

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Supplementary Agenda 2

Tuesday, 11 July 2017

7.30 pm, Committee Rooms 1 & 2

Civic Suite

Lewisham Town Hall

London SE6 4RU

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This meeting is an open meeting and all items on the agenda may be audio recorded and/or filmed.

Part 1

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LFB report to Lewisham Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
From: Martin Corbett	Borough Commander, London Fire Brigade	11th July 2017

Introduction

1. Following the fire at Grenfell Tower I have been asked to provide a short update report to the OSC explaining what is being done pan London and locally in Lewisham in response to the incident. Much of the outline and background to the event can be found in the officer report - Update on Fire Safety Arrangements following the Grenfell Tower Fire, that can be found elsewhere on this agenda.

This report adds a little more detail in a London Fire Brigade context that I can expand upon further during the meeting if required.

Responsibility of Housing Providers

2. One of the repeated requests to the LFB, both from worried residents or residents associations is to carry out risk assessments to provide reassurance to them that their building is safe. However, as you may know, housing providers have the duty to ensure there is a comprehensive fire risk assessment for all purpose built blocks of flats and maisonettes that they own or manage, not the Fire

Brigade. Checking and reviewing the risk assessment is the single most helpful action that can be done by housing providers to improve the safety of residents. These fire risk assessments need to identify the general fire precautions required for the building. I won't go into the detail of what is expected but I am confident, that these reviews are being done in Lewisham especially by Lewisham Homes but other housing providers in Lewisham.

3. The role of the Fire Authority is to audit premises based on risk and should there be any deficiencies or contraventions to fire precautions, issue an improvement notice, detailing actions to resolve the deficiencies, or an enforcement notice which prohibits the use of the building if the risk to residents or employees (if a business) is too great.

Internal LFB response

4. In response to the Grenfell Tower incident the LFB have set up an internal task force, headed up by a Deputy Assistant Commissioner and comprising of 30 of the most experienced fire inspecting officers (IO) in London. The role of the task force is to identify buildings similar to Grenfell that are most at risk, audit them and provide a detailed report to the housing provider. I must be clear that these audits are not a replacement to the housing providers review of their risk assessment. At the moment the task force has identified about 340 high rise buildings in London that require auditing and that figure changes each day. The task force assess

this list each day and programme, according to risk, which buildings to audit.

5. In Lewisham three buildings have been confirmed as containing ACM, two in Hatfield Close and Gerrard House cladding (see the officer report). These have been audited by the task force and findings provided to Lewisham Homes. Nothing significant was found to issue and enforcement notice on or evacuation of, these buildings.

Additional local response

6. As mentioned previously one of the post incident actions is to reassure residents that they are safe and that everything is being done to maintain their safety and I very much understand that the LFB plays a major part in this. I can fully understand why people who live in high rises have questions about their safety but I want to stress that thankfully, fires are rare. As an additional measure, to reassure residents, when the IO's carry out an audit at a building known to have ACM cladding the housing provider representative and crews from the local fire station must be present.

7. This is four fold:

- To carry out home fire safety visits (HFSV) to anyone who wants one in that building at that time.
- To reassess the tactical plan so we are well prepared should we need to attend an incident at that location (note that the pre

determined attendance to all high rise buildings in London has been increased to 5 fire engines and an aerial appliance)

- To liaise with the OI with regard to any issues that arise from the audit that may affect the tactical plan.
 - To reassure residents and reiterate the stay put guidance
8. As previously mentioned Hatfield Close and Gerrard House have been visited by local crews in close liaison with Lewisham Homes, who I must say have been very proactive in their response.
 9. There are other buildings in London and Lewisham (see Appendix E of the officer report) which do not have ACM cladding and as such will not be prioritised by the task force to have a IO audit of the building but visits will be carried out by local crews without the IO being present. These are prioritised locally to start with the taller tower blocks first then others in order of how tall they are or when the task force notifies the local station. To date we have visited Daubeney Tower, Eddystone Tower (both 24 stories) Tuscany Corte (15 stories) and Paris Corte (10 stories).
 10. We have also had a large demand from the public following the incident for HFSVs. These individual requests are recorded on an internal database and programmed to fire station crews according to "slots" they provide in their diary. Due to this increase in demand I and asked fire stations to increase the number of "slots" they provide to cater for the increase in demand.

11. If anyone in Lewisham requires a HFSV all they can book of by visiting the LFB web page <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/HomeFireSafetyVisit.asp> or calling 0800 028 44 28 or alternatively pop into their local fire station.

Councillor guidance

12. The LFB is also conscious of the pressure on local councillors, so in addition to the information in this report I attach two further documents for your information that may help you.

- Councillor guidance on fire safety in council meetings
- Councillor guidance on fire safety for use during estate visits

13. I would also like to reiterate the "stay put" guidance to all councillors and residents of Lewisham that is still valid:

What should I do if there's a fire?

