

Housing and Modernisation

Response to the recommendations from the Residents Fire Safety Scrutiny Panel report.

We welcome this report and appreciate the contribution made by residents working with Graham Turner to produce the report in a short timescale.

The report covers 6 key themes and is structured to follow those 6 themes through to a series of comments on how the Panel feel that the area of work in question can be improved: “What might be Improved”. This response focuses on those ‘recommendations’ and sets out our intended action in response alongside some commentary from the relevant managers on work done to date.

Managing and Improving Fire Safety				
	What might be improved?	Action	By whom	By when
1.	p.11 Additional fire protective measures such as the installation of sprinklers in Southwark’s high rise residential buildings may enhance building safety and improve resident confidence in the stay put evacuation strategy	Review the scope for further fire protective measures following the publication of the final report of the ‘Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety’ led by Dame Judith Hackitt	Fire Safety Team (FST)	End March 2019
Update/Comments:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The retrofitting of sprinklers to our high rise buildings was considered as part of our response to the Lakanal Coroners Rule 43 recommendations. • In addition all blocks of seven storey and above with a fire risk rating of moderate and above have all had major works completed to reduce the overall risk rating. In line with LFB advice we concentrated our efforts on those buildings with our most vulnerable residents and installed sprinkler systems in our SHU’s and hostels. • For general needs blocks we fitted enhanced LD2 type smoke and heat detection in our high rise and complex buildings and continue to install these at all other blocks during the course of the Major Works programme. We also work with the SAIL team in order to assist vulnerable residents living in high rise and other general needs blocks. 				
2.	p.11 Additional engagement with residents to improve trust in the stay put policy	Draft and deliver a comprehensive communications plan including a section on the ‘stay put’ approach. Review the fire safety strategy and include a strategy for continuing resident engagement.	Area Manager (Central) FST	End January 2018 End March 2019

Update/Comments					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have identified two main actions to help build trust in the stay put policy where that is applied to a building: introducing a new communications plan which includes an emphasis on stay put and reviewing our overall fire safety approach and including in that an increased emphasis on resident engagement. The 7-storey and above blocks already have Fire Safety Information Packs (FSIP) which were delivered to residents in 2015 which explains in plain language why 'stay put' is recommended. These FSIPs are reviewed alongside the fire risk assessment for that building. We have now decided that (FSIPs) will be drafted for all blocks of flats – again simultaneously with the FRA - and that programme is due to be completed by 2020. Council communications (in particular the website) will point residents towards the LFB website explaining evacuation policies and what 'stay put' may be recommended for their building. The communications plan includes an action to complete a Fire Safety update report at 6 monthly intervals for Tenants Council and Area Forums, HOC and TMOC.. The overall Fire Safety Strategy is being reviewed in line with the recommendations arising from the BB7 report. 					
3.	p.11	Better provision of electrical appliance safety information and advice to improve awareness of the fire related risks	Draft and deliver a comprehensive communications plan including a section on the website	AM (Central)	End January 2018
Update/Comments					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The communications plan will include a review of the Council website to include additional information on electrical appliances and a link to the LFB website.. Vulnerable new tenants will be offered a visit from the LFB which will be arranged at tenancy sign-up and undertaken approximately 6 weeks after the tenancy starts. That visit will emphasise the risks from overloading plugs and sockets. 					
4.	p.11	The competency of Fire Wardens – training and certification to be provided to support role requirements	Draft criteria for the appointment of fire wardens.	Fire Safety Team	End March 2018
Update/Comments					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high demand from housing providers across the country for Fire Wardens has not been without issue regarding the quality of these staff including those on the Ledbury Estate. In order to counter this, Ledbury Wardens have been given Southwark specific training from departments within the Council including the Fire Safety Team and Engineering. Every watch that comes on duty is briefed and debriefed and they are inspected regularly (unannounced) by Southwark Council staff. Any Warden not meeting the high standards set by the Council (and expected by the residents) is dealt with immediately - there is a 'zero tolerance approach' to poor performance. The level of training provided to Wardens and staff on site at the Ledbury has increased significantly to take into the account the installation of a common 					

parts fire alarm system into all four blocks on the Ledbury Estate. The current arrangement with a common parts fire alarm system, two Wardens per block and 24 hour on site Council staff far exceeds that as laid down in the newly written guidance 'Waking Watch/Common Fire Alarm-Guidance to support a temporary simultaneous evacuation strategy in a purpose built blocks of flats'.

- This guidance will be tailored to meet the specific demands of any building for any future incidence.
- Southwark Council have kept the London Fire Brigade informed at all times and they fully support the Council's approach to the fire strategy at the Ledbury.

