



ISLINGTON

COUNCIL

29 June 2017

ADDITIONAL DESPATCH

Please find enclosed the following items:

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| Item 9 | Islington Council's response to the Grenfell Tower fire | 1 - 6 |
| Item 12a. | Revised Chief Whip's Report | 7 - 8 |

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Report of: Cllr Diarmaid Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development

Meeting of:	Date	Ward(s)
Council	29 June 2017	All

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SUBJECT: Update on Islington Council's response to the Grenfell Tower fire

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report sets out Islington Council's response to the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower and Islington Council's fire safety arrangements within its housing stock.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council's thanks are passed to the firefighters of Islington and across London for their heroism and prompt response to the Grenfell Tower fire on 14 June.
- 2.2 That Council notes the urgent actions being taken by Islington Council in response to the fire at Grenfell Tower and the support provided to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the Grenfell Fire Response Team.
- 2.3 That following on from urgently addressing the fire safety issues currently in hand, a thorough examination will be undertaken by Islington Council into how the sides of Braithwaite House came to be partially clad in a combustible form of cladding.

3. Background

3.1 Supporting the Grenfell Fire Response Team

Firefighters across London, including Islington firefighters, supported the mammoth efforts of the London Fire Brigade to put out the fire at Grenfell Tower. Their prompt response for assistance, heroic acts and continued support has been greatly appreciated throughout Islington. The response of all the emergency services to this incident should be commended.

Islington Council has committed to supporting the Grenfell Fire Response Team, which has been set in the aftermath of the fire by the Pan London Gold Command, to respond to the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in the early hours of Wednesday 14 June 2017. Help will be provided as needed and asked for by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the Grenfell Fire Response Team. Help provided so far includes:

- An emergency planning officer has been supporting the emergency response and been present on the ground;
- Local Authority Liaison Officers (LALOs) have also been providing support with the emergency response on the ground;
- Four social workers from the Children's and Adults Services have been provided to support those affected by the fire for at least the next three weeks;
- A relief Director of Housing has been provided to The Grenfell Fire Response Team and has worked on the ground co-ordinating alternative housing offers;
- Housing needs and housing operations staff have been provided to help with the temporary housing of those who have lost their home as a result of the fire and are meeting with residents to help establish their on-going needs;
- We have offered access to empty properties that become available to let, to help with the temporary rehoming efforts;
- Counselling services have also been provided by Islington to firefighters who attended the scene.

Positive feedback has been received on the efforts of our staff in providing support in response to this fire.

3.2 Ensuring safety for our residents in council-owned homes

Before the Grenfell Tower fire

The Council established its Homes and Estates Safety Board (H&ES Board) in 2012 which is modelled on the Safeguarding Board model. It has an independent chair, representation from the London Fire Brigade, the Executive Member for Housing and Planning, and specialist staff across the council and Partners for Improvement in Islington (Partners) [who deliver services to most of the council's street properties] in attendance. The H&ES Board oversee Housing's fire risk assessment programme and the following body of work being carried out to enhance fire safety:

- Since 2013 the council has spent £7m on its fire risk assessment programme and associated fire works to all its council housing in the borough;
- A further £38m of fire safety works are programmed to be completed;
- The council spends £1m annually on carrying out its electrical testing programme, ensuring that wiring in homes is safe and up to required standards;
- Dry riser checks are carried out regularly and all checks are up to date.

The council has a robust Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) programme, with some blocks assessed annually and every block reassessed at least once every three years.. FRAs can identify a range of measures and improvements to fire safety and these actions are followed up by housing staff. Improvements that require more significant investment are added to the council's programme of investment. The following measures are either under way or were already planned before the Grenfell Tower fire:

- £24m is being invested in communal doors and bin storage areas throughout our estates
- A programme of upgrades to front doors to improve their resistance in the event of a fire is also being carried out at a cost of £11m
- Dry risers will be converted to wet risers in two of the highest blocks in Islington. This will better

support fire crews in the event of a fire at the top of those blocks by making water instantly available. The dry riser mains in Michael Cliffe House will have been converted to wet risers by the end of June; works for Peregrine House are scheduled to be carried out later this year.

