

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **HOUSING AND FIRE SAFETY ADVISORY PANEL** held on **WEDNESDAY, 17TH APRIL, 2024** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 2, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Jason McIntyre (Co-Chair), Gulbahar Begum (Co-Chair) in the Chair, Ceri Baraclough, Catherine Crawford, Razaq Dawodu, Francis Dias, David George, Gavin Haynes, Maria Jacobs, Silvia Kirk, Brian Levey, Tezar Miah, Simon Murray, Councillor Meric Apak, Councillor Kemi Atolagbe, Councillor Anna Burrage, Councillor Pat Callaghan, Councillor Lorna Jane Russell and Councillor Tom Simon

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Gillian Farrugia, Ryan Heng, David O'Keefe and Jo Rose

The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Housing and Fire Safety Advisory Panel and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.

MINUTES

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Ryan Heng and David O'Keefe.

2. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Webcasting

The Chair announced that the meeting was being broadcast live to the internet and would be capable of repeated viewing and copies of the recording could be made available to those that requested them. Those participating in the meeting were deemed to be consenting to being filmed.

Councillor Meric Apak, Cabinet Member Better Homes

The Chair announced that Councillor Meric Apak, Cabinet Member for Better Homes, would be standing down as a cabinet member in May. The Chair advised that Councillor Apak had been instrumental in taking forward the fire safety agenda in his role as a cabinet member, and the panel wished to thank him for all his work in this capacity.

Councillor Apak thanked the panel members and officers in supporting him in delivering the work of the panel over the last few years and wished them well for the future.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA

Panel members were advised that they had been appointed to the panel as they were residents of Council owned homes, and for councillors their general declarations had already been recorded under their formal declarations of interests, so they only needed to make a declaration if they had a specific declaration in relation to an item on the agenda.

There were none.

4. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT

There were none.

5. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2024.

The meeting agreed that on page 3, bullet point 7, the word "simulation" should be changed to "simultaneous" and that Simon Murray should be added to the list of members present at the meeting.

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2024, subject to the above amendments, be approved as a correct record.

6. LONDON FIRE BRIGADE (LFB) ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Borough Commander.

David George, Borough Commander, took the meeting through the report and gave the following key responses to questions:

- Since the report had been finalised, the data had now indicated that Camden was no longer the borough with the highest number of fire casualties in London.
- The service was aware of the concern regarding the charging of e-bikes and scooters in the home, and they had a video which was available to be viewed

on the London Fire Brigade website that explained the dangers of charging personal electric vehicles in the home and on escape routes.

- Over the past year across London there had been more fire casualties, deaths and serious injuries than was expected and the service had done some trend analysis around why that had been and it had concluded that the majority of people getting seriously injured and dying in fires were elderly residents of Camden. As a result of this information the service was working with Camden's Adult Social Care Service, carer providers and residents to make them aware of this, and provide them with further information regarding how to mitigate against fire risks. Further information would be provided regarding the tenure of the fire casualties in the borough, whether they were known to adult social care services, quarterly casualty statistics, assess trends, the causes of fires, along with specific information regarding all the fires in Camden Council homes.

**ACTION BY: Borough
Commander/Director of Property
Management**

- London Fire Brigade would no longer be attending automatic fire alarms in non-residential premises during working hours. This was because the facts and figures told them that a miniscule number of those alarm activations had actually resulted in a fire in a non-residential premises during the day. This was due to their normally being somebody at work on the premises during that time. The service would still be attending residential automatic fire alarms at high-rise estates, hospitals, care homes, and other such premises. The service would also still respond to fire alarms that were triggered for homes above non-residential premises.
- The service would provide information and a link for the Council to publicise regarding the Saturday Surgery events held at fire stations in Camden. Also the LFB's community engagement teams would liaise with the Council regarding linking into Camden events to allow for the sharing of fire safety advice across the borough.

**ACTION BY: Borough
Commander/Director of Property
Management**

- In relation to tenanted homes above commercial premises, these would all have their own FRAs and have hard-wired smoke detection in place. For converted premises there would often be a communal area alarm in use if simultaneous evacuation was required. There was work ongoing in addition to the FRAs with the commercial property team to look at compartmentation, along with the arrangements around fire safety for the whole premises. This could lead to works needing to be undertaken on these premises.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

7. BUILDING SAFETY ACT IMPLEMENTATION

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Property Management.

Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, took the meeting through the report and he along with Alozie Ohnonu, Interim Head of Resident & Building Safety, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Officers would provide information regarding the role of the building safety managers and the way they were working together to ensure best practice and consistency were being built into service delivery.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

- The building safety case development work was being undertaken in-house by the Building Safety Manager Team who had a wealth of experience from ex-fire fighters and staff with structural surveying experience. When and where necessary the team would also be tapping into subject experts outside of the service. As one of the things the Housing Regulator had advised was that local authorities should understand their own gaps in knowledge and make sure that they tap into subject experts where they need to. The Council would be doing this in relation to its hazard assessments of the buildings, as this is something quite new to the housing industry.
- The Council was seeking to put in place structural surveys in addition to housing stock condition building surveys. As part of this there would be 5 fire compartmentation surveys to make sure officers had a good understanding of the building. This would require a gap analysis to be done over the next couple of years to assess what was missing in terms of information.
- If the Council found during the risk assessment process a safety issue with a building then it would do a condition change risk assessment, where it would go through the risk factors, consider what the actual mitigations were and take appropriate actions if necessary. This would be undertaken in collaboration with the fire service. The condition change process could mean immediate action to deal with an issue, or through a longer timescale as part of the Council's planned maintenance programme. Any such works would impact on the Council's overall capital programme of works, with scheme's having to be reprogrammed to allow for the immediate action to rectify a structural need. This impact would be reflected in the appropriate data gathering schemes.
- The Council would seek to work with tenants and residents to help them understand why it needed to have access to their homes, and take appropriate fire safety actions. As part of this process it was looking at where

there were multiple areas of no access, and where that was coupled with vulnerable people. This information would then help shape the programme for accessing these homes. The Council did though have a legal right to enforce the terms of a tenancy or lease agreement and within those agreements it had certain rights of entry.

- The Council had two programmes in place covering annual fire door flat front entrance door inspections (covering approx. 16,000 entrance doors) along with a quarterly communal fire door inspections (covering approx. communal 580 doors). Access was again proving to be an issue and officers were reflecting on what they had learnt so far on these matters before moving on with the programme.
- The need for a best practice definition of what ‘best endeavours’ meant in terms of attempting to gain access for safety inspections and work, had been brought to the attention of the Housing Regulator and appropriate Government Departments by London Council representatives. The Council would like to see specific standards for the requirement to be outlined by the Government, and it was hoped that guidance may follow the first tranche of building assessments of high rise buildings.
- The Council had a tendering process in place for the contract to undertake an internal stock conditions survey of its housing stock. The information gained from this process, along with the information from its neighbourhood services teams would help provide a long-term picture of the conditions of its housing stock.
- Building safety case reports would provide a whole system assessment of the safety of the building, whereas the fire risk assessment was a specific singular specialised assessment.
- As the Council was part of the Government’s Early Adopters Group, in relation to the Building Safety Act, it had sent two safety cases (which had been produced in full) for two buildings to the Building Safety Regulator to get some advice on content and format. Though no advice had been received as yet, it was still a useful exercise because the Council could see profile information that it needed to put together in terms of the high rise buildings within the scope. The Council had now completed three building safety case reports, and these were split into three archetypes that covered the profiles of the high rise buildings it had. This would mean that for the rest of its high-rise Council homes it would be able to easily duplicate the framework across the remaining buildings, so that part of the programme should be quicker and be relatively straightforward.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

8. SOCIAL HOUSING REGULATOR CONSUMER STANDARDS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Property Management.

Housing and Fire Safety Advisory Panel - Wednesday, 17th April, 2024

Melissa Dillon, Resident Safety Engagement & Governance Lead, took the meeting through the report and she along with Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, gave the following key responses to questions:

- As part of the regulatory requirements the Council was required to carry out resident satisfaction surveys, collect performance data and to submit it to the Housing Regulator by the end of the financial year. The regulator would use this information to provide the Council with a rating that summarises its compliance. This information would be shared with the panel once it was available, along with an update on the links between the Building Safety Act Building Safety regulation and the Housing Regulator. The initial information could be submitted to the July meeting if available, with the final outcomes and other local authority comparisons submitted to the October meeting of the Panel.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

- If members of the panel had further questions on this process they could be forwarded to the Housing Regulator representative, who gave a briefing to the panel on Monday 15th April, as he offered to answer any such questions.