FSSP Communications and Awareness				
	What might be improved?	Action	By whom	By when
5. p.18	A more proactive approach in the delivery of communications and the development of a fire safety communications strategy, which encompasses a range of communications methods which can be delivered to residents at planned regular intervals.	Draft and deliver a comprehensive communications plan	Area Manager (Central)	End January 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The communications plan is completed and includes a range of communications tools and a timetable for both delivery and review. This plan will be included in the report to Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny sub-Committee on 31 January 2018 				
6. p.18	Development of a formal policy/process that can assist the fire safety manager in the delivery of fire safety information and advice to residents	Review the fire safety strategy and include a strategy for continuing resident engagement	FST	End March 2019
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall Fire Safety Strategy is being reviewed in line with the recommendations arising from the BB7 report. 				
7. p.18	Resident confidence in the stay put policy with additional engagement, provision of information and promotion.	Draft and deliver a comprehensive communications plan including a section on the 'stay put' approach.	Area Manager (Central)	End January 2018

Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See point 2 above 				
8. p.18	Improvements to the website so that all available fire safety information is located or accessed from one dedicated Fire Safety section/portal. This will assist Southwark employees as well as residents in obtaining current fire safety information	Draft and deliver a comprehensive communications plan including a section on the website	Area Manager (Central)	End January 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Southwark website currently includes a dedicated section on fire safety, however, that section does need to be refreshed to make it more visible and to ensure that content is current and appropriate. A Review of website content will complete by end February 2018 and improved links to fire safety information will be included as part of the communications plan. This will include links to external agencies where appropriate for further guidance and advice. Council communications (in particular the website) will point residents towards the LFB website explaining evacuation policies 				
9. p.18	Provision within the website for online fire safety videos and interactive tutorials that residents can be signposted to when residents take up tenancies, tenancy checks, or promoted within Southwark Life magazine, council tax notifications, rent statements, posters etc	Draft and deliver a comprehensive communications plan including a section on the website	Area Manager (Central)	End January 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Review of website content will complete by end February 2018 and improved links to fire safety information will be included as part of Communications Action Plan. This will Include links to external agencies where appropriate for further guidance and advice. 				
10. p.18	Exploit current available communications opportunities and seek new ones for the delivery of fire safety advice i.e. using quarterly rent statements, Southwark Life Magazine, website home page banners and pop -ups, RSO tenancy checks, council tax	Draft and deliver a comprehensive communications plan.	Area Manager (Central)	End January 2018

Appendix 1 – Fire Safety – Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny sub-Committee 31 January 2018

	reminders, fridge magnets, etc			
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The communications plan includes a range of communications tools and a timetable for both delivery and review. 				
11. p.18	How residents are encouraged to take personal responsibility for ensuring that they maintain their fire safety awareness and understanding of the fire safety provisions that are provided in their homes and buildings to keep them safe.	Review the Tenancy Sign-up process Draft and deliver a comprehensive communications plan.	Area Manager (voids) Area Manager (Central)	End February 2018 End January 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That starting point for this is at sign-up of a new tenancy and the sign-up pack is being refreshed to ensure that the respective obligations in the tenancy agreement are highlighted at the time. Lettings staff are being trained accordingly. The communications plan attached to this as an appendix includes detail on improving wider communications with residents. As FSIPs are completed they will be delivered to all residents, included in sign-up packs and made available to our Sales and Acquisitions Team to forward on to new lease assignees. 				
12. p.18	Utilisation of resident representatives to act as fire safety champions who can promote fire safety messages at local level with the provision of newsletters and information at meetings.	Develop training package for fire safety champions as part of programme to develop repairs inspectors.	Resident Involvement Manager	End July 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At any given time we have in the region of 120 constituted TRAs in the borough, we also have a regime of regular estate inspections which involve residents - the vast majority of whom will be TRA representatives. We will explore options to develop fire safety champions and how it might be delivered more effectively by linking with other existing resident involvement Dissemination of information and future training offer to the formal consultation structure and individual TRAs, while working with other engaged residents to produce volunteers. Resident repairs inspectors will be given the opportunity to participate in the work. 				
13. p.18	Enhanced guidance and training for RSO's so that fire safety information and guidance opportunities are maximised when tenancy visits and checks occur.	Development of new mandatory training package for RSOs (and other staff but focused on RSOs) to be refreshed every three years.	Organisational Development	June 2018

Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to a mandatory programme of training for RSOs – which will be refreshed on a three year cycle we have also developed a set of internal technical FAQs for publication on our intranet 'The Source' which is designed to ensure consistency of message across the Council as a whole. These have been designed to complement the expert advice from our Fire Safety Team. 				
14. p.19	Improve the appearance and quality of fire safety guidance leaflets (council and LFB) that are currently provided to new tenants, so that they are more likely to be read and include on them the leaflet version/production date so that currency of the information can be verified.	Review the Tenancy Sign-up process Draft and deliver a comprehensive communications plan.	Area Manager (voids) Area Manager (Central)	End February 2018 End January 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Version control is now in place on LFB Home Fire Safety Guidance included in the sign-up pack and the review of that pack will include a process for ensuring the most up to date copies are used. 				
15. p.19	The provision and re- enforcement of fire safety information at 2 yearly tenancy checks. Re issue paper fire safety guidance leaflets (council and LFB) as original copies that are provided at tenancy sign up may be out of date or lost and information forgotten by residents.	RSOs to be provided with a link to the current fire safety leaflets and the periodic tenancy visit procedure to highlight the importance of the conversation around fire safety.	completed	completed
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RSOs and Lettings Officers have been provided with a link to the current, correct version of the leaflet for sign-ups and tenancy checks. We are also reviewing the tenancy visit procedure to reinforce the importance of the conversation around fire safety. 				
16. p.19	Provide additional fire safety information interventions for older children and students (Secondary school and upwards) such as the effects of deliberate fire setting and impact on community.	tbc		

Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussions with colleagues in Community Safety and Education have started to explore the scope for joint working with the Council's Fire Safety Team on providing fire safety awareness 				
17. p.19	The checklist on the RSO pro forma that is used for tenancy checks to be enhanced with additional fire safety enquiries/checks.	Periodic tenancy visit procedure to be reviewed to incorporate additional check where appropriate	Strategy and Business Support Manager	End August 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This action has been given a slightly longer timescale for completion because we need to be assured that RSOs have the right information and knowledge to respond to additional fire safety questions. RSOs are not intended to be fire safety experts and although a set of technical FAQs have been developed to assist and support them we need to review the effectiveness of those before we extend the fire safety information they are able to give. 				
FSSP Maintenance of Fire Safety Facilities				
	What might be improved?	Action	By whom	By when
18. p.24	Enhanced training for call handlers so that calls can be handled more effectively.	Review training programme for Customer Services Officers	Head of Customer Services	End April 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Services Officers in the contact centre rely on the accuracy of information held on our management systems to ensure accurate advice is given to callers. As much detail as possible is therefore required within Housing IT systems so officers can find the information required, the focus of our communications plan, however, is to ensure that adequate, suitable and appropriate fire safety advice is available on our website. Contact centre officers undergo an extensive 6 week training programme, which includes visits with contractors to sites around the borough. As many of our staff also live in the borough, local knowledge is generally reasonable, though with over 170 blocks over seven stories tall, it is not reasonable to expect them to know the details of each. 				
19. p.24	Reduce the queueing and waiting times so that callers are responded to by a call handler in a reasonable time frame	Continued provision of performance data to Asset Management Core group	Head of Customer Services	completed

Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data collected and reported to Core Group is used to improve the customer experience. Contact Centre performance is directly related to demand (i.e. the number of people calling the contact centre at any given moment in time). The number of people calling is directly related to factors such as inclement weather, major heating/power outages and in particular poor contractor performance. These factors drive call volumes upwards and sometimes make it difficult to achieve the targets that have been set. Contact Centre performance is reported in a number of different ways, in an attempt to reflect customer experience. We report average wait time (i.e. the time it takes from choosing an option – e.g. Repairs - to speaking with an officer) as well as reporting on the longest waiting call in a period. In addition to this we report on percentages of people waiting more than 5 and 10 minutes. All the data taken together gives a robust view of customer experience. 				
20. p.24	Review of the OOH mobilisation and decision making framework to ensure that the necessary attendance is made to incidents that are reported.	Undertake review of OOH process	Head of Repairs and Maintenance	End Sept 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asset Management will undertake a review of the Council's out of hours provision over the next 9 months. Terms of reference will be agreed by end of January and the review should be completed by September. 				
FSSP Repairs and Refurbishment				
	What might be improved?	Action	By whom	By when
21. p.26	Enhanced monitoring, checking and supervision of repair/remedial works.	Look at ways of increasing numbers of works in progress inspections	Head of Repairs and Maintenance/Head of Engineering/Head of Investment	End March 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FST will attend pre-contract meetings with Major Works contractors. CRTOs/Project Officers/all site based staff to receive fire safety refresher training every three years Following the Grenfell tragedy, CRTOs accompanied FST on FRA visits. 				
22. p.26	The numbers of completion/sign off checks to	Look at ways of increasing numbers of post	Head of Repairs and	End March 2018