Close partnership working has been forged with the London Fire Brigade through the H&ES Board and regular bilateral meetings chaired by Sean McLaughlin, Director of Housing and Adult Social Services. This Partnership has helped develop innovative practices and has seen the installation of 3 permanent mobile sprinkler units for very vulnerable residents where the risk of accidental fire is particularly high.

3.3 Action since the fire at Grenfell Tower

Islington Council has fully complied with requests from government for information and action following the terrible fire at Grenfell Tower. 126 of our housing blocks are six storeys high or more. 55 of these have cladding but only 8 have panel cladding, which is the particular focus for further investigation at present. Samples of the cladding used on all eight blocks have been taken and sent for testing by the Buildings Research Establishment (BRE). Samples taken from Braithwaite House, identified as most likely to contain Aluminium Composite Materials (ACM), returned as positive. The ACM was present in the cladding to the flanks on the side of the building. The cladding to the rest of the sides, front and back of the building has also been sent for testing by the BRE as a precaution. Results from the remaining seven blocks on the Harvist and Brunswick Estates, are expected imminently.

The council was informed late on Thursday 22 June that ACM was present at Braithwaite House and council staff attended the building that evening, along with the London Fire Brigade, to carry out fire checks and remove obstructions in communal areas. The London Fire Brigade carried out a fuller inspection of the building the next morning. Arrangements were made for the removal of cladding panels to start on site on Monday 26 June and the erection of scaffolding took place on Friday 23 June in preparation. Furthermore, the council has organised for 24/7 fire safety patrols to take place at Braithwaite House until the cladding is removed, and Area Housing Officers have been on hand to answer residents' questions each morning.

In recent years there have been fires in some of the council's tower blocks including Braithwaite, Talbot (Harvist), Hind House (Harvist) and Kestrel House. Reassuringly, in these cases the compartmentalisation of the buildings worked as expected and fire did not spread beyond the flat where it originated in all these cases. The worst fire in recent years in a council block occurred at one of our smaller blocks, Rollit House. The fire at Rollit House spread through the roof space, which had been due to undergo works that would have prevented the fire just weeks after it took place. Fortunately, all residents escaped from the fire unharmed. Following the fire, a risk-assessed programme of checking roof spaces is being carried out, having been agreed with the London Fire Brigade.

Further investigations will be undertaken on the remaining 47 blocks and samples taken as and when appropriate. These blocks do not have rain-screen cladding and are therefore considered lower risk.

3.4 Safety in non-council buildings

The council has written to all housing associations in Islington asking them to share with us the details of their returns to the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG), providing details of their tall and clad blocks and any concerns about the presence of ACM. The council will continue to work with housing associations and share best practice with them in respect to approaches to fire safety.

The council has been in discussion with the landlord of the Archway Tower in the north of the borough. The landlord has shared with the council its fire risk assessment and provided reassurance that the cladding on the building is of a different kind to that used on Grenfell Tower.

The council's Service Director, Planning and Development, Karen Sullivan will be writing to all owners of buildings of six storeys and over that have received planning permission or building control consents within the last 15 years. They will be advised to keep fire risk assessments up to date and provide us with advice about the safety of cladding on their buildings.

The council has contacted partners in the NHS to discuss their property situation, and the council is conducting a thorough review of the situation with all school buildings.

3.5 Communications

Getting clear and useful information, reassurance and advice out to residents has been a priority since the fire at Grenfell Tower. A full statement from Cllr Ward was issued on the same day as the fire itself, with information published online and distributed publicly via Twitter and sent directly to media. An updated statement followed on Friday 16 June, with additional information including the Council's decision to halt the high-rise insulation project.

Soon afterwards, communications focussed on the blocks where samples had been taken for testing (those on the Harvist Estate, Braithwaite House and the Brunswick Estate). Following the fire at Hind House (Harvist Estate) on 17 June, letters went out to residents on Wednesday 21 June and a visit was carried out by ward councillors that afternoon.

