

## **Cabinet – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2017**

### **Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 13<sup>th</sup> July 2017**

**Report title:** Housing Fire Safety update

**Wards:** All

**Portfolio:** Councillor Jennifer Braithwaite, Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing

**Report Authorised by:** Sue Foster, Strategic Director for Neighbourhoods and Growth

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#### **Report summary**

This report provides an update on the issues and actions for Lambeth arising from the Grenfell Tower Fire.

#### **Finance summary**

This is an update report and there are no specific finance implications arising from it.

#### **Recommendations**

1. To note the issues and actions to date arising from the Grenfell Tower fire.

#### **1. Context**

- 1.1 The Grenfell Tower fire resulted in deaths of at least 80 people on 14<sup>th</sup> June. There is no official information yet about the rapid spread of the fire. This is significant because Building and Fire Regulations govern how materials used in housing construction and refurbishment should compartmentalise, contain and slow down the spread of fire enabling the Fire Brigade to tackle fires and manage evacuation if fires cannot be contained.
- 1.2 It has been suggested that that the type of cladding used on Grenfell Tower increased the rate of at which the fire spread and the first official requirement from government following the tragedy has been a series of requests of local authority and other public housing landlords focussing on the cladding of medium and high rise residential blocks. There has been particular concern about a type of metal-based Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding used in the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has asked Councils to identify whether any panels which are of a particular type of ACM cladding has been used in new builds or refurbishment of property formed of six storeys or more or 18m or higher. All public residential landlords have been asked to provide samples of the cladding on their medium and high rise blocks for fire testing by the BRE (Building Research Establishment).

- 1.3 Lambeth owns 122 medium (6-9 storeys) and high rise (10 storeys and above) residential blocks. In line with DCLG guidance the Council has identified all those that have some form of cladding and commissioned our consultants to take samples from the 31 blocks which have cladding and submit them for BRE fire testing within seven days. DCLG has prioritised tests to identify ACM cladding and where this is the case have put in place special arrangements with the London Fire Brigade to carry out urgent inspections to assess fire risks in those blocks. However all types of cladding submitted by local authority and Registered Provider (housing association) landlords is being tested and it is important to note that to date there is 100% failure rate i.e. all samples tested have failed the BRE tests.
- 1.4 A Public Inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire is being established and although no formal information is yet available on the reasons for the catastrophic spread of the fire, it is clear a number of factors may be involved. The Council is therefore looking at all aspects of fire safety relating to our housing stock focussing on the need to ensure our medium and high rise blocks are as safe as possible for our residents.
- 1.5 In the intermediate aftermath of the fire, the Council has written to residents in high and medium rise blocks to provide information, advice and reassurance. This information is regularly updated.
- 1.6 There are approximately 67 housing associations (Registered Providers - RPs) with residential stock in Lambeth and RPs provide housing for 23,000 tenant households. RPs are also sampling cladding for the same BRE tests. To date three RP blocks in Lambeth with ACM-type cladding have been identified. Officers are in close contact with the RPs involved to ensure the Council is made aware of the implications for their residents. The first block to be identified in Lambeth by DCLG with ACM-type cladding– Park Heights in Stockwell, is to have its cladding replaced by the landlord, Network Homes.
- 1.7 A range of wider concerns about the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea’s (RBKC) response to the fire at Grenfell Tower have also been raised and Lambeth has been quick to respond both in terms of immediate assistance to RBKC since 14 June and in reviewing and updating our own emergency planning arrangements.

## 2. **Housing fire safety testing**

- 2.1 Lambeth owns 122 medium and high rise housing blocks:

Count of LBL Structures	
Structure Height	Total Structures
6	35
7	24
8	17
9	10
11	15
12	1
13	4
15	3
18	2
19	1
21	4
22	4
24	2
Total Structures 6 floors	122

or above	
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From our asset data, we have identified those which we know have some form of cladding:

Structure Height	Cladding	No Cladding	Total
10 and Above	22 (13 fully clad, 9 partially clad)	14	36
6 to 9	9	77	86
Total	31	91	122

- 2.2 The majority of cladding dates back to construction or refurbishment works that took place some years ago, so we do not have full information about the cladding type or construction method. However all blocks with cladding have been sampled and the samples submitted for testing by the BRE by 28<sup>th</sup> June. We expected to receive the results of the tests with 24 – 48 hours but at the time of writing have yet to receive all results. As referred to above we expect the samples to fail the tests as has been the experience nationally.

#### Fire Risk Assessments

- 2.3 All our housing blocks have up to date Fire Risk assessments (FRAs), however we have now commissioned additional Level 4 FRAs. Level 4 is the most stringent level of assessment including external and internal inspections and this work is starting immediately. Officers are also working closely with both the London Fire Brigade (LFB) local command and the newly established London-wide LFB inspectorate team to advise on all aspects of fire safety. Officers have identified those blocks where we know there may be fire safety concerns other than those around cladding, to be prioritised, this includes both outstanding issues arising from FRAs and concerns raised by residents.
- 2.4 We are in contact with the LFB and DCLG on a daily basis and jointly with the local LFB command responding immediately as required. On 29<sup>th</sup> June we asked the local LFB command to visit and advise on concerns raised at Brittany Point in Stockwell and this resulted in immediate works to doors in the block and turning off the gas supply. Residents were contacted that day and hot meals provided that evening to any residents who wanted them – heating and hot water were not affected. Electric ovens are now being provided to any residents who used gas ovens and 24hour patrolling put in place. Concerns about cladding in stairwells at Southwyck House in Brixton also resulted in immediate action on 29<sup>th</sup> June with officers on site overnight, 24 hour patrol cover arrangements and work to remove the cladding starting on 30<sup>th</sup> June. Residents affected were notified of what was happening and why through hand delivered letters as soon as actions were agreed.

