Sprinkler work to start at Swansea Council’s high-rise blocks of flats

WORK fitting sprinklers in Swansea Council’s high-rise blocks of flats is expected to begin in November.

Priority will be given to blocks of flats which have had exterior cladding fitted, with work continuing on a phased basis over the following months.

Cllr Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member for Housing, Energy and Building Services, announced the news on the same day the Welsh Government announced that cladding on the council’s high-rise council properties passed UK Government fire safety tests.

The latest developments come less than two months after the Grenfell Tower disaster claimed more than 80 lives and prompted local authorities all over the UK to check their own high-rise residential properties.

Cllr Lewis said: “Swansea Council has acted with speed and determination to make sure our residential high-rise blocks are safe, so our tenants can be reassured that they can continue to live safely in their homes.

“We were the first local authority in the UK to get a ‘whole system’ test of the cladding system used on our high-rise flats in Clyne Court and Jeffreys Court. Those tests came back telling us the system was safe, so it’s very reassuring news that the Welsh and UK Government tests agree with ours and that the type of test we arranged to be carried out is now being used as best practice.

“But we aren’t stopping there. We want our tenants to have the further reassurance of sprinkler systems which have a proven ability to dampen fires down before they have a chance to take hold.”
“That’s why we’ve authorised the purchase and fitting of sprinkler systems. Preparatory work will start in October with fitting taking place on a phased basis, starting with those properties which have cladding systems in place.”

Cllr Lewis said it is too early to say when the work will be completed because of industry capacity, but it was the council’s aim to finish as quickly as possible. It’s also too early to say exactly how much fitting sprinkler systems to all 11 of the council’s high-rise blocks will cost.

She added: “Throughout the aftermath of the terrible events at Grenfell Tower, Swansea Council’s first priority has been to ensure the safety of our tenants and to keep them informed about what we are doing to support them.

“In the morning following the fire our housing staff were out knocking on doors and delivering letters to update tenants on what we were doing and what they could do themselves to prevent fire.

“Our experts were also conducting fire safety checks in communal areas, making sure fire doors were in good condition and setting up night-time patrols to offer tenants extra reassurance.

“Following the latest tests, the Welsh Government is advising councils to continue to take professional advice on fire safety in their high-rise residential buildings. Fire safety experts from Mid and West Wales Fire Service have been inspecting our high-rise properties recently as part of the annual checks and, naturally, we will be working closely with them and our tenants in future.”

For further information please contact: Greg Jones on 01792 636226
greg.jones@swansea.gov.uk