

## £20m investment in Solihull high-rise homes

26 November 2020

**HIGH RISE RESIDENTS in north Solihull** are set to benefit from a £20million investment in their homes. NFA member Solihull Community Housing (SCH), which manages 37 high rise buildings in the borough on behalf of Solihull Council, has announced the installation of sprinklers throughout the entire high-rise housing stock.

In addition to this, almost half the buildings will be having external works to replace spandrel panels in a further move to bring them into line with the very latest building standards.

SCH chief executive Fiona Hughes, said: “We are delighted to be able to share this great news with all our high-rise customers. Their safety and wellbeing is our number one priority.

“Since the Grenfell fire tragedy in 2017, all landlords of high-rise buildings have had to evaluate the best course of action to ensure the safety of customers. Following extensive meetings with our colleagues at Solihull Council, further supported by West Midlands Fire Service, the unanimous decision has now been taken to install sprinklers throughout all our high rises.”

While it is now law for new buildings over 30 metres to be fitted with sprinklers, landlords are not legally obliged to retrofit sprinklers in older buildings. However, an extensive programme of investigative research has led all involved parties to agree that this is the right thing to do in Solihull.

Councillor Ian Courts, Leader of Solihull Council, said: “The safety of our tenants and residents is paramount. Following advice from fire safety experts we have decided as a Council to equip all our high rises with sprinklers to increase fire safety. Although none of our high rises were affected by the problems associated with the Grenfell tragedy, we still feel the installation of sprinklers will provide the reassurance and protection our tenants and residents deserve.”

This work will support SCH’s ongoing commitment to fire safety and complements other key safety protective measures such as fire doors. Sprinklers are now seen as the single most effective method of improving fire safety in high rise buildings. They will detect a fire, suppress it and raise the alarm.

Sprinklers also assist firefighters in carrying out search and rescue operations. Fire safety advisors, and technical and professional experts, are unanimous in supporting the installation of sprinklers in high rises. They are especially important where there are vulnerable residents who would find it difficult to escape in the event of a fire, such as those with mobility problems.

SCH has set up a comprehensive plan for engaging with residents and keeping them informed throughout. They will be kept up to date through the publication of regular special newsletters, social media, website posts and customer liaison officers who will host socially distanced drop-in sessions where it is safe to do so.

“This is exciting news which I’m sure our high-rise residents will welcome,” added the SCH chief executive, Fiona Hughes. “We look forward to working closely with residents as we start this important piece of work that reaffirms our commitment to their safety and wellbeing.”

For more information, contact  
SCH Communications Manager Paul Castles [paulcastles@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:paulcastles@solihull.gov.uk)