

# Multi Matters

MAY 2019

ISSUE 3

**Bright new mural  
for Denburn Court  
residents**

**Fire safety advice  
to keep everyone  
safe**

**Cleaning contract  
update**

**Call for more  
residents!**



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# Conference on the importance of multi storey living

By Citywide Multi-Storey Group chair Leonora Montgomery

The social and architectural importance of tower blocks over the years was the focus of a conference held at Edinburgh University and we were only two of the three multi-storey dwellers attending amidst the national and international academics and professionals.

The event was organised by Tower Block UK which hopes to help stop the negative connotations associated with multi-storey living. This is very important in an age where multi-storey blocks increasingly vanish from our horizons in Britain. The Tower Block UK project has also helped to document the history of multi-storey social housing in Scotland and Britain at local and national level.

The day for myself and Group Vice-Chair Betty Simpson started with a bus trip to Leith and a walking tour of the newly designated category 'A' listed Cables Wynd House (made famous in the Trainspotting film as it's shaped like a banana) and Linksvie House multi-storey buildings which are in a conservation area and were to be completely renovated.

All in all, we had a wonderful day with the message being that multi-storey buildings are an important part of our heritage and as such should be well maintained and properly preserved.



## From drab to fab!

Denburn tenants-L-R Andy Christie, Liz Stables, Irene Hodgins,

A bleak concrete space in the Denburn area has been transformed into a brightly coloured seated area for the enjoyment of local residents and passers-by.

The Quad area beside Denburn Court was adopted by the Denburn Tenants and Residents Group in 2017/18 with help from ACC and Greggs and repairs were carried out to prepare it for its transformation.

Residents were asked for suggestions and several ideas were discussed in the Group's get-togethers.

It was a large "canvas" at 30 metres long and 1 to 5 metres tall and the theme which emerged to fill the space attempts to depict the seasons of the year. The main theme which was sketched out on the walls was to transport the viewer into landscapes and seascape to give impressions of the four seasons (in fairly idyllic weather conditions!!).

Enquiries were made but it became clear the only way to get this project done would be DIY so local resident Andy Christie, who went to Ellon Academy and RGU, took on the task.

Andy, who worked as a development manager, enjoyed art at school but found little time for drawing and painting during his working life however has re-found his interest.

He said: "The design was embellished as the mural progressed with some of my own ideas such as snow boarders, cyclist and a bridge, with requests from residents for ships and a train and some hard-to-find creatures for the kids to find. As the complexity of the landscape emerged, so the colour palette expanded to 20 to 30 colours.

"An impressive masonry paint pallet was amassed thanks to the ACC depot and B&Q and the brilliant summer weather of 2018 made it possible to complete the transformation between May and October.

"Comments from passers-by during the work made it all worthwhile ranging from 'My dad likes looking down at it from his flat' to 'Is that a dinosaur?'.

"Outdoor art doesn't last forever so let's enjoy it while we can."

## Resident-led inspections

The people best able to tell us about what is needed within their multi storey block are the people who live there. Whether it is reporting repairs, pointing out safety concerns or identifying improvements which would make a difference to their community, the residents are the "eyes and ears" of a building.

With this in mind, we are keen to

introduce resident-led inspections in the multi storey blocks across the city. These will be regular walkabouts of the buildings, initially with key staff present, which will identify any issues which require action or gather ideas for improvement. By building a clear reporting system and reporting back regularly, residents will know what is being done in their blocks, have clear timescales for completion and can

be involved in any decisions around future improvements for their area.

We hope that we will be able to develop these inspections in all multi storey blocks across the city, but want to start in one area to begin with. An initial meeting has been arranged for Grampian Court in Torry on Thursday 25 April 2019, with a view to extending to Morven Court and then across the city once established.



# Successful community engagement event

Citywide Multi-Storey Group chair Leonora Montgomery, and Vice Chair Betty Simpson spent an enjoyable morning in the company of the Police, Fire Service, Housing Officers and Cfine talking to tenants and residents about their issues and the benefits of joining our group.

