems are also considered in cases where the capacity of a school will increase by more than 50%. This will relate to new build elements and the existing school. Responsibility for fire suppression systems once installed rests with the schools (subject to any initial remedial works issues).
- All schools under the control of LCC and which do not have a fire suppression system installed shall seek to create a fire retardant space, suitable for their needs as assessed by themselves, which provides a minimum of 2 hours fire resistance.  
All other organisations that are responsible for the provision of school premises within Lancashire shall be encouraged to adopt the same recommendations *as will apply to those schools under the direct control of LCC.*

The Cabinet should note that all Capital building works projects undertaken on schools by the Authority, either complete brand new build, extensions, and/or alterations currently comply with all statutory regulations relating to fire safety.

The Government had begun a period of consultation in 2016 to remove all reference to fire suppression systems being included in school buildings, however, due to the recent Grenfell fire tragedy this was noted to have subsequently been withdrawn and is understood to be under review along with a review of the current Building Regulations. The timescale when this will be completed is unknown.

The Cabinet is recommended to approve an amendment to the current policy to ensure that until the national policy framework is clarified all Capital schools projects consider fire suppression measures on a case by case basis for Cabinet to decide whether or not to include such a system.

Once the Government has completed the review, all recommendations resulting from it will be taken into account and a further review of the County Council's policy on Fire Suppression Measures in schools will be undertaken.

It should be noted that over the last 5 years there have been a total of 8 reported fires in Lancashire schools as follows:

- 2017/18 - 0 fires to date
- 2016/17 – 1 fire (outdoor classroom)
- 2015/16 – 2 fires. (Each settled at less than £10k)

- 2014/15 – 0 fires
- 2013/14 – 5 fires (one of which was Leyland St. Mary's, however no fire suppression system was installed in the new build and not requested by the insurance company )

## **Consultations**

The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) endorses the correct installation of sprinklers systems in newly built and refurbished schools. CFOA has recognised the importance of sprinklers in schools for many years, and believes if sprinklers were considered at the design stage of new build or refurbishment of existing buildings, costs could be kept to a minimum. Each year, 1,300 schools in the UK suffer fires large enough to be attended by Local Authority fire and rescue services.

## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

## **Risk management**

The County Council fully complies with all current Building Regulations when undertaking capital improvement works to its school buildings. This includes all fire safety measures required. The inclusion of fire suppression measures are considered currently taking into account both risk and cost.

## **Financial**

The Education and Skills Funding Agency does not currently provide funding for the inclusion of fire suppression measures in schools capital projects. If a fire suppression system is to be included in any scheme the funding will come from the overall Schools capital funding pot.

## **List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

Exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972. The report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information). It is considered that in all the circumstances of the case the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.