The first letter to go out to residents of Braithwaite House went out on Thursday 22 June, confirming that cladding samples had been sent for testing and inviting them to a drop-in session the next day. This was followed up with a second letter on Friday 23 June once the council had confirmation of the presence of ACM.

On Friday 23 June, a drop-in session was held at Braithwaite House by the Leader, Executive Member for Housing and Planning, Director of Housing and Adult Social Services, local ward councillors and the London Fire Brigade from 11am-1pm, where residents and the Tenants Management Organisation (TMO) were given the news that ACM was present. At this meeting the council was able to confirm works to remove the ACM would start on Monday 26 June. The same day, a further letter was issued to Braithwaite House residents confirming that the cladding would be removed starting from Monday 26 June, and inviting residents to a second meeting with council officers, councillors and the London Fire Brigade on Tuesday 27 June.

Letters to residents of the Brunswick Estate were distributed on Friday 23 June.

Further letters for all council tenants and occupants of leasehold properties will be posted in the week commencing 26 June and will provide information about the action being taken by the council, safety advice and reiterating the fire safety arrangements for council buildings.

Information and advice about fire safety has been updated in light of the tragic events at Grenfell Tower and frequently asked questions are being developed to help answer residents' questions and to support council Members and staff in responding to concerns of residents.

A briefing on the fire was provided at the Housing Scrutiny Committee on 20 June and further briefings will be arranged at upcoming meetings where residents may want to attend to have their concerns and questions answered.

Furthermore, council officers and councillors have attended, or will be attending, meetings of the Finsbury Park Ward Partnership (28 June), a meeting with Harvist Estate residents (30 June), Highbury East Ward Partnership (5 July) and a meeting of the Finsbury Ward Partnership (25 July). Further information will be released to the public and media as soon as we have it.

4. Implications

4.1 Financial Implications: Financial implications will be sought as investment decisions are considered and made.

4.2 Legal Implications: Legal implications will be sought as investment decisions are considered and made.

4.3 Environmental Implications: These will be considered as investment decisions are made.

4.4 Resident Impact Assessment:

The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

An assessment of the impact on all residents, especially those who have particular vulnerabilities, will have to be carried out as decisions are made around investments and the management of any works necessary as a result of cladding tests.

5. Reason for recommendations

5.1 There has been a pan-London response to the fire at Grenfell House, for which Islington Council and fire officers have provided support and assistance. The council is responding to the requirement of CLG in checking cladding on its high-rise buildings and has been working on providing residents with information and advice to keep them safe.

Appendices

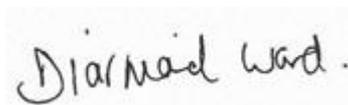
- None

Background Papers

- None

Final report clearance:

Signed by:



28 June 2017

Cllr Diarmaid Ward,
Executive Member for Housing and Development

Date:

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ISLINGTON

COUNCIL MEETING – 29 June 2017

REPORT OF THE CHIEF WHIP

COMMITTEE APPOINTMENT:

1. APPOINTMENT TO THE HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

- a) That Dean Donaghey is appointed as a resident observer to the Housing Scrutiny Committee with immediate effect.

Recommendation:

- a) To agree that Dean Donaghey is appointed as a resident observer to the Housing Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2017/18 or until a successor is appointed.

APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES:

2. APPOINTMENT TO THE DAME ALICE OWEN FOUNDATION

- a) That Mark Taylor, Director of Learning and Schools, is standing down from the Dame Alice Owen Foundation and that Andrea Stark, Director of Employment, Skills and Culture, is appointed as his replacement with immediate effect.

Recommendation:

- a) To agree that Andrea Stark, Director of Employment, Skills and Culture, is appointed to the Dame Alice Owen Foundation until the end of the municipal year 2018/19 or until a successor is appointed.

3. APPOINTMENT TO THE CAMDEN AND ISLINGTON NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

- a) That Councillor Shaikh is standing down from the Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust and that Councillor Turan is appointed as her replacement with immediate effect.

Recommendation:

- a) To agree that Councillor Turan is appointed to the Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust until the end of the municipal year 2017/18 or until a successor is appointed.

COUNCILLOR SATNAM GILL
Chief Whip

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