A community engagement event was held at the multi storey blocks in the Cornhill area was well attended and was hailed a great success.

The event was an opportunity for residents to meet with representatives from various agencies, including Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, CFine, ASBIT, tenant representatives, and local housing officers.

The services were available over the course of three days based in the street pastor vehicle, outside the multi storey blocks, and residents were

able to discuss any issues with the relevant services.

The event was well attended by the local residents with positive feedback received. It is hoped that with support from the local housing officer, Alan Walker, a residents group can be started following the success of this event which can look to take forward some of the issues raised by residents.

Drop-in sessions at Cairncry Community Centre are continuing on a monthly basis, as advertised within the notice boards situated in the foyer areas of the blocks for local residents to attend.

## Why not start a tenant or resident group in your street in the sky?

Aberdeen City Council supports all our tenant and resident groups. We would like to get all our multis having a group – whether it is one multi or a few multis in the same area banding together.

Tenant and resident groups usually start with just a few people. They can be set up for several reasons, not always due to a problem in an area. Sometimes the idea may come from one individual who is keen to do something for their area and who searches out other people interested in joining. It might be that the residents want to have a bigger voice for communicating with the council. Your Housing Officer may wish to establish a group to improve communication and consultation in your area, or may want to establish a group to get the community working together to address an issue such as antisocial behaviour.

Remember - a group of people coming together and speaking for their area is often stronger than an individual.

So, what are you waiting for, please contact your Housing Officer today. For further information on Tenant & Resident Participation, contact **Carol Hannaford** Development Officer on [channaford@aberdeencity.gov.uk](mailto:channaford@aberdeencity.gov.uk) or 01224 522839.



## We want you!

From Citywide Multi-Storey Group chair Leonora Montgomery

L-R Irene Hodgins, Betty Simpson, Sylvia Murdoch, Brenda Mackie, Liz Stables, Ian Mackie and Leonora Montgomery

We are always ready to welcome new members to our group, representing all of our multi storeys across the city, and also representing both tenants and private owners.

ACC's director of customer Andy Macdonald is attending our meetings

and is keen to engage, consult, and welcomes our input into all relevant issues.

For further information, please contact the chairperson of the group Leonora Montgomery at [leonora.montgomery@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:leonora.montgomery@yahoo.co.uk)

## Fire safety – it's in your interest

From the Citywide Multi-Storey Group

We are a member of the Scottish Government's National Fire Safety Panel set up after Grenfell to agree multi storey fire safety legislation, and we support all the messages about fire safety as it's in all our best interest to prevent fires. It's us - the residents - who are most affected.

We would also like to reiterate the importance of reducing the incidents of false alarms as they put lives at risk and they can cause a massive inconvenience to residents while the Fire Service carry out their checks.



# How you can help to prevent fires

## Replacement of flat doors

Doors and windows which are internal to the building must meet strict fire resistance standards. High rise buildings are designed to contain the fire to the flat where the fire originally started. This is only true if the doors and windows fitted meet the fire resistance requirements. It has been noted that a number of residents have changed their front doors to something that is more attractive than the original fire door. We must ask that all residents that have changed their front door follow the advice to ensure they meet the minimum requirements.

## Parking around high rise buildings

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service sends a number of appliances to each incident, this can be as many as seven.

## False alarms

False alarms at high rise buildings impact you as a resident and SFRS as the responding emergency service. The cost to your Fire Service for each call is £2,000 and your ability to use lifts in the building will be restricted for approximately 30 minutes on each occasion. You can help us by doing the following.

- If you have work being carried out in your flat by someone you have hired, please do not let them cut wood or create dust in the hallways as this sets off the alarms.

- Please be careful when leaving the front door of the building to ensure you do not break the call point which again automatically contacts the fire service.

