

## HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 JUNE 2018

### URGENT ITEM: FIRE SAFETY ON THE WHITECROSS ESTATE

**The Chair has agreed to accept this as an urgent item due to serious