

Open Agenda

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Monday 11 September 2017

7.00 pm

Ground Floor Meeting Room G01A - 160 Tooley Street, London SE1
2QH

Supplemental Agenda

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Date: 6 September 2017

5	Date: 11 September 2017	To: Overview and Scrutiny committee
Report title:	Ledbury Estate Update	
From:	Gerri Scott, Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation	

Recommendation

1. Overview and Scrutiny committee (OSC) is asked to note the contents of this report.

Background

2. As reported to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 13 July 2017 in response to the issues raised by the tragic Grenfell Tower Fire, the council and the LFB jointly held a residents' meeting to listen to and respond to concerns about fire safety on Monday 26 June 2017. At that meeting, a resident reported large cracks in their flat in one of the four 14 storey towers (Bromyard, Peterchurch, Skenfrith and Sarnsfield) on the Ledbury estate, expressing concern that these cracks breached the compartmentation of the flat and therefore compromised fire safety. There are 224 properties in total, 75 one bedroom, 72 two bedroom and 76 three bedroom.
3. The blocks are large panel system construction, built by Taylor Woodrow between 1968 and 1970 and are former GLC properties which transferred to Southwark Council in 1982.
4. Following that meeting, the Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation (SDHM), contacted the resident by email to arrange a visit by the Fire Safety team to inspect the cracks. The Fire Safety team carried out an inspection of the resident's flat on 29 June 2017 when it became clear that the gaps were significant. This raised concerns about the structural integrity of the block, and the other three tower blocks as well as the fire safety of the residents.
5. A new fire risk assessment was carried out on 30 June 2017 and the LFB were informed. The LFB carried out their own assessment of the tower blocks on the same day which required the council to put in place a number of remedial measures, all of which were designed to ensure that residents could remain in their homes during the investigative surveys and the temporary repairs to seal the breaches in compartmentation. These included:
 - Walking Wardens (one per two floors) hired from a private company to walk the floors during twelve hour shifts (two shifts per day). This is co-ordinated from Tenants and Resident Hall (Control Centre) by Southwark Council staff to ensure that the brief is complied with in full.
 - Each block has one person designated to call 999 to inform the Control Centre of any potential issues. This person has overall control of the wardens in the block. The instruction to the Wardens is that in the event of a fire anywhere in the block they are to alert the residents and assist them to leave the block. There is no longer a 'stay put' strategy applied to the estate we are now working to a simultaneous evacuation strategy. In an emergency, priority will be given to those on the floor of a fire and initially those on the floors above the fire.

- Communication between all Wardens via radios and between the Control Centre and the Head Warden and between Head Wardens for each block. The maximum distance from a front entry door to the staircase is @six metres and there are four flats per floor.
 - Ongoing work to seal any gaps between flats.
 - Inspections to all fire doors to ensure they are thirty minutes fire resistant and have appropriate self closing devices. If there is any doubt regarding the validity of a 'notional' door it will be replaced.
 - A 'zero tolerance' approach to all items in the common areas to include doormats and pot plants.
 - All flats have enhanced LD2 part 6 fire alarm system meaning we have coverage to all rooms in the flats except the bathrooms. All flats were checked to ensure their fire alarm is in full working order
 - Initial inspections undertaken by a Senior Building Surveyor and our Senior Fire Surveyor indicated there are no potential breaches between the dwellings and the escape routes and that the escape routes are fully protected. This building has no cladded materials.
 - An interim fire alarm system covering the common areas at every landing.
6. All of these measures were fully complied with and as long as they remain, pending a permanent solution to the compartmentation issues, residents will not need to leave their homes.
 7. A team of technical staff started to assess all of the flats within the four tower blocks from Thursday 29 June. Contractors were appointed to carry out remedial works and continued to do so over the weekend and into the following weeks.
 8. Arup, the leading civil engineering firm, were commissioned on Friday 30 June and started work on Monday 3 July. They carried out internal investigations to 4 flats, three occupied and one empty, and also erected a tower scaffold to the exterior of the building to inspect the structure externally.
 9. Arup wrote to the Director of Asset Management, on 5 July 2017 to advise that,

'Arup engineers have found no structural safety issues but are continuing to investigate and will make recommendations for remediation work if required'.
 10. The LFB Borough Commander wrote to residents of the four tower blocks on 5 July 2017 to advise them of the ongoing dialogue between the council and the LFB and the appropriateness of the council's measures in view of the compartmentation measures as below:

'Southwark Council then took the precaution of placing fire wardens on each floor of each of the blocks and briefed them to evacuate the entire block should a fire occur. Needless to say this is contrary to the LFB policy of 'stay put' but entirely appropriate if there are doubts regarding the compartmentation of a building.

In addition to the implementation of briefed fire wardens a range of other measures have been actioned that add to your safety in regard to early detection of fire, keeping means of escape clear and protected and evacuation protocols. Arrangements are being made to secure long term solutions and rest assured that the enhanced measures currently in place on the Ledbury Estate, will not be lifted until these solutions are satisfactorily actioned'.