If you see anyone deliberately setting off the fire alarm system please contact Police Scotland on 101 or CrimeStoppers anonymously on **0800 111 555**.

## No smoking in hallways or corridors

No smoking or vaping in communal hallways – this will activate the smoke detectors and automatically contact

SFRS and each false alarm costs the fire service £2,000. The smoke detectors do not make a noise when

activated as they go straight through to SFRS so you may not realise you've set them off.



# Flytipping fire hazard

The cost of fly tipping is not only an unsightly one but can be a fire hazard or attract vermin. We usually have to clean up from 300 to 800 illegal dumps every year -which costs the council (and ultimately the taxpayer) more than £240,000.

Instead, take your bulky items to a Household Waste and Recycling Centre or book a bulky uplift – Council Housing tenants can have four items per year uplifted for FREE. You can book online at [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/waste](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/waste) or visit Kincorth, Mastrick, Tillydrone or Woodside Customer Access Points.

To find your nearest Household Waste and Recycling Centres and what they accept. If you spot fly tipping, please visit [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/waste](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/waste).

## Donate/Reuse

Better still, give your unwanted goods and large items another life by donating them for reuse through donation schemes or local charity shops. Alternatively, the National Reuse Phone Line is a free collection service for items that are still in good working condition. Phone them on **0800 0665 820** and they will arrange for your item to be collected and passed on to someone else who needs it.

# What can you do?

Homeowners can help reduce the risk of fire spreading by ensuring that your waste is disposed of properly - by using either the bin chute or recycling bins.

Please do not abandon any large items beside bins or anywhere else in the building. If you have household items that you no longer need you can take them to a Household Waste Recycling Centre or arrange for a collection.

You can book a bulky waste collection at [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/waste](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/waste). Or you can visit one of our Customer Access Points:

- **Kincorth Customer Access Point** can process all Environmental Service requests. They are able to take cash, cheque and card payments and can process invoices.
- **Mastrick Access Point** can process all Environmental Service requests. They are able to take cash, cheque and card payments and can process invoices.
- **Woodside Access Point** can process all Environmental Service

requests. They are able to take cash, cheque and card payments and can process invoices

- **Marischal College Customer Service Centre** do not process requests for Environmental Services or take payments for them. Instead they can provide you with free access to the Contact Centre.

Aberdeen City Council tenants are entitled to have up to four bulky items collected free of charge, which can be split over a maximum of four collections. If you receive council tax and/or housing benefits, you will be eligible for the reduced rate of £12.50. When you call for a collection you will be asked to provide a benefit claim reference number.

The cost is covered by the Housing Service and is included as part of your rent. Only the tenant named on the lease can call and organise the uplift.

For everyone else there is a standard charge of £25 for up to four items.

# Warning about storage and furniture

Please be aware that drying rooms and electrical cupboards should not be used as storage, and common hallways/stairwells/communal areas should not have any items of furniture there or also be used as storage.

Items stored in these areas are a fire hazard and can also block safe passageway for Firefighters if they are called out to a potential fire. This could jeopardise your or your neighbours' safety.

To arrange collection of large items, visit [www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/waste](http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/waste).



Fire damaged door, Aberdeen

## Private owners who have installed front doors

We have been working with private owners about replacing entrance doors which don't meet the fire resistance regulations.

Before 2005, the required resistance was 30 minutes but the Scottish Building Standards regulations changed and now require any replacement entrance door installed to a flat within a multi-storey building be rated to resist fire for one hour.

We'd like to thank the owners for engaging with us on this subject and we will continue to work with them. If you have replaced the entrance door from the common lobby/balcony in to your flat, it is recommended that you check with the installer to ensure that it meets the appropriate fire resistance standards.



# Aberdeen City Council reassurances

We would like to assure residents that both Aberdeen City Council (ACC) and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) take fire safety very seriously.

Since the terrible fire in London last June, Council officers have been working in partnership with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to check the specification of materials used in Aberdeen multi-storey blocks. We can confirm that the materials and design used fully comply with all relevant building regulations and standards.