ACTION BY: Panel Members/Director of Property Management

- Officers were aware that the data arising from the Tenants Satisfaction Survey were likely to reflect tenants overall perception of a service (likely to be low), rather than an individual service/contractual view (likely to be good/very good).

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

9. COMPLIANCE PERFORMANCE REPORT

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Property Management.

Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, took the meeting through the report and gave the following key responses to questions:

- The Council had in place a programme for delivery regarding all the medium risk actions arising from the FRAs in the regulatory notice. A lot of these actions related to fire door installation, and the work associated with the programme had been allocated to the appropriate teams to deliver. The main issues around the delivery of these programmes related to contractor

performance and accessing homes. A copy of the programme and the timeline for its delivery would be provided to the panel at its July meeting.

ACTION BY: Head of Capital Works

- Actions that had been identified as an immediate risk would be actioned immediately, non-urgent actions would be programmed in the normal way which was based on a risk-based approach.
- The aim was to seek to reduce the outstanding actions identified in the programme (currently 8,000 were identified as being overdue), down to zero over the next 24 months. These overdue actions had their own delivery programme which had been shared with the Regulator. Again the delivery challenges were contractor performance and accessing tenant's homes. It was recognised by the Regulator that there would always be a number of such actions which would remain overdue due to specific circumstances, and in future these actions would need to be managed through normal processes which would include the inspection of the housing estate by the neighbourhood housing teams.
- As yet there was not a single benchmark data set regarding measuring performance by landlords in relation to FRA actions. Officers would however provide information regarding how the Tenant Satisfaction Measures being introduced captured FRA performance (this focussing on the assessments themselves rather than actions).

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

- An external contractor undertook the provision of the Council's FRAs, which was because of the complex nature of the Council's housing estate. A briefing session for Panel members had been arranged for 8th May on Camden's FRA process, which would cover what's involved with it, how it was being done and who undertook the work.
- Future compliance reports would just have information on the 5 year electrical testing regime rather than the defunct 10 year cycle.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

- The Council had put in place a new electrical testing process which was being provided by 4 additional contractors. These 4 providers were helping the Council manage the testing backlog and the programme was on track.
- A report had been scheduled for the July meeting regarding the fire door inspection programme and had been included in the work programme of the panel.
- The impact of the Council having to shift capital and revenue funding into fire safety had meant that other programmes (e.g. windows, roofs and communal decorations) have had to be slowed down.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

10. WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Property Management.

The meeting asked for the following items to be added to the work programme

- **Consumer Standards – Initial information (July)**
- **Consumer Standards – Final information with other local authority comparative data (October)**
- **Medium Risk outstanding actions delivery programme (July)**

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

Further information would also be provided regarding rooftop exits and the officer's response to the deputation from the Holly Lodge Estate that was made at full Council.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

New items in bold

3rd July 2024

- Gateway 2 & 3 Building Control Regime
- Compliance performance report (Standing item)
- Fire doors testing, smoke and carbon monoxide alarm installation programmes
- **Medium Risk actions deliver programme**
- **Consumer Standards**
- Work Programme

22nd October 2024

- Fire and building safety charter annual report (looking at financial year 2023/24)
- Compliance performance report (Standing item)
- BS9997 Standard Fire Safety Management System Independent Audit report
- **Consumer Standards**

Housing and Fire Safety Advisory Panel - Wednesday, 17th April, 2024

- Work Programme

29th January 2025

- Annual report on work of the Panel
- Compliance performance report (Standing item)
- Work Programme

23rd April 2025

- LFB Annual Report
- Compliance performance report (Standing item)
- Work Programme

Yet to be Programmed

- Accessing Homes
- Leaseholder safety checks compliance proposals

RESOLVED –

THAT the work programme as revised above, and action tracker update be endorsed and noted.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There were none.

The meeting ended at 8.00 pm.

CHAIR

Contact Officer: Gianni Franchi

Telephone No: 020 7974 1914

E-Mail: gianni.franchi@camden.gov.uk

MINUTES END