

Consultation on Fire and Smoke Alarms in Scottish Homes

Policy Development

Post the Grenfell fire tragedy the Scottish Government has brought forward a consultation document that covering fire and smoke alarms in Scottish homes. For the first time this could result in a cross tenure standard being applied which would include both the social rented and owner occupied sector. There are important questions over the extent of coverage, the timeframes and who meets the costs. The paper is to provide an opportunity to consider these issues and to inform COSLA's response.

Summary and Recommendations

This consultation seeks views on possible changes to standards required and proposes extending the current minimum safety standards in private rented housing to all other tenures.

The Board is invited to:

- i. Note the publication of the consultation on the fire and smoke alarms in Scottish homes; and
- ii. Consider and provide any comments to inform the content of COSLA's response to the consultation appended to this report as Annex A.

References

NONE

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Consultation on Fire and Smoke Alarms in Scottish Homes

Policy Development

1. As board members are aware, following the extensive and tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London, a Ministerial Working Group on Building and Fire Safety was established to review Scotland's building and fire safety regulatory frameworks. As part of this work the Group agreed that the consultation on fire and smoke alarm originally planned for later this year should be brought forward. Scottish Government still intend to consult on other issues affecting housing tenure during the winter 2017/18.
2. The consultation seeks views on possible changes to standards required for fire and smoke alarms in Scottish homes. It is proposed that the current minimum safety standards in private rented housing is extended to all tenures. There's an underlying belief that where possible housing standards should be consistent across all tenures.

Current COSLA Position

3. COSLA has supported the ongoing work of the Ministerial Working Group on Building and Fire Safety. Given the role fire and smoke alarms play in reducing fatalities across Scotland COSLA is supportive of this work being given priority by Scottish Government. Nonetheless extending current standards in private rented housing to all tenures will be a significant undertaking which will require cross sector support, leadership and funding.

What is changing?

4. The consultation itself is available [here](#) and seeks views in a number of areas including:
 - Current standards for Fire and smoke alarms
 - Options to extend the standards
 - Changes to the minimum standards
 - Costs, timescales and compliance
 - Wider context
 - Carbon Monoxide detectors
 - Impact Assessments
5. COSLA's response to the consultation will seek to provide a narrative on the broad areas outlined above. Elected members may wish contributions on the more technical questions contained in the consultation to be answered by subject experts.

Proposed COSLA Position and Next Steps

6. Board members are asked to consider what response COSLA should make to the consultation contained in Annex A. In particular, elected members are asked to provide contributions on the broad matters of: creating new minimum standards for fire and smoke detectors in the social rented and owner occupied sectors, whether these should be applied to all tenements and blocks, including regardless of height and tenure; and whether this should also cover common areas.
7. Members views would also be valued on: whether home owners and social landlords should pay for the work needed; whether they should comply in the same timeframe and if the proposed timescales of 1 year for battery alarms and two for mains wired ones are

appropriate. There is also a question that members may have views on - the sufficiency of the existing encouragement approaches and enforcement routes.

8. A drafted COSLA response will be put to Leaders at the end of November, and then submitted to Scottish Government as soon as possible thereafter.

Summary and Recommendations

9. This paper highlights to the Board the recent publication by Scottish Government of the consultation on the fire and smoke alarms in Scottish homes. This consultation seeks views on possible changes to standards required and proposes extending the current minimum safety standards in private rented housing to all other tenures. This consultation has been prioritised by Scottish Government to ensure views collated can contribute to the wider response to the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower.
10. The Board is invited to:
 - i. Note the publication of the consultation on the fire and smoke alarms in Scottish homes; and
 - ii. Consider and provide any comments to inform the content of COSLA's response to the consultation appended to this report as Annex A.

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Appendix A

Question 1: Do you think that there should be a new minimum standard for fire and smoke detectors in social rented housing?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

1 (a): If yes, do you think this should be based on the standard currently applying to private rented property? (see paragraph 19)

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

1 (b): Alternatively, do you think that some other standard should apply to social rented housing? If so, please give details.

Question 2: Do you think that individual flats should all be subject to the same minimum standards, regardless of tenure, in all tenements and blocks, regardless of height?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

2 (a): Alternatively, do you think that individual flats should all be subject to the same minimum standards, regardless of tenure, only within tenements and blocks higher than 18 metres?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

2 (b): If you are in favour of a standard for flats, whether in all buildings or only those over 18 metres tall, do you think this should be based on the standard currently applying to private rented property?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

2 (c): Alternatively, do you think that some other standard should apply? If so, please give details.

Question 3: Do you think that there should be a common new minimum standard for fire and smoke detectors in all housing, regardless of tenure?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

3 (a): If yes, do you think this should be based on the standard currently applying to private rented property?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

3 (b): Alternatively, do you think that some other standard should apply?

Yes No Don't know

If so, please give details?

Question 4: Do you think that any new standards should require fire and smoke detectors to be interlinked in different flats in the same building?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

Question 5: If we introduce a new minimum cross-tenure standard, do you think that it should require fire and smoke detectors in common areas?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

Question 6: Do you think that it would be acceptable to specify battery alarms in new standards, provided these meet the minimum criteria?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

6 (a): This would involve a change to the current Private Rented Sector guidance which requires mains wired smoke alarms. Please let us know your views about this.

Question 7: Do you think that a minimum standard should specify a maximum age for alarms?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

If yes, do you agree that the maximum age should be 10 years? If not, what alternative?

Question 8: Do you think that there should be any change to the rules on the location of alarms in the minimum standard?

Yes No Don't know

If so, what?

Question 9(a). Do you think there should be any other changes considered for any new standard for social landlords and owner occupiers

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

9(b). Do you think there should be any other changes considered for the existing standard for private rented housing?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

Question 10 (a): Do you think that it is reasonable for home owners to pay for the work needed to comply with a new minimum standard for fire and smoke alarms?

Yes No Don't know

If not, who do you think should meet these costs? Please explain your answer.

10 (b): Do you think that it is reasonable for social landlords to pay for the work needed for their properties to comply with a new minimum standard for fire and smoke alarms?

Yes No Don't know If not, who do you think should meet these costs?

Please explain your answer.

Question 11: Do you think that the timescale we have proposed for installing additional alarms is reasonable for

(a): One year for battery alarms?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

(b): Two years for mains wired alarms?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

Question 12: Do you think that the timetable should be the same for both owner occupiers and social landlords?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

Question 13: Do you think existing enforcement routes are sufficient for the social housing sector?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

13 (a): If not, what else do you think is needed to enforce a new standard in social housing? Please also tell us what additional support is needed, for example training or advice or guidance.

Question 14: Do you have any views on the most effective approaches to encouraging compliance with a minimum standard for fire and smoke alarms in the owner occupied sector?

Question 15: We have outlined other measures and approaches we are planning to consider in future work. Is there anything else we should be including?

Question 16: Do you think that there should be a new minimum standard for carbon monoxide detectors in

(a) social rented housing

Yes No Don't know
and

(b) owner occupied housing?

Yes No Don't know

Please explain your answer.

Question 17: Do you have any comments on these impact assessments?

Question 18: Do you have any other comments on this consultation?