11. Communications to residents have been ongoing. A control centre has been set up in the Ledbury estate TRA Hall. This hall has been constantly staffed by council staff since Friday 30 June. Each block was given its own Resident Services Officer, and the TRA hall was and is being staffed by officers from the council 24/7. It also provides rest centre facilities for the fire marshals and contractors who have been working on site.
12. The SDHM sent letters all residents of the four tower blocks on Friday 30 June, Saturday 1 July, Monday 3 July and Wednesday 5 July. These have been hand delivered to residents, together with the letter from the LFB and update from Arup.
13. A dedicated website www.southwark.gov.uk/ledburytowers was set up where all information has been posted. Copies of FRAs are available on this website, although these are live documents because of the current compartmentation issues and are being constantly updated. Ward councillors and the Chair of Ledbury TRA have received regular updates.
14. Arup engineers provided an overview presentation about the structural issues and answered residents' questions at the Ledbury Estate TRA AGM on Tuesday 11th July 2017, and the venue was located at the Camelot School to provide sufficient capacity for attendees.
15. At the time the long-term solution for the tower blocks was to address the compartmentation issues. The current remedial works being carried out are temporary measures to provide compartmentation. Arup's report was to provide conclusions on the nature of the structural movement and its extent and any remedial works. The council also anticipated working with independent specialist consultants to develop a system to seal the cracking ensuring that it is flexible enough to maintain compartmentation to meet the necessary tolerances which we see with this type of construction. Once a design solution was agreed these works were to be commissioned and started immediately.

The Arup Investigations

16. On 13 July 2017 the SDHM wrote to all residents updating them on the meeting that had taken place at Camelot School on the 11th July. At this meeting Arup gave an update about their investigations into the structural implications of the cracks in your blocks. This was followed by a question and answer session with the council's Fire Safety Manager who updated everyone on the impact that these cracks have on fire compartmentation and what was being done to address this.
17. At the meeting officers and councillors heard directly from residents about their concerns and questions and addressed the issues identified, and the ways the council was going to fix them.
18. At the meeting Arup confirmed that they had not found anything in their investigations that gave concern about the structural stability of the building but that they were continuing their assessment. Once their work was completed, a commitment was made to share all their findings with residents.
19. The Fire Safety Manager explained that the gaps impact on compartmentation and talked about the work that the council needs to do to fill the gaps, to make sure that should a fire break out in one of the flats, the fire and smoke would not spread to neighbouring flats or shared areas.

20. It was also reported to residents that the council had started carrying out type 4 fire risk assessments, which are the most detailed and intrusive assessments that can be carried out.
21. Also at the meeting was an independent Building Surveyor, Arnold Tarling, invited by residents to carry out his own investigation of fire safety in the blocks. The council requested his report, and agreed to address his concerns as part of our own review.
22. The first mention of gas and the specific issues relating to gas in the four blocks relating to the specific Large Panel System structure of the blocks, came from Arnold Tarling in week commencing 10 July when the council heard from a BBC journalist that Mr Tarling was carrying out an independent investigation in the blocks, and that gas had been raised as a potential issue. At that point some of the fears raised by Mr Tarling related to misinformation in that residents had been told that the gas had been installed in the 1980s however this was not correct).
23. The SDHM urgently contacted Mr Tarling on 10 July to request details of his concerns so that we could address them, but did not receive a response until Thursday 13 July. However, Mr Tarling attended the public meeting at the Ledbury on Tuesday 11th and asked whether or not we would be investigating this issue. The council agreed to do so, again requested details of his investigations, and immediately commissioned Arup to look into this matter as part of their wider structural investigations at the block. As noted above Arup had originally been commissioned to look into cracks reported to the council at an earlier public meeting.
24. Arup conducted this additional investigation and the council received a letter, emailed on Thursday 10th August, stating that they had not found evidence of the strengthening they would have expected to find in these blocks. The council therefore immediately took the decision to turn off the gas and informed the DCLG Permanent Secretary because of the potential wider implications for landlords of similarly constructed blocks across the country.
25. On 15 August 2017 the Leader of the Council wrote to Ledbury tower residents who had been informed immediately of the Arup findings and gave an update on the arrangements that officers were putting in place to provide temporary hot water and cooking facilities, and install an alternative power supply.
26. Engineering staff were immediately on site and contractors were contacted to prepare for this work. The identified solution was to fit electric immersion heaters and electric cookers into every flat within the next few weeks. Work immediately started to test and install the immersion heaters as the first priority.
27. Until this work was completed, the leisure centres continued to offer free shower facilities for all Ledbury residents, and hot plates were available for anyone who needed them. Staff remained on hand 24 hours a day in the TRA hall to offer personal support and advice.
28. The letter from the Leader also informed residents that there was still a major works programme to carry out, which is likely to start next year, to bring the Ledbury Towers up to an excellent standard, with a permanent solution to the cracks. The letter committed to working with residents to develop a plan and timetable for this work.