If your flat or maisonette is being affected by fire or smoke and your escape route is clear:

- *Get everyone out, close the door and walk calmly out of the building.*
- *Do not use the lift.*
- *Call 999, give your address, the number of your flat and state which floor the fire is on.*

If there is a fire or smoke inside your flat or maisonette but your escape route is NOT clear:

- *It may still be safer to stay in your flat or maisonette until the fire brigade arrives.*
- *Find a safe room close the door and use soft materials to block any gaps to stop the smoke.*
- *Go to a window, shout "HELP, FIRE" and call 999.*
- *Be ready to describe where you are and the quickest way to reach you.*

If there is a fire in another part of the building:

- *Purpose-built maisonettes or blocks of flats are built to give you some protection from fire. Walls, floors and doors can hold back flames and smoke for 30 to 60 minutes.*
- *You are usually safer staying put and calling 999.*
- *Tell the fire brigade where you are and the best way to reach you.*
- *If you are within the common parts of the building, leave and call 999.*

Good advice for every home in London is

- *Fit smoke alarms in every room. Smoke alarms provide a vital early warning and can allow extra time to escape if there is a fire in your home.*
- *Always make sure you have an escape plan in place and that everyone in your home knows what to do in an emergency.*

Martin Corbett

London Fire Brigade Borough Commander

London Borough of Lewisham

Councillor guide on fire safety for use during council meetings

FIRE SAFETY IN PURPOSE-BUILT BLOCKS OF FLATS AND MAISONNETTES IN YOUR BOROUGH

Local authorities play a vital role in ensuring fire safety within their borough as community leaders, enforcing authorities, partners to the emergency services and as landlords themselves.



Local authorities as the responsible person

Where the local authority is itself a responsible person for a property under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 it has a legal duty to keep properties safe from fire. This includes the common areas of purpose-built blocks of flats or maisonnettes.

This means that the local authority has to ensure that there is a **comprehensive fire risk assessment** for each of its buildings. A fire risk assessment helps identify all the fire hazards and risks in the property so that the responsible person can make a decision on whether any risks identified are acceptable or whether something needs to be done to reduce or control them.

There should also be an **emergency evacuation plan** in place for each building. This details the action that residents and others need to take if there is a fire. This plan must make sure residents and others are safe, that a fire can be

detected and that residents are warned of this event. Residents should be able to safely escape from a fire using routes within the building designed and maintained to be safe to use during an emergency. There should be appropriate signposting and lighting in place on these routes.

Purpose-built blocks of flats or maisonnettes are designed and built as self-contained residential units usually sharing common corridors, staircases and entrance. Purpose-built blocks of flats and maisonnettes can be of any height, not just high-rise. In these buildings the 'stay put' principle applies. This means that if a fire starts in the common parts or in another flat, all residents not directly affected by the fire would be expected to 'stay put' and remain in their flat unless directed to leave by the fire and rescue service.

More detailed information can be found at london-fire.gov.uk

WHAT CAN COUNCILLORS DO?

Do not make assumptions that fire safety is being actively or effectively managed in purpose-built blocks of flats and maisonettes in your borough. Councillors can make their boroughs safer by scrutinising how responsibilities for fire safety are met and ensuring that the fire safety in your borough is continuously being monitored and improved.

STRATEGIC AND POLICY QUESTIONS FOR COUNCILLORS TO ASK

These are questions you should ask about the fire safety of purpose-built blocks of flats and maisonettes in your borough, particularly in relation to the residential estates and properties run by the local authority, ALMO or local housing associations. They can be asked generally or in the context of specific programmes and projects.

Some of the questions overlap in their focus but this does not matter – fire safety is a complicated area and involves many of the different professional disciplines involved in managing and maintaining a building.

- Where are the risk assessments carried out on local authority, ALMO or local housing association properties under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 held? How often are they reviewed? Who carries out these risk assessments and what are their qualifications?
- Are councillors told if the local authority, ALMO or a local housing association is the subject of enforcement action by London Fire Brigade?
- What contractual relationships are in place with leaseholders about their fire safety responsibilities, including for flat and maisonette front doors? By upholding their responsibilities, leaseholders have an impact on the shared means of escape for the building for all residents.
- Is there a clear process in place for residents to report and escalate concerns about fire safety?
- How do local authority employees with non-housing responsibilities (e.g. social services, carers, pest control etc.) report fire safety concerns about homes they have visited?
- What is in place to make sure that residents know what they need to do if there is a fire in their block or property? Do new residents receive this information in their welcome packs?
- Does the borough have clear policies stating that:
 - before any modifications or maintenance works are carried out in purpose-built blocks of flats or maisonettes, there must be proper assessment of the impact on fire safety?
 - all modifications or maintenance works will result in buildings which are equally or more fire safety compliant than they were before the works?
 - once modifications or maintenance works are complete, councillors will receive confirmation that the building will meet all necessary fire safety requirements?

Councillor guide on fire safety for use during estate visits

MAKING SURE ESTATES ARE SAFE FROM FIRE

Local authorities play a vital role in ensuring fire safety within their borough. Where the local authority is itself a responsible person for a property under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 it has a legal duty to keep properties safe from fire. This includes the common areas of purpose-built blocks of flats or maisonettes that make up estates.



Risk assessments

Local authorities, ALMOs and housing associations need to ensure that there is a **comprehensive fire risk assessment** for each of its purpose-built blocks of flats or maisonettes.

A fire risk assessment helps identify all the fire hazards and risks in the property so that decisions can be made on whether any risks identified are acceptable or whether something needs to be done to reduce or control them. You can ask:

- Where is the risk assessment for this building?
How often is it reviewed?
- Who carries out these risk assessments and what are their qualifications?

Confirming the emergency evacuation plan is in place

Purpose-built blocks of flats or maisonettes are designed and built as self-contained residential units usually sharing common corridors, staircases and an entrance. They can be of any height, not just high-rise. In purpose-built blocks of flats and maisonettes the 'stay put' principle applies. This means that if a fire starts in the common parts or in another flat, all residents not directly affected by the fire would be expected to 'stay put' and remain in their flat unless directed to leave by the fire and rescue service.

There should also be an **emergency evacuation plan** in place for each building. This details the action that residents and others need to take if there is a fire. This plan must make sure residents and others are safe, that a fire can be detected and that residents are warned of this event. Residents should be able to safely escape from a fire using routes within the building designed and maintained

to be safe to use during an emergency. There should be appropriate signposting and lighting in place on these routes. There is a responsibility to inform tenants about the evacuation measures and safe behaviours for properties. You can ask:

- What emergency evacuation plan is in place for this building?
- How have residents been informed about it?
- Are fire escapes and other parts of the escape route, such as corridors and stairwells checked regularly for obstructions?
- Is emergency lighting and signage in place along the escape route?

Making sure staff know their responsibilities and where to get advice

It is crucial that those involved in the day-to-day management of estates have fire safety in mind when they are working on the estate. If they don't then new risks may go unreported and undealt with. You can ask:

- Do estate wardens have any formal objectives on fire safety?
- Are the estate services team in contact with the local fire station? Have they planned or delivered any joint initiatives together?
- Is information passed on to the fire brigade or do the fire brigade ever join with estate inspections? Perhaps they should be invited?
- Do wardens and other officers on estates find that they get a fast response from other parts of the organisation when they report fire safety concerns?

Storage and rubbish

There should be policies to keep the common or shared areas clear, especially of items that could burn or be a potential fuel source for arson. You can ask:

- What is done to help people to store bikes and prams that can't be stored in communal areas?
- How often are rubbish chutes checked for blockages and bin areas for overflowing rubbish?
- Is there clear signage about where rubbish goes?
- What action is taken to deal quickly with unauthorised storage or dumping of rubbish?

Arson risk and security

Fires lit deliberately can cause a lot of damage as they can be lit using multiple points of ignition and at vulnerable points in the building. It is important that buildings are secure.

Entrance doors should be secure to prevent intruders entering. This should include doors to tank rooms, roof access, parking/garage/shed areas and electrical cupboards. This is particularly important for areas in roof spaces and basements because if doors are open and fire can spread easily to these places, it can lead to rapid spread of fire to other parts of the building. You can ask:

- How often is the security of the estate checked? Have there been any problems? Are communal areas in and around the block well lit?

Front doors of flats

In a shared residential building, the front doors of individual flats are an important part of the fire protection for the building. This is sometimes referred to as 'structural fire safety'. Often, the front doors of individual flats perform a function as part of the protection for the routes used for escape from corridors and staircases in blocks of flats. These doors need to be fire resisting, self-closing, close fitting with no gaps, no warping and not damaged in any way. Do all the flat front doors look the same? If they don't this could be because residents have replaced them. You can ask:

- Do all the front doors in this block meet the appropriate standard?

Multiple layers of paint

Where paint is allowed to build up into multiple layers, this can allow very rapid fire spread as the paint splits and burns. In common areas this can compromise escape routes. You can ask:

- How many layers of paint are on the walls in common areas? Are they safe?

Dry risers

Dry risers are used to enable water to be delivered for firefighting purposes to all floors of high-rise buildings. The dry riser valves on the ground floor of a building are signposted for firefighters. If the dry riser valves are tampered with or damaged in any way it can cost fire crews vital seconds when they arrive at fires in high-rise blocks. You can ask:

- Are the dry risers checked regularly to see if they have been tampered with?

More information is available at
london-fire.gov.uk

Your local fire safety team can answer queries and provide support. Contact details for the teams can be found here: www.london-fire.gov.uk/FireSafetyRegulationTeams.asp