	be increased to ensure that required standards are met, resident satisfaction and standards of living maintained.	inspections	Maintenance/Head of Engineering/Head of Investment	
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colleagues from both the Engineering and Repairs teams, including Fire Safety Officers, already attend handover visits on new build projects to ensure compliance. 				
23. p.26	Ensure that those responsible for the checking progress and signing off of major fire safety or related works are able to carry out the tasks effectively by guaranteeing that they have the required professional & technical qualifications, competencies and accreditations to undertake the role.	Review appointment criteria to ensure appropriate checks are undertaken	Investment Manager	end September 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider undertaking self-audits for internal staff and external contractors to ensure competencies In house fire safety team has a mix of expertise, competence and qualification to undertake this task and their FRA work. The FS team is involved from design to completion of major works and new build projects. We also regularly check the competencies, training and qualification of our major work and repair contractors 				
24. p.26	The time it takes for snagging works to be followed up and completed.	Set timescales for completion	Investment Manager	end September 2018
Update/Comments				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure contractors are competent in first instance? Practical completion will not be accepted on any contracts until all snagging items are completed, except for very minor issues.' 				
FSSP Resident behaviours				
What might be improved?		Action	By whom	By when

Appendix 1 – Fire Safety – Housing and Community Safety Scrutiny sub-Committee 31 January 2018

25.	Private Lease agreements – consider improving lease agreements so that clauses relating to homes/ overall building fire safety are enhanced and suitably sufficient to inform owner of the effect and impact that unauthorised alterations may have on fire safety provisions within buildings	Review scope for lease variations	MySouthwark Homeowner Manager	End April 2018
<p>Update/Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is recommended that we only consider varying all future leases not, varying our existing leases retrospectively as this can only be done on an individual voluntary basis which means consulting with each individual leaseholder. Updating the lease to incorporate more robust clauses relating to fire safety is positive and an opportunity to review and update other clauses in the lease. If a leaseholder does not want a new lease we cannot amend it or go to the FTT for a determination as essentially our existing lease is not defective all we want to do it improve it which isn't a valid reason for and FTT. Even if we had a defective lease they still have discretion whether to grant new lease terms. There are between 4 – 6 different types of leases in Southwark with approximately 16,000 leaseholders. There are significant costs to varying leases. We currently charge 305.87+VAT. In addition there would be Land Registry costs, mortgage company costs, leaseholders solicitors fees (approx. £650-£700 per variation and Paris Smith costs There would also be the administrative costs of consulting every individual leaseholder which would require additional staffing resources for some considerable length of time as it is not like varying the tenancy agreement where we can consult with everyone, consider their feedback then go ahead and vary the agreement on mass. We would also have to ensure we had the right resources for the project in our legal compliance team to do each variation. 				
26.	Consider making online training module/s available for residents as a means of improving fire safety knowledge within homes/buildings	Develop training package for fire safety champions as part of programme to develop repairs inspectors.	Resident Involvement Manager	End July 2018
<p>Update/Comments - see point 12 above</p>				
27.	That decisions on applications for alterations are completed by the council within the specified 4 week timescale to prevent the commencement of unauthorised alterations taking place after the cut off time	Sales & Acquisitions to review timescales in procedure.	Sales and Acquisitions Manager	End June 2018
<p>Update/Comments</p>				

- Option to be discussed with our internal partners to confirm whether 4 weeks is still a realistic timeframe for considering alterations. This will not be possible for significant alterations (extensions etc) in which case we will look at our wording to ensure that any reference to timeframes are stressed as a guideline and not a rule.
- At the start of the applications process we provide applicants with a clear understanding of our processes and the matters we review prior to providing consent. We also advise residents that starting works without consent in writing will result in a breach of the lease. We do not believe there are many applicants who are completing works without consent in writing.

What is done for vulnerable groups of people

	What might be improved?	Action	By whom	By when
28.	The provision of home fire (domestic) sprinklers for residential fire prevention in the homes of vulnerable residents that do not wish to or may not be suitable for supported living in accommodation such as sheltered units	Develop a fire safety policy for vulnerable households including case by case assessments on the safe storage of mobility scooters, the use of personal misting systems and the use of PEEPs.17	Area Manager/Fire Safety Manager	September 2018

Update/Comments

- Explore suitability of portable misting systems for those considered particularly at risk
- Is there LFB funding?
- MA practitioners meetings to recommend perhaps