29. On 17 August 2017 the Leader wrote again to residents with a more detailed update on progress with these works.
30. This was followed with a public meeting held on 23 August 2017. Notes of this meeting are attached as Appendix 1.
31. On 30 August 2017 Arup provided their interim report on their investigations and this was shared with all Ledbury tower residents the report concluded the following:
 - *The tower blocks on Ledbury Estate have been assessed against current building regulations and government guidance for LPS blocks with piped gas.*
 - *The BRE report dated 1985 found that Ledbury (then Commercial way) was a Taylor Woodrow Anglian 'Type B' building and that "The flank wall joints in 'Type B' TWA buildings are likely to be adequate" in the event of a gas explosion of magnitude 34kPa.*
 - *In the absence of documentation on record specifically relating to Ledbury Estate, Southwark Council asked Arup to check whether the four tower blocks at Ledbury Estate satisfy the Government recommendations for robustness of Large Panel System tower blocks with piped gas. Specifically, Southwark Council requested that Arup undertake a rapid assessment of whether a gas explosion could lead to progressive and disproportionate collapse?*
 - *Physical investigations were carried out in the two available (vacant) flats, one in Bromyard and one in Skenfrith House. No reinforcement was detected in the internal (cross) loadbearing walls or the internal leaf of the external (flank) loadbearing walls, as such the walls would fail under a 34kPa and also a 17kPa blast load (blast pressures for piped and bottled gas as defined by BRE). The loss of walls would undermine the support to the floor slabs immediately above and investigations of the connection between the floor slabs and wall above show that the connection is incapable of supporting the weight of the floor in tension. The extent of the loss of the floor slabs in the floor above is likely to be greater than 15% of the total floor area at that level which fails to satisfy the Building Regulations Approved Document A – Structure. The buildings fail to satisfy the three criterion as defined in BRE's Handbook for the Structural Assessment of Large Panel System (LPS) Dwelling Blocks for Accidental Loading.*
 - *It is recommended that piped gas is turned off from the tower blocks on Ledbury Estate. Note: at the time of finalising this report, the gas has already been turned off. Based on the findings of the investigations undertaken, it would be impractical to strengthen the building to accommodate piped gas. The assessment also shows that the wall panels would fail under blast pressures defined by BRE for non-piped gas. It is therefore recommended that gas is not re-introduced in any form. It is further recommended that the gas pipes be removed, to ensure there will be no future use of piped gas.*

- *As discussed in the previous sections of this report, at this particular time, the assessment that we have carried out is not a full assessment. The assessment has focused on the areas of the building known to be most vulnerable when considering the effect of a gas explosion. This limited assessment has identified connection details that would require strengthening in order to enhance the margin of safety to where it needs to be for this type of building for future use, to bring within required limits the extent of damage that would be caused in the event of accidental damage to the structure.*
- *With gas turned off from the blocks the immediate and main risk will be removed.*

Current Situation Update

32. Heating, hot water and cooking: So far the council has accessed 34 flats to fit immersion heaters to provide a (limited) hot water supply to residents. In most flats we have had to remove asbestos in the locations needed for the new cylinders, and the asbestos contractors have accessed 51 flats. We have the ability to do 20 a day subject to residents giving access so if this happens could complete in two weeks. This is dependent on residents providing access. We have teams of both asbestos and heating contractors on site ready to do their work and residents have been asked to make an appointment with their Resident Services Officer so we can complete this work without delay.
33. We have instructed Keepmoat to source and supply the number of electric cookers required, but cannot install these until the electrical supply within and to the blocks has been upgraded. These will be ordered by around 13th September and the first batch will arrive for fitting within 7 days and the rest will follow within 1-2 weeks at latest.
34. The blocks' electrical supplies and local network do not have the capacity for the additional load of immersion heaters and electric cookers. Keepmoat are currently on site undertaking works to the blocks over the next two weeks, and will be finished by 6th September and we are also working with UKPN in order to upgrade their local supplies to the blocks. We will keep residents informed of any proposed power outages as a result of this work. These will be for a working day each block.
35. Longer term the council needs to provide residents with a proper, permanent heating and hot water service.
36. We plan to install a district heating system to each of the four tower blocks. Initially this will mean that each block will have a temporary large boiler sited somewhere outside the block on the ground floor. Pipework from the boiler will be run internally up the blocks and connected to the existing radiator and hot water circuit within each flat.
37. To do this successfully and perhaps more importantly, quickly, before the onset of colder weather, we will need access into each flat on approximately four occasions. We are aiming to have this work completed by mid October, in time for when we can expect colder weather, so we are working hard with residents to provide the access needed to meet this timescale.

Housing moves:

38. The SDHM wrote to all residents of the Ledbury towers on 19 July 2017. This letter reiterated that Arup, the structural engineers appointed by the council, had not found anything of concern in their surveys with regards to the structure of the four tower blocks. Their surveys were ongoing and a commitment was made to report back to residents on their findings as soon as possible.
39. The letter also set out information on what the council would do regarding rehousing which was a question raised by residents at the meeting on 11th July 2017 and again in a deputation to the full council meeting on Wednesday, 12 July. In response to the deputation a commitment was made that anybody who was concerned about their safety would be offered the opportunity to go into Band 1 and bid for an alternative home. The letter also set out how residents could apply to go on Southwark's homesearch bidding scheme and be placed in Band 1. This was available for existing tenants and their households.
40. Residents were also informed that Band 1 is the highest possible priority the council can award on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme giving residents the ability to bid for a new home, including both Southwark Council and housing association properties advertised on the council's homesearch website with a right to return to their home on the Ledbury for those who only wished to move away from the estate temporarily, while the works were completed.
41. To assist residents with this process Housing Solutions Officers were based with the team at the Ledbury TRA Hall. It was also agreed that to assist with the cost of moving, a sum of £5,800 would be provided.
42. 125 Households have registered on the Homesearch bidding scheme although some of these are not yet actively bidding.
43. As a result 94 Households have been placed in band 1, the highest priority for housing. 31 Households need to be verified through the submission of documents/system checks. This is currently being prioritised so we can do the process as quickly as possible and officers are on site contacting residents in order to get the remaining cases registered in band 1. Of the 188 tenanted properties in the four towers 63 have not yet placed their name on the bidding scheme.
44. 4 residents have moved. 8 offers have been made and accepted and these households are awaiting move in dates. 10 residents finished in 1st position with their bids and are waiting to view properties. 11 Households finished within 2nd & 3rd positions and are awaiting confirmation of viewing results from 1st applicants. 2 offers were refused by residents following viewing/second thoughts after the bidding cycle. 4 households placed in Bed and breakfast accommodation. This was 6 but 2 have returned.
45. The Housing Solutions service is stationed at the Ledbury office Monday – Sunday 9am-5pm and the office remains open with the extended team of officers from across housing and modernisation 8 am to 8 pm and cover for emergencies 24 hours a day. The officers are able to provide assistance on getting registered, updating medical information, receiving documents and updating errors on applications. They can also provide bidding advice and updates on any offers.
46. All tenants have a right to return to the Towers when the works have completed.
47. We are finalising plans with Hyde Housing Association to purchase a brand new block very close to the Ledbury, with 80 properties from 1 to 3 bedrooms. These will be council properties at council rent. We are hoping these will be ready this November, and we will reserve the whole block for Ledbury Tower residents.

Structural works and issues

48. ARUP say that with gas turned off from the blocks the immediate and main risk will be removed. However, given the concerns raised and the apparent issues with the historical documents we have regarding the history of the blocks we want to make sure everything is thoroughly investigated and so we have asked ARUP to continue to do a comprehensive structural investigation that will include getting into other empty properties across all four blocks to advise on works as we move forward into the major works phase. ARUP are the leading experts in this field and are working with others that have extensive experience of large panel system buildings and understand these kinds of buildings. These further investigations will include testing of materials (the concrete) and an engineering assessment to understand where we may want to add to the strengthening of the tower blocks. We have impressed on ARUP the need to conclude all of this quickly but we want the assessments to be thorough. In other major works projects structural surveys can take 9 months but we have asked them to report on 20th November.
49. In the meantime, we are continuing to address the fire safety issues in the four tower blocks. We hope to install a new system on the communal landings which will enable us to reduce the number of fire marshals. We are also finalising the specification for the permanent solution to deal with the fire compartmentation issues.

Financial assistance

50. £200 has been agreed as a one-off compensation payment per household for the inconvenience and disadvantage caused. Cheques were hand delivered to all tenants in the four Towers on 31st August. Another payment of £20 weekly is being paid while heating and hot water is restored to the four blocks, this has also been applied to tenants of non-resident leaseholders. This is consistent with compensation that has been given elsewhere in the borough in emergency situations.
51. The council is also paying disturbance payments to those who move. So far 2 payments of £5,800 have been processed to pay for two permanent moves. Payments are subject to any outstanding arrears being deducted. We aim to process any allowance as soon as sign-up is completed.
52. If residents speak to officers in the TRA hall, cash can be made available for any emergencies - so far we have paid out £308.99 for things like an oyster card top up to access showers, meals, laundry and replacing the electric kettle of one resident who needed a new kettle because of heating water.
53. The council is compensating residents, as it does in other similar emergency situations, and is paying for Temporary Accommodation for those who need it. Residents have also been offered the opportunity of a longer term move and a disturbance payment. Rent should still be paid.

Conclusion

54. The situation at Ledbury Towers is constantly evolving and is being closely monitored by daily briefing meetings chaired by the SDHM which responds to all of the operational issues captured by the locally based team as well as the broad strategic issues such as, major works, ongoing structural surveys and rehousing options.

55. As such the information contained in this report is current at the time of writing however officer will provide further updates at the meeting 11th September 2017.

Ledbury Towers meeting 23/8/17 – questions, answers and actions

	Question	Answer	Action
	<p>Heating, hot water and cooking: summary</p> <p>So far we have accessed 34 flats to fit immersion heaters to provide a (limited) hot water supply to residents. In most flats we have had to remove asbestos in the locations needed for the new cylinders, and the asbestos contractors have accessed 51 flats. We have the ability to do 20 a day subject to residents giving access so if this happens could complete in two weeks. This is dependent on residents providing access. We have teams of both asbestos and heating contractors on site ready to do their work. Please make an appointment with your Resident Services Officer so we can complete this work without delay.</p> <p>We have instructed Keepmoat to source and supply the number of electric cookers required, but cannot install these until the electrical supply within and to the blocks has been upgraded. These will be ordered by next Wednesday 30th August and the first batch will arrive for fitting within 7 days and the rest will follow within 1-2 weeks at latest.</p> <p>The blocks electrical supplies and local network do not have the capacity for the additional load of immersion heaters and electric cookers. Keepmoat are currently on site undertaking works to the blocks over the next two weeks, and will be finished by 6th September and we are also working with UKPN in order to upgrade their local supplies to the blocks. We will keep residents informed of any proposed power outages as a result of this work. These will be for a working day each block.</p> <p>Longer term we need to provide you with a proper, permanent heating and hot water service.</p> <p>We plan to install a district heating system to each of the four tower blocks. Initially this will mean that each block will have a temporary large boiler sited somewhere outside the block on the ground floor. Pipework from the boiler will be run internally up the blocks and connected to the existing radiator and hot water circuit within each flat.</p> <p>To do this successfully, and perhaps more importantly, quickly, before the onset of colder weather, we will need access into each flat on approximately four occasions. We know you are keen to have this done as soon as possible and we are aiming to have this work completed by mid October, in time for when we can expect colder weather, so we cannot understate the need for you to please provide the access needed to help us meet this timescale.</p>		
1	Are you saying we can't turn the heating on until mid-October? We are cold.	This is the time we turn on the heating in most of our blocks, but we understand this is difficult for some people who would normally top up heat with electric or other	We note this concern, and will provide a timeline regarding whether electrical heaters can be used by

		heaters. If residents are feeling the cold they should come and speak to us about alternative arrangements.	some in September
2	Will an oil boiler create noise and fumes?	District heating is used on estates across the borough and we are experienced in limiting impact on residents (eg placing it away from homes). Current models are fairly quiet and do not emit fumes.	Council officers to provide images of similar schemes for information.
3	How are we prioritising disabled people and families with children?	We have the details of all vulnerable residents and have been visiting them, but if neighbours are aware of specific needs/concerns please let us know.	Council officers and TRA to carry out visits to vulnerable residents.
4	The hall isn't well-organised. Every time I come in I'm told someone will call me back but no-one does. What are you going to do to improve this?	We are sorry about this. Officers are doing their best but it's clear we need to improve the system.	The council will improve the system of recording information and responding to residents to ensure everyone has a consistent and timely response.
5	Is the immersion heater temporary? It's taking up a lot of space?	The heater is permanent and once the district heating system is in place, water will flow through the existing pipes and the immersion will act as a back up.	
6	What will the costs be with communal heating. Do we have any control?	Modern systems give you individual control for your flat, so you can reduce or increase usage to suit you. Generally fuel costs with district heating are comparable to other methods.	
7	If I've already got an immersion heater, will you replace it?	We'll check it and if it's in good working order we won't replace it.	
8	Can I buy my own cooker instead or choose which one I get?	The cookers need to be under a certain wattage, but we can speak to the contractors about selecting a few for residents to choose from.	The council will ask contractors to select three cookers in different colours and display them in the TRA hall so residents can choose.
9	I live in Peterchurch and my gas has been off for longer than the other flats. I am spending £10 per day on electricity. What will you do to reimburse us?	The problems in Peterchurch began because of an issue with Southern Gas Network, but the gas has stayed off because of the council's decision to turn the gas off. We accept Peterchurch residents may be out of pocket and we will look at how we compensate them.	
Housing moves: summary			

	<p>125 Households have registered on the Homesearch bidding scheme some of these are not yet actively bidding. As a result 94 Households have been placed in band 1, the highest priority for housing. 31 Households need to be verified through the submission of documents/system checks. This is currently being prioritised so we can do the process as quickly as possible and officers are on site contacting residents in order to get the remaining cases registered in band 1. Of these 5 applications that have been submitted within the last 48 hours will be processed today. Of the 188 LBS tenanted properties in the four towers 63 have not placed their name on the bidding scheme. 3 residents have moved. 8 offers have been made and accepted and these households are awaiting move in dates. 10 residents finished in 1st position with their bids and are waiting to view properties. 11 Households finished within 2nd & 3rd positions and are awaiting confirmation of viewing results from 1st applicants. 2 offers were refused by residents following viewing/second thoughts after the bidding cycle. 4 households placed in Bed and breakfast accommodation. This was 6 but 2 have returned.</p> <p>The Housing Solutions service is stationed at the Ledbury office Monday – Sunday 9am-5pm and the office remains open with the extended team 8 am to 8 pm and cover for emergencies 24 hours a day. The officers are able to provide assistance on getting registered, updating medical information, receiving documents and updating errors on applications. They can also provide bidding advice and updates on any offers.</p> <p>All tenants have a right to return to the Towers when the works have completed.</p> <p>We are finalising plans with Hyde Housing Association to purchase a brand new block very close to the Ledbury, with 80 properties from 1 to 3 bedrooms. These will be council properties at council rent. We are hoping these will be ready this November, and we will reserve the whole block for Ledbury Tower residents.</p>		
10	What are you doing for leaseholders? They seem to have been forgotten.	My Southwark Homeowners is there to support leaseholders. Officers have been knocking on leaseholders' doors to talk through their options with them.	The council is sorry that leaseholders are not feeling supported, and will work with the SGTO to set up a meeting to look at their specific issues.
11	Why do we have to bid like anyone else for a new property? We are waiting to move out of homes that aren't safe.	Now the gas has been turned off, the towers are safe, but we understand not everyone feels safe. Band 1 gives you the highest priority and allows you some choice in where you go. We could make direct offers but they often aren't any quicker, and most people want some choice re area and property. But please talk to us if it isn't working for you.	
12	Why are housing officers asking for a letter	We understand that different officers may have asked for	The council will provide residents

	from my employer? It's not easy for me to ask for this.	different paperwork – we will clarify what is required and why, and share a list with officers and residents.	with a list of the paperwork/ID we need to process their housing request, and why we need it.
13	The 80 new properties won't be enough for everyone. How will you prioritise some residents over others?	We believe some residents will choose to move to a different part of the borough, some will want a different size flat, and not everyone will want to move, but if there are more than 80 people who want a flat in the new block our general rule is to prioritise those who have been on the waiting list the longest, and those who work or volunteer.	
14	Will we be putting right the damage to décor from work to fix the gaps/cracks?	The contractors should be tidying when they finish their work, but if you are unhappy with the way things have been left please let us know in the office and we will arrange a visit. Given more invasive works are planned for the blocks, when a full refurbishment will be carried out, we do not recommend that residents go to a lot of effort redecorating now.	
15	What will we do to help overcrowded families?	There is a severe shortage of four bedroom properties in Southwark but we recognise the exceptional circumstances at the Ledbury and will do all we can to help.	
<p>Structural works and issues: summary</p> <p>ARUP say that with gas turned off from the blocks the immediate and main risk will be removed. However, given the concerns raised and the apparent issues with the historical documents we have regarding the history of the blocks we want to make sure everything is up to scratch and so we have asked ARUP to continue to do a comprehensive structural investigation that will include getting into other empty properties across all four blocks to advise on works as we move forward into the major works phase. ARUP are the leading experts in this field and are working with others that have extensive experience of large panel system buildings and understand these kinds of buildings. These further investigations will include testing of materials (the concrete) and an engineering assessment to understand where we may want to add to the strengthening of the tower blocks. We have impressed on ARUP the need to conclude all of this quickly but we want the assessments to be thorough. In other major works projects structural surveys can take 9 months but we have asked them to report on 20th November.</p>			

16	How will the major works affect the fire stopping work that's already been done?	It shouldn't but if there is any breach, we will make it safe. The work will need to be signed off by an independent assessor.	
17	Are Arup looking at all the issues raised in the 1984 documentary 'The Great British Housing Disaster'?	Arup are looking at the broad issues raised in relation to Large Panel System blocks in recent weeks, including what additional strengthening was done at the time of construction, and whether the blocks could withstand a certain force of gas explosion. As there was doubt about this point in their initial investigations, we took the decision to turn off the gas.	We will share Arup's full detailed report with residents when they have finished their investigations.
18	If invasive works are carried out in my flat, won't it be dangerous for my children?	Some residents have said they want to stay in their flats while the work is carried out but until the investigations are finished and we know what major works we need to carry out, we won't know whether this is possible. Obviously we won't carry out works with residents present if there is any safety risk.	
19	Will there be an investigation as to why cracks weren't dealt with historically, picked up by surveys etc?	Yes, Cllr Cryan has asked the Scrutiny Committee to carry out this investigation, to report by the end of the year.	Confirm details when available.
20	Have we created these problems to force people to move out so we can knock the buildings down?	No, absolutely not.	
21	How long will the buildings last – what is its lifespan?	Arup will look at this as part of their investigation. The work they propose will extend the lifespan of the buildings but we can confirm details once we have their report.	
22	Are non-Ledbury residents being allowed to move into the Ledbury Towers as flats become vacant?	No, we need to keep flats empty to carry out our investigations, we have agreed for people to return if they want to, and empty flats help to reduce the overall pressure on the electrical supply.	
23	Did leaseholders pay towards external gas works a few years ago and will we be	No, this was a Southern Gas Network programme and so leaseholders wouldn't have paid towards it.	

	reimbursed?		
24	Will we provide any support to tenants of leaseholders?	In terms of temporary measures, we have offered leaseholder tenants the same support. If these tenants want help to move elsewhere in the private sector we can offer this.	
25	I have concerns about Keepmoat, following poor quality work carried out in my flat before. Are they the right choice?	We are sorry to hear that and will investigate, but ratings for their recent work elsewhere in the borough have been very positive, and Keepmoat will work with resident representatives.	We will look into the resident's specific concerns and raise them with Keepmoat.
<p>Financial assistance: summary</p> <p>£200 has been agreed as compensation per household. Cheques will be hand delivered to all tenants in the four Towers by 1st September. This is consistent with compensation that has been given elsewhere in the borough in emergency situations.</p> <p>We are paying disturbance payments to those who move. So far 2 payments of £5,800 have been processed to pay for two permanent moves. Payments are subject to any outstanding arrears being deducted. We aim to process any allowance as soon as sign-up is completed.</p> <p>If residents speak to officers in the TRA hall, cash can be made available for any emergencies - so far we have paid out £308.99 for things like an oyster card top up to access showers, meals, laundry and replacing the electric kettle of one resident who needed a new kettle because of heating water.</p> <p>The council is compensating residents, as it does in other similar emergency situations, and is paying for Temporary Accommodation for those who need it. Residents have also been offered the opportunity of a longer term move and a disturbance payment. Rent should still be paid.</p>			
26	Will we redecorate people's flats once the major works have been carried out?	Yes, we will carry out a complete refurbishment.	
27	My gas supplier says I have to pay the full amount owed which is several hundred pounds. Can the council help?	Yes, if you bring the details to the TRA hall, we will look at it.	
28	How can we make sure everyone gets the same support? Some people aren't confident asking for help.	Not everyone needs the same level of support, and staff can use their discretion to help people on a case by case basis. However, we agree there needs to be a greater understanding of what is on offer.	Council to publish list of support on offer.

29	When will we get the £200 upfront payment?	We had initially said by 1 st September but will aim to get them out sooner.	NB cheques to be delivered w/c 29/8/17
30	Will compensation go back to when we first reported the issues?	The historic issues will be examined by the Scrutiny investigation and we will decide on next steps once they report back.	
31	Why do we have to pay rent when the council is in breach of our tenancy agreement?	The council has processes in place for these kinds of circumstances where gas is cut off, involving compensation. Rent needs to still be paid for homes provided, but compensation is provided for the inconvenience and any extra costs incurred.	
32	Will your right to buy be protected even if you move?	Yes. If you move out because of the current issues, and return once the major works have been finished, or remain in another council property, you will retain your lifelong tenancy, right to buy etc.	
33	Can the council provide a list of the different terms and conditions offered by the council and housing associations?	Yes, the SGTO has something already prepared.	Cris Claridge to action
34	What happens to the right to return if the blocks have to be knocked down?	We have no plans to demolish the blocks, but we would honour the right to return to council properties on this site.	
35	If a leaseholder bought their property less than 5 years ago do they have to pay the discount back, given the exceptional circumstances?	We can look at this as part of the special leaseholder meeting that is being arranged.	
36	Will Labour, like the Liberal Democrats, include a commitment in their manifesto that the land will remain for council housing?	Yes.	Cllr Peter John to ensure this is included.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Monday 11th September 2017, 7pm, Tooley Street

Statement response from Ledbury Action Group and Ledbury Estate Tenant & Resident's Association

In response to Gerri Scott (Strategic Direct of Housing & Modernisation's) 'Ledbury Estate Update; of 11th September 2017.

2. On 6th June 2017, several days before the tragic Grenfell fire, Southwark Council's Senior Building Surveyor; Peter Clarke visited a flat on the Ledbury Estate upon the request of the resident and assessed the severe cracks in that property as 'natural movement'. No fire risks were mentioned. This raises the question of how many other dangers have been reported across the borough and are not being acted upon?
3. Southwark Council inherited the Ledbury Estate from the GLC in 1982. Why have Southwark's own periodical structural appraisals over the past 35 years failed to pick up the cracks/fire risks and gas issues? The cracks have been reported for decades. Sajid Javid asked the same question in the House of Commons on 5th September stating 'Those cracks did not appear overnight. How can it be that the local authority was seemingly able to act only after the Grenfell tragedy? There are some really big questions for the local authority to answer.'
4. Southwark's Fire Safety department should be familiar with the full fire safety review promised after the Lakanal judgement. Why weren't the fire risks discovered at Ledbury sooner? How is it that Southwark's own assessments failed so drastically?
5.
 - a) Cllr. Cryan recently confirmed that there were 16 flats still remaining on the Ledbury Estate that had not yet been assessed for cracks. Recent images shared by residents over the past few days show huge cracks, previously undiscovered, only being remedied now. The update report states that all flats now have enhanced fire alarm systems, though some residents state their alarms have *not* been checked. Why weren't all cracks identified and remedied weeks ago during the fire alarm works? Or alternatively when Southwark authorised forced entry to flats to switch off the gas supply? As such, to date, there are still serious fire risks present in the towers, and in the case of a fire, smoke would still have many open routes to spread from flat to flat rapidly.
 - b) Additionally, many of the remedial works carried out to cracks are starting to re-open. Including the works deemed a 'permanent solution'.
 - c) A false fire alarm at Peterchurch House on Friday 14th August was mishandled. Fire Marshals were not in place, there was no radio communications to raise the alarm.

Residents had to run to the TRA hall in person to alert staff. Dave Rowson; Southwark's Fire Safety Manager apologised, but the residents are left with little faith in the current fire safety arrangements.

6. The measures were not fully complied with as stated in (5)

11. Frequent reports from residents of miscommunication and bad attitude from some Southwark staff based at the TRA hall led to the Ledbury Action Group introducing 'Independent Observers' to accompany residents upon request, to seek information. The Ledbury Action Group were told, however, by staff at the TRA hall that their poster regarding Independent Observers would be removed as it was classed a 'flytipping' if they added it to the noticeboard. Such is just one example of the attitude of some staff there. Residents have been left in tears on many occasions. Residents have also expressed concern over the lack of privacy at the TRA hall where personal information is being discussed and shared in a large open room amongst many other people. Cllr. Cryan promised that she would address these matters, however, little has changed on the ground.

13. The letter from Southwark of 10th August has not been posted on the Ledbury Towers website. This letter has caused much confusion amongst residents as it stated that Southwark would be decanting in the coming weeks and months. The following letters directly contradict that and residents are still no clearer on whether they will be required to move or not.

14. ARUP made an error. They stated at the meeting of 11th July that Ledbury were Type 'B' tower blocks and they seemingly relied solely on the BRE report that stated inaccurately that the Commercial Way blocks were built in 1971. If either Southwark or ARUP had spoken to residents on the ground, they would have discovered that some residents have been living there since 1968. Are the Council still confident in ARUP?

18. What are the new structural implications given that ARUP have now discovered that no structural strengthening appears to have been carried out on the Ledbury towers as recommended by legislation following the Ronan Point disaster inquiry?

All the previous assessments & works were done on the assumption that strengthening **had** been done. The residents are calling for *urgent* interim reassessment of the building structure to be undertaken immediately. Residents are hugely concerned that large holes are currently being drilled through the floors for the new district heating system and electrical rising main *before* a new appraisal has been carried out. The risks of 'accidental damage' such as impact, high winds (as mentioned by Large Panel System expert Sam Webb) and fire are reportedly enough to cause progressive collapse. Additionally the ARUP report of 30th August worryingly states that *'this limited assessment has identified connection details that would require strengthening in order to enhance the margin of safety to where it needs to be for this type of building for future use, to bring within required limits the extent of damage that would be caused in the event of accidental damage to the structure.'* This would indicate that currently, the building is outside of the required limits. Are Southwark confident that they are prioritising resident safety?

21. Why were Category 4 Fire Risk Assessments only promised by Southwark following instruction from Arnold Tarling? Why didn't Southwark do these sooner?
22. Why was the gas issue only explored upon the instruction of independent experts; Arnold Tarling and Tony Bird, who were brought in by residents? Why didn't ARUP pick this up?
27. One resident attended Peckham Pulse to take a shower but the staff there had no idea of the arrangements made by Southwark.
28. a) How can Southwark make promises regarding major works and 'excellent' refurbishments before they've received the full ARUP report due on 20th November?
- b) Southwark have not yet surveyed all the flats for potential gaps. The kitchens and bathrooms and entrance halls have not been inspected at all. Air gaps were found around the old gas risers in the kitchen cupboards by Arnold Tarling, directly connecting flat to flat all the way up the buildings. In order for Southwark to be thorough, they would need to inspect behind kitchen units, cupboards and in bathrooms and all other areas to ensure that there are no gaps there through which fire could spread.
- 32.a) The new immersion heaters have been leaking, causing misery to residents across the four towers. Many residents were told by the staff based at the TRA hall to call the Southwark Repairs Line to report these leaks. These delays meant in several cases, water got into the electrics, with lights blowing and fuses short-circuiting. One resident described smelling burning and smoke coming from her light fitting and being faced with having to move into temporary accommodation as a result. The contractors; Smyth & Byford, have told residents that 20 new immersion heaters a day (as promised by Southwark Council) is not viable and that they can install 10 per day maximum. Residents report up to 5 missed appointments for these installations, with many residents booking time off work to allow access.
- b) The asbestos removal which has been carried out in recent weeks has been seemingly haphazard. Many residents have been in situ whilst asbestos was being removed. Inconsistent levels of safety equipment have been used.
34. Residents were told that the electricity supply would be upgraded by 6th September. The deadline has been missed. The choice and installation date of new cookers is still unclear.
37. Residents are already feeling cold. What happens if the district heating installation is also delayed?
40. a) Residents are reporting delays, some up to 4-5 weeks between viewing properties and being allowed to sign their new tenancies. Residents are asking that this process be sped up.
- b) Some residents have been shown properties which are not in a fit state for viewing. Two residents (one accompanied by her young children) have been shown around former squats with drug paraphernalia laying around. Why are properties not visited by Southwark to ensure they are in a safe condition prior to viewings?
45. Again there is miscommunication taking place with the staff at the TRA hall. Information regarding rehousing is inconsistent.

46. Southwark have promised the 'Right to Return' for all tenants. However, legal advisors have informed tenants that if they move through the Band One 'Homesearch' system, they will not legally have the right to return. Will Southwark please immediately clarify all the terms and conditions attached to the 'Right to Return'.

50. Many residents feel that £20 a week is not sufficient and are asking that Southwark assess each individual households needs.

51. Southwark need to be clear and consistent with their terminology over the £5,800 payment. The update report refers to it as a 'Disturbance payment' – which is something entirely different.

The legal advice given is that this is a '*Discretionary Home Loss Payment*' – It's important that it's referred to by its correct name as to not cause confusion. It's also important that it's classed as 'Discretionary' – otherwise the Right to Return would legally be affected.

52. Will Southwark let residents know exactly what they are entitled to claim for, how they go about it, who they need to speak to and what information needs to be provided? Gerri Scott stated at the meeting on 23rd August that cash is available for residents at the TRA hall for electricity top-up. One resident, upon attending the hall, was told that she would need to speak directly to her housing officer about this, who was on holiday for several weeks.

53. Residents are unhappy to be paying full rent whilst living under these conditions and again are urging Southwark for a rent freeze.

54. Residents request a named Project Manager to be present onsite to oversee all matters. The SDHM should be keeping the Ledbury Action Group and the TRA informed on the daily briefing meetings, with an opportunity for us to feed back any pressing matters as well.

Residents additionally would like to know more about the investigation promised by Cllr. Cryan regarding the historical issues relating to the towers and how this happened. Residents would like to know what form is the investigation taking, who will be carrying it out and when will it be released?

Residents are recommending that the Ledbury Estate be included in the future agendas of the Housing & Community Safety Scrutiny Committee.

Many thanks

Ledbury Action Group and Ledbury Estate Tenants and Residents Association

(Ledbury Action Group: www.LedburyEstate.com)

