

THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN

At a meeting of the **HOUSING AND FIRE SAFETY ADVISORY PANEL** held on **WEDNESDAY, 29TH JANUARY, 2025** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT

Gulbahar Begum (Co-Chair) in the Chair, Jason McIntyre (Co-Chair), Silvia Kirk (Deputy Co-Chair), Ceri Barraclough, Catherine Crawford, Razaq Dawodu, Ryan Heng, Brian Levey, Thomas Watkins, David George, Gavin Haynes, Maria Jacobs, Councillor Sagal Abdi-Wali, Councillor Kemi Atolagbe, Councillor Steve Adams, Councillor Anna Burrage, Councillor Pat Callaghan, Councillor Tom Simon and Councillor Lorna Russell

MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT

Francis Dias, Gillian Farrugia, David O'Keefe, Tezar Miah, Simon Murray 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 David O'Keefe, Jo Rose, Gillian Farrugia, and Michal Jankowski.

Also apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Anna Burrage and Lorna Russell and Tom Simon who needed to leave the meeting early.

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.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OF ITEMS ON THIS 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 22nd October 2024.

RESOLVED –

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 22nd October 2024 be approved as a correct record

6. ELECTION OF RESIDENT CO-CHAIR

The meeting sought nominations for the position of Resident Co-Chair. Gul Begum was the only nomination and the meeting agreed that she be the Resident Panel Co-Chair for a further 12 months.

RESOLVED –

THAT Gul Begum be appointed Resident Co-Chair for a further 12 months.

7. ANNUAL REPORT - WORK OF THE PANEL AND TERMS OF REFERENCE REVIEW

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

Melissa Dillon, Resident Safety Engagement & Governance Lead, took the meeting through the report.

Officers agreed to provide members with options regarding revising the name of the panel so that it better reflected the regulatory framework surrounding building and fire safety.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (MD)

RESOLVED –

1. THAT the activity over the preceding 12 months against the objectives in the Terms of Reference attached as the appendix to the report be noted.
2. THAT the main review of the Terms of Reference be deferred as proposed in paragraph 1.2 of the report.
3. THAT the minor amendment of the Terms of Reference to allow for the appointment of a deputy resident co-chair as set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report be approved

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (MD)

8. ELECTION OF DEPUTY RESIDENT CO-CHAIR

The meeting sought nominations for the new position of Deputy Resident Co-Chair. Silvia Kirk was the only nomination and the meeting agreed that she be the Deputy Resident Co-Chair for the next 12 months.

RESOLVED –

THAT Silvia Kirk be appointed Deputy Resident Co-Chair for the next 12 months.

9. GRENFELL INQUIRY PHASE 2 REPORT - UPDATE

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 Melissa Dillon, Resident Safety Engagement & Governance Lead, Steve Boulton, Fire Safety Advisor Manager, and Maria Jacobs, Head of Neighbourhoods, gave the following key responses to questions:

- It was expected that the Government would announce that it was going to introduce new rights for residents to have a person centred risk assessment, along with new duties for the Council to carry them out. These regulations would be impacted by the type of building the person was living in along with who would be entitled to the service.
- It was expected that clarity would be provided to Local Authority landlords regarding the reasonable steps and the reasonable endeavours they would be required to undertake to deliver the requirements. It was hoped that extra burdens funding would be provided to support all of this work. The Council was already undertaking some preparatory work in this area.
- The Council would need information from its tenants and residents regarding their vulnerabilities and the support they would need in relation to their Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), which would then be

reviewed and assessed by the Fire Safety Advisory Team. Following this assessment then a response would be provided that could refer residents to adult social care for a support package or adaptations to the premises that may be required.

- It was expected that the Government would provide a response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry phase 2 report over the next 6 month period, along with accelerating the remediation of unsafe cladding on high-rise/high-risk buildings.
- The Council had undertaken a PEEPs pilot with residents of six high-rise buildings which covered 260 homes. This involved Council staff knocking on-doors to ascertain whether they felt they needed such a plan, which resulted in only 18 people identifying that they felt needed a PEEP. Following on from this information officers from the Fire Safety Advisory Team were working with colleagues in neighbourhood services, along with other colleagues in the repairs and stock conditions teams to identify tenants and residents they felt should require PEEPs to ensure full coverage. 368 residents had now identified as needing help to evacuate their home in an emergency
- The Fire Safety Advisory Team was working to ensure it could deliver the PEEPs programme, and as part of this it was getting support from colleagues in Neighbourhood Services. This process was being supported through Tenancy Visits and the development of a Tenancy Visit App that would allow appropriate staff to load relevant information on the housing data management system, and make any necessary referrals for a PEEP or other care and support action.
- Currently the visiting programme was targeting people over 70, people who hadn't reported a repair in the last 12 months, and people that had reported damp and mould 12 months previously but hadn't had a follow up visit, which officers anticipated to be approximately 9,000 tenants.
- Officers would ensure that the Leaseholder Forum was made aware of the PEEPs programme.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (MD)

- The Council currently invited resident of all Council homes, whether tenants or leaseholder to identify themselves to Camden if they needed a PEEPS assessment, though how works identified through the assessment process would be paid for was still to be resolved when it applied to leaseholders.
- One of the Government Working Groups covering this issue was seeking to clarify the position regarding PEEPs for tenants living in street properties in relation to access and any works funding obligations.
- The Council was putting in place the processes regarding the establishment of the Chalcots Phase 2 Inquiry and an update regarding the timetable would be provided to Panel Members.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