### **3. Emergency Planning**

- 3.1 Lambeth Council has been involved in providing emergency assistance since the London Local Authority Control Centre (LLACC) was activated on 15<sup>th</sup> June to date has provided a range of staff and resources to help with the Grenfell Tower response including emergency planning staff, adults and children's services social workers and our Assistant Director for Housing Needs spent four days in west London coordinating housing assessments for Grenfell victims. Both general needs and specialist housing has also been offered.

- 3.2 It is recognised that we will need to learn lessons in reviewing our emergency response plans and work is already underway to ensure local and service-based out of hours and incident response arrangements are in place and properly integrated across all key services. Officers have produced draft plans for any emergency evacuation of our housing stock should this be necessary. This includes extensive updated information and contact details of residents in all our medium and high rise blocks, with household size and any special needs noted, as well as arrangements for rest centres, assessment centres, emergency housing and provision of food and bedding etc.

## **4 Communication**

- 4.1 Residents in Council blocks have now received a series of communications to provide information, advice and reassurance about fire safety. Information on the Council's website was reviewed and refreshed immediately after the Grenfell fire to update advice to residents about protecting themselves and their families from the risks of fire. Additional information from the LFB is also available through the Council's website. An extensive set of FAQs is continually being updated as officers seek to respond to queries and concerns being raised (see attached). We have received an enormous number of enquiries about a range of fire safety issues from residents, councillors, MPs as well as the press and statutory and non-statutory agencies - all of which are being dealt with as quickly as possible.
- 4.2 Any advice and information on fire safety is being checked with the LFB and where immediate actions or fire safety works are required, we have mechanisms in place to inform residents as quickly as possible. It is important to note that the basic messages about what to do in the event of fire have not been changed and although the local fire brigade deal with around 400 domestic fires in Lambeth each year, the vast majority are quickly dealt with without injury.
- 4.3 Meetings for Tenant and Residents Associations (T&RAs) and Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) have taken place across the borough to update residents and answer any questions, as well as listen and investigate any fire safety concerns residents may have about their homes.
- 4.4 Further updates and any significant new information will be reported to Cabinet and Councillors more widely as required.

## **5 Finance**

- 5.1 The cost of tower block cladding sampling inspections is £39,000 and is being met within the Housing Planned Maintenance budget. There will be further costs arising from the works already undertaken or underway, and from the additional contract staffing to provide 24 hour cover where required. Actions that may be required following Inspections will be costed, scrutinised and resources identified as they arise. Major Works costs will need to be included in the Council's Housing Capital Programme and may have implications for the delivery of the existing planned programme as additional capital resources may be required.
- 5.2 Actions arising from FRAs are ongoing and met within Housing revenue and capital budgets. The Government has indicated what additional resource will be made available for works associated with ACM cladding.

## **6 Legal and Democracy**

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

- 6.2 The Chair and Leader of the Council, Councillor Lib Peck, has requested that this report to be heard as an urgent item of business at Cabinet on 03 July 2017. The five working day pre-notification period was waived in this instance due to the quickly developing nature of the issues concerned. It was considered that the report should not be deferred to the next meeting of Cabinet.

## **7 Risk management**

This report addresses how Risk is being managed in the aftermath of the Grenfell Fire.

## **8 Equalities impact assessment**

In identifying and carrying out any works associated with fire safety, officers are working to identify any residents – whether they are our tenants, leaseholders or private tenants who live in our blocks who may have special needs or requirements that affected by the works. We now have database information to identify particularly vulnerable residents who live in our medium and high rise blocks and officers will ensure these residents are supported and informed during any works.

## **9 Timetable for implementation**

- 9.1 As set out above all work in response to fire safety requirements is ongoing.

<b>Audit Trail</b>				
<b>Consultation</b>				
<b>Name/Position</b>	<b>Lambeth directorate/department or partner</b>	<b>Date Sent</b>	<b>Date Received</b>	<b>Comments in para:</b>
Councillor Jennifer Braithwaite	Cabinet Member for Environment and Housing	30.06.17	30.06.17	
Councillor Lib Peck	Leader of the Council	30.06.17	30.06.17	
Sue Foster	Strategic Director for Neighbourhoods and Growth	30.06.17	30.06.17	
Neil Wightman	Director of Housing	30.06.17	30.06.17	
Andrew Ramsden Finance	Corporate Resources	30.06.17	30.06.17	
Greg Carson Legal Services	Corporate Resources	30.06.17	30.06.17	4.1
Henry Langford Democratic Services	Corporate Resources	03.07.17	03.07.17	4.2

<b>Report History</b>	
<b>Original discussion with Cabinet Member</b>	30.06.17
<b>Report deadline</b>	N/A
<b>Date final report sent</b>	N/A
<b>Part II Exempt from Disclosure/confidential accompanying report?</b>	None
<b>Key decision report</b>	No
<b>Background information</b>	None
<b>Appendices</b>	Appendix A – Frequently Asked Questions