We are committed to working with tenants and residents to ensure their safety.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**We have produced a list of common questions asked by residents at our drop in sessions or via social media.**

### **How many Aberdeen City Council multi-storeys have over-cladding?**

Aberdeen City Council has 59 multi-storey blocks of flats, with over-cladding currently on 18 of them. There are a further seven multi-storey buildings undergoing over-cladding work.

The over-cladding programme has been carried out by the contractors Lovell, Graham Construction, and Keepmoat.

### **Is there a difference in cladding here compared to London?**

The materials used in the over-cladding of ACC multi-storey buildings are not the same as what has been reported to have been used on the Grenfell Tower in London. The materials used in ACC multi-storey buildings are resistant to the spread of fire.

ACC technical officers in partnership with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service have been checking the specification of materials used in Aberdeen blocks and can confirm that the materials and design used fully comply with all relevant building regulations and standards.

### **What fire safety measures are in place in multi-storey properties?**

All Aberdeen City Council multi-storey blocks benefit from a number of systems including fire alarms and smoke detectors that are linked to a fire alarm panel, emergency lighting in all communal landings, and exit staircases. Each multi-storey block is also equipped with dry risers in each building.

Fire alarm panels and other fire safety

equipment are checked on a regular basis. In addition, SFRS undertake a fire safety inspection of each multi-storey block every quarter.

Aberdeen City Council owns a total of 3,879 flats within the multi-storey blocks and all, apart from 47, have been fitted with mains powered smoke detectors. The remaining 47 flats have battery-operated alarms which are due to be replaced by mains powered.

These smoke detectors have a life of 10 years and, at the time of installation, residents are given a leaflet stipulating the maintenance regime, i.e. regularly check that the green mains light is lit and to test the alarm weekly, by depressing the test button. ACC carries out checks on the smoke detectors when a property becomes void. The smoke detectors are replaced as part of a rolling programme.

In ACC's capital programme for 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, we are upgrading mains powered systems in 19 multi-storeys at a cost of more than £500,000.

When the multi-storey buildings were constructed, there was no requirement to have fire suppression systems so the 59 multi-storeys do not have them. We will take on board any findings from the fire service investigation in London and review as necessary.

### **What are the next steps?**

**Aberdeen City Council, SFRS and the Scottish Government will continue to work closely throughout the investigation into the Grenfell Tower fire, and we shall continue to review multi-storey block fire safety on an ongoing basis.**

## Cleaning Contract Update

In September, the Council's Strategic Commissioning Committee agreed to possible changes to the multi-storey cleaning arrangements. The cleaning of communal areas, currently carried out by Orbis Protect Ltd, could be undertaken by the Council's in-house Facilities Management team.

These changes were put forward following a detailed review which demonstrated the Council's in-house team could achieve greater value for residents and wider front-line services across Aberdeen by delivering this work.

Many of the Council's team members reside in the multi-storey buildings and have a vested interest in keeping them as clean as possible. As the team carry out other services in the buildings such as fly-tipping, there are many opportunities for greater synergies to deliver a better, consistent service for residents.

Consultation with residents and owners has begun and if they are in favour of the change, the Facilities Management team will start working within the multi-storeys from 1 July 2019, at completion of the current contract.

# Scottish Fire and Rescue Service advice

Following the tragic incident in London in 2017, we fully understand that residents will have concerns regarding their safety in the 59 residential high rise buildings across Aberdeen. We want to assure you that high rise buildings are one of the safest buildings in which to live when there is a fire. The building is designed to contain the fire to the flat where the fire first started. In addition to this, SFRS Firefighters have procedures that when implemented allow a quick and safe response to these fires in order to extinguish them.

