

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

### DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 29 JUNE 2004

#### CONSULTATION ON THE INTRODUCTION OF AUTOMATIC LIFE SAFETY FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS WITHIN THE BUILDING REGULATIONS

##### Report by Director of Development and Property Services

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of a consultation paper prepared by the Scottish Executive on the proposed introduction of Building Regulations relating to automatic life safety fire suppression systems. The report has been prepared following consultation with the Council's Fire and Security Working Party.

### 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 On the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2004 the Committee was informed of the Fire Sprinklers in Residential Premises (Scotland) Bill, which proposed to introduce residential sprinklers into new or converted buildings. As a result of this consultation exercise the Scottish Executive have introduced a draft Building Regulation relating to automatic life safety fire suppression systems within specific high-risk residential premises. The Executive seeks views on the proposals and in particular the type of premises covered by the standards and the use of the Technical Guidance proposed.

### 3. THE CONSULTATION PAPER

- 3.1 In February 2004 the Building Research Establishment published the results of a two and half year project "The effectiveness of sprinklers in residential premises" commissioned by the Buildings Division of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.
- 3.2 The research found that residential sprinklers are cost-effective for residential care homes (old persons, children's and disabled persons care homes) and for tall blocks of flats (eleven storeys and above), but not cost-effective for other dwellings. It also found that for sprinklers to become cost-effective, high-risk buildings may be targeted, and justified on a case-by-case basis using the cost-benefit approach developed in this project.
- 3.3 Following this research the Scottish Executive propose to include automatic life safety fire suppression systems in specific **new or converted** buildings. It is not proposed to apply retrospectively to existing buildings or to buildings subject to minor refurbishment.

The buildings to be covered are:-

- **Residential care buildings** as defined under the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 (excluding Hospitals);
- **High rise flats** (greater than 18.0m above ground level);
- **Sheltered housing** where care is required to live independently;
- **Enclosed shopping centres** (enclosed shopping centres over 5,600 square metres in size are already required to install such systems, this is now being extended to all enclosed shopping centres).

## **4. CONCLUSION**

4.1 Whilst the proposed changes to the building regulations and use of the technical guidance are generally supported the following concerns remain;

a) The proposals do not cater for the introduction automatic life safety fire suppression systems within public buildings (such as schools etc) or other types of residential facilities. The residential facilities excluded by the proposed regulations specifically relate to:-

- Domestic dwellings and flats up-to 18m in height;
- Houses in Multiple Occupation;
- Hotels, Motels, Hostel and lodges;
- Student halls of residence for colleges and Schools;
- Employee Accommodation;
- Residential Clubs;
- Ecclesiastical Residential Accommodation;

b) The cost of the sprinklers when compared with the overall cost of new buildings is very small, and therefore the cost borne by the developer and ultimately the building owner should not be considered as a burden. Specifically, the issue of cost versus the human loss of life should not be considered a factor in this debate.

4.2 Consequently, the Scottish Executive should consider introducing within the building regulations automatic life safety fire suppression systems for other residential and public buildings.

## **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 As the Council strategy is to include automatic life safety fire suppression systems within all its new premises there are no additional financial implications for the Council as a direct result of the consultation exercise, nor from the implementation of the proposed regulation.

## **6. LEGAL / AUTHORITY IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no legal / authority implications for the Council at this stage as a result of the consultation exercise.

## **7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 There are no personnel implications for the Council as a result of the consultation exercise.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) note the contents of the report;
- (ii) Authorise the Executive Director of Development and Property Services to submit a report to the Scottish Executive on the Councils views as contained in Section 4.

**James Lavery**

**Executive Director of Development and Property Services**

4 June 2004

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Draft Building Regulations for Domestic and Non-Domestic buildings;
2. BRE Report No 204505:- The effectiveness of Sprinklers in Residential Premise
3. Development Services Committee: 10 March 2004 on the proposed fire sprinklers in residential premises (Scotland) Bill
4. Fire Sprinklers in Residential Premises (Scotland) Bill:- Policy Memorandum.
5. Fire Sprinklers in Residential Premises (Scotland) Bill.

Anyone wishing to inspect the above papers please contact David McDowall on (01563) 576749.

Implementation Officer: Alan Neish – Head of Planning, Development and Building Standards