10. LEASEHOLDER ACCESS OPTIONS

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Housing

Sinéad Burke, Head of Property Asset Management, took the meeting through the report and she along with Maria Jacobs, Head of Neighbourhoods, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Legal warning letters tended to be very effective in ensuring access to a home but when necessary the Council would use a First Tier Tribunal Application, along with an injunction. Forfeiture of the Lease was viewed as a very draconian measure, and should only be relied upon for the most serious breaches or in the event other remedies having failed, as the courts would require that the Council was procedurally correct in any application it made. The Council did not currently capture details on legal and non-legal remedy outcomes, and it was reviewing so that it was able to provide transparent information on this going forward.
- Entering a property without permission from the resident or in the absence of any court order poses a significant risk to the Council, and it would need to consider this on a case by case basis by balancing the impact of waiting for an appropriate order against the risk posed to others in the block. This would also include working with the Council's legal team to assess the risk of any legal, financial or reputational action that may flow from this.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

11. BUILDING SAFETY CASE INFORMATION

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

Melissa Dillon, Resident Safety Engagement & Governance Lead, took the meeting through the report and she along with Andrea Mills, Resident Engagement Strategy Lead, who took the meeting through the Resident Engagement Strategy, gave the following key responses to questions:

- The Building Safety Regulator had advised that it had resourcing difficulties and that there were delays in processing Gateway Applications and Building Safety Case assessments, so there would be a delay in providing feedback

on the information that had been submitted by Camden to date. The Building Safety Regulator had though advised the authority that they welcomed Camden's high quality Resident Engagement Strategy.

- There was no high-rise building using a large panel system in Camden, also relating to Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) a review had been undertaken that had identified some high-rise buildings as being low risk on having this in place, so further work was being undertaken by an engineer to advise the authority on this so it had an accurate picture of the position.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted

12. PERFORMANCE ON COMPLIANCE, QUARTER TWO 2024/25

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

Sinéad Burke, Head of Property Asset Management, took the meeting through the report and she along with Melissa Dillon and Maria Jacobs, gave the following key responses to questions:

- The Council was making steady progress in working through all its outstanding medium and low risk Fire Risk Actions. This was being delivered at the expected rate with existing level of staff and contractors undertaking the work. Other issues effecting the delivery of these actions related to capital actions (approximately half the outstanding actions related to this), that would need to go through the new Gateway building regulation process (currently running at 30 weeks which was beyond the expected deadlines, due to staffing and resources issues). This meant that building control approval would now be required before any such works could be undertaken. Also a number of the Fire Risk Actions were also partially complete but had not been closed until all the works had been undertaken. Grilles on tenants doors, which would require the removal of the grille and a new door were identified as 2 actions and the job for the works would cover both actions. The lead in time on obtaining doors could be slow as the Council was competing with other housing providers for the same doors.
- Officers would give consideration to the best way of ensuring that tenants and residents were kept informed of any delays regarding door installation or repairs, along with providing appropriate reassurance regarding any safety issues arising from Fire Risk Actions.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (SB)

- Officers would provide the no access number for smoke detector installation for Q1 and ensure that in future the report included each quarter's data so that they could be compared.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (SB)

- There were issues regarding gaining access to homes at the end of the programme, and the Council was working with those tenants to see what options would work for them. Officers worked with colleagues in neighbourhoods to work through issues with these tenants. The Council also needed to take forward how it dealt with persistent cases to work through issues they had earlier and in different ways to allow access.
- The Water Tanks 6 monthly servicing regime was identified as being in the red category as the programme overall had slipped. Officers would provide information regarding the worst overdue periods for Water Tanks servicing.

ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (SB)

- The process surrounding secured tenants no access was broadly similar to the process for leaseholders (the use of the First Tier Tribunal Application would not apply in this instance, and it would be difficult to get the tenant to surrender their tenancy). When necessary the Council could apply to get an injunction, this though did not grant the Council powers of access or the ability to force entry but would compel the tenant to allow the Council to do the work. If the tenant still refused access then the Council would then need to go back to Court for a committal which could lead to the tenant going to prison for contempt of Court for not adhering to the injunction. There were often reasons why tenants did not allow access which could relate to their mental health, so the Council sought to work with them and the other appropriate agencies in this instance. Not allowing the Council access was a breach of the tenancy agreement so a notice seeking possession could be sought. This though was a very long process and the Courts were busy at the moment so such an approach would take a long time to resolve. The best approach was working with the tenant through any issue, as this was always the best and quickest way of dealing with such an issue.

RESOLVED –

THAT the report be noted.

13. WORK PROGRAMME AND ACTION TRACKER

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

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The meeting asked that the following reports be added to the work programme:

- Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 report – Government response (to be added to the April meeting if published)
- PEEPs programme (to the yet to be programmed list)

New items in bold

23rd April 2025

- LFB Annual Report
- Compliance performance report (Standing item)
- **Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 report – Government response (if published)**
- Work Programme

Summer 2025

Resident/TRA training

Terms of Reference Review

Compliance performance report (Standing item)

Autumn 2025

Annual Fire & Building Safety Charter report 2024/25

Compliance performance report (Standing item)

Yet to be Programmed

- Compartmentation work in commercial premises
- **PEEPs programme**

RESOLVED –

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

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT

There were none.

The meeting ended at 7.40 pm.

CHAIR

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MINUTES END