

Item No. 8	Classification: Open	Date: 06/05/04	MEETING NAME Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Report title:		Emergency Procedures (re: Fire at East Dulwich Estate)	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee [8 March 2004]	

RECOMMENDATION(S)

1. That the Executive's review of emergency procedures arising from the Thames Water scrutiny report include:
 - i. looking at the assessment and escalation of emergency situations and that appropriate back-up procedures and resources are put in place;
 - ii. reviewing communication arrangements so that a clear chain of communication can be quickly established at the site of emergencies;
 - iii. where a utility company is involved, ensuring that they meet their own performance standard in responding to the incident.
2. That the Housing Department consider disseminating local emergency plans to Tenants and Residents Associations (T&RAs).
3. That the Crown House Neighbourhood Manager engage with T&RAs over the arrangements for emergency procedures, and that the T&RAs have a participatory role in planning and actioning these procedures.
4. That the Executive investigate practical arrangements to permit Officers to have delegated powers to incur expenditure in emergencies.
5. That the Housing Department instigates a rolling cycle of emergency training exercises in implementing the Local Emergency/Contingency Plan for each Neighbourhood on a timetable at the discretion of the Director of Housing. This exercise should be monitored by independent expert assessors who will give feedback to each neighbourhood.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6. At its meeting on 9 February 2004, the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee heard a report from Councillor Veronica Ward expressing concern about the emergency response to a fire at East Dulwich Estate in January 2004. Concerns raised by Councillor Ward on behalf of those present included quality of temporary accommodation offered, the time taken to provide food and shelter, and the security of the vacated flats on the Estate.
7. The Sub-Committee agreed that it would receive reports from Officers and the Chair of the East Dulwich Tenants and Residents Association (TR&A) about what took place during the emergency situation, with the purpose of identifying lessons to be learned.
8. Councillor Veronica Ward, Housing officers, and the Chair of the East Dulwich Estate TR&A were amongst those who were invited to address the Sub-Committee

on 8 March 2004 to outline their concerns. Further issues that emerged during these discussions included communication with those affected by the emergency, the role of T&RAs in emergency situations, perceived competency of officers to respond to emergencies, and limitations surrounding the delegated powers of officers to incur expenditure when responding to local emergency situations.

9. Attached as appendixes are the following:

- Appendix 1: Report from the Chair of the East Dulwich Estate T&RA
- Appendix 2: Report from Housing officers
- Appendix 3: Briefing note from Councillor Veronica Ward.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

10. The Sub-Committee heard from the Scrutiny Manager that Executive was planning to review emergency procedures in light of the Thames Water scrutiny. It was considered timely and appropriate for Executive to be made aware of some of the issues being raised in relation to implementing local emergency procedures at East Dulwich Estate, and for Executive to consider these issues during their review.

11. During the scrutiny the role of T&RAs in emergency situations provoked discussion. It was noted that T&RAs did not have copies of local emergency plans, nor were they party to the development of the emergency plans. The Sub-Committee believes that this issue needs to be addressed.

12. The Sub-Committee also tasked specific actions to Housing officers. The Crown House Neighbourhood Manager was asked to report back to the Sub-Committee on:

- EDF Energy's report on the cause of the fire and any remedial action necessary to prevent a similar occurrence on other estates
- the response of accommodation suppliers to concerns raised by the Housing Department about the quality of temporary accommodation.

The Manager was also asked to engage with T&RAs over the arrangements for emergency procedures, and to ensure that T&RAs had a participatory role in planning and actioning these procedures. The Sub-Committee will ensure that these actions are followed up.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee: Agendas and Minutes	Scrutiny Team Rm 3.16, Town Hall, Peckham Road, London SE5 8UB	Carina Kane Scrutiny Project Manager Tel: 0207 525 4393

APPENDIX A

Audit Trail

Lead Officer	<i>Shelley Burke</i>	
Report Author	<i>Carina Kane</i>	
Version	<i>Final</i>	
Dated	<i>26/04/04</i>	
Key Decision?	<i>No</i>	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Borough Solicitor & Secretary	No	No
Chief Finance Officer	No	No
Chief Officers	No	No
Executive Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Constitutional Support Services	27/04/04	