

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