## What to do in the event of a fire

### General Fire Safety Advice

If there is a fire inside a flat or maisonette, the advice is to alert all the people in the flat and leave the property and close all doors. They should follow a pre-determined escape plan and if there is a lot of smoke within the flat, people should crawl along the floor where the air should be clearer and the temperature cooler. They should always use the stairs rather than the lift and call 999 as soon as they are in a safe place.

If there is a fire elsewhere in the building then the structure of the flat – walls, floors, and doors – are designed to give appropriate

protection. It is important for responsible owners to ensure that high-rise buildings are properly constructed and any refurbishment or maintenance is carried out to compliant standards of fire safety.

If there is a fire in your building but not inside your own home, then you are usually safer to stay in your flat unless the heat or smoke from the fire is affecting you. If you 'stay put', you should still immediately call 999 for advice and to ensure the Fire and Rescue Service along with attending emergency crews have been notified.

The advice provided to tenants can and does change depending on the circumstances that present



themselves at what are very dynamic incidents. The advice in this statement is part of a preventative approach to ensure a consistent approach is taken by fire and rescue services to assist tenants in developing an initial and safe escape plan.

Once a 999 call is made, and Firefighters arrive at the fire, then the advice may be reinforced or change depending on the nature and development of the fire, the building, and its tenants.

## Cause and numbers of fires in multi storeys

Numbers of fires are reducing in multi-storey buildings but we need everyone's help to reduce them even further.

### Causes over three years

- Cooking/chip pan/ deep fat fryer ..... 43
- Careless handling due to sleep/unconscious/careless disposal ..... 16
- Faulty or negligent use of appliance/equipment ..... 13
- Smoking ..... 10
- Accumulation of flammable equipment ..... 2
- Faulty leads to equipment or appliance ..... 2
- Others ..... 42

### Numbers



# Multi-Storey Flat Safety

## Advice from Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

**In an emergency only PHONE 999 and ask for the Fire Service**

### If a fire occurs in your flat

- Follow your fire escape plan
- Shout to alert the household and get out quickly
- If smoke is present keep low, crawl if you need to get below the smoke level
- Close doors behind you including the front door to prevent smoke and fire spread
- Don't return to investigate or fight the fire
- Don't use the lifts always take the stairs to exit the building

**CALL 999 AS SOON AS YOU ARE IN A SAFE PLACE**

### If the fire is NOT in your flat

- If a smoke alarm is sounding in a communal area or you smell smoke call the Fire and Rescue Service
- Stay in your flat and keep the front door closed
- Pack a towel or sheets around the bottom of the front door to stop smoke getting in
- Go to an open window and wait for the arrival of the Fire and Rescue Service

**ONLY LEAVE THE SAFETY OF YOUR FLAT IF YOU'RE AFFECTED BY HEAT OR SMOKE, OR IF YOU'RE TOLD TO LEAVE BY FIREFIGHTERS OR THE POLICE**

### If you are trapped

- In the unlikely event of becoming trapped by fire in your home, go to your "safe room" and gather everyone there
- Call the Fire and Rescue Service as soon as possible and protect the room by packing bedding or towels around the door to help block the smoke
- Open the window to breathe clean air and try attracting attention by waving a sheet
- Gather on a balcony if one is accessible

**IF THERE IS A FIRE DON'T BE ALARMED BY THE SCALE OF THE FIRE SERVICES PRESENCE AS WE NEED A LARGE AMOUNT OF RESOURCES TO GET OUR EQUIPMENT FROM THE GROUND UP TO THE FLOOR OF THE FIRE**

**DO NOT JUMP – THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE WILL BE ON THEIR WAY**

**YOU ARE AT NO MORE RISK OF HAVING A HOUSE FIRE THAN THOSE LIVING IN OTHER TYPES OF HOUSES**

**NEVER USE THE LIFT WHEN EVACUATING THE BUILDING**

**IF THERE IS A FIRE WE'LL BE THERE**

**For a Free home fire safety visit**

**CALL 0800 0731 999**

**TEXT "FIRE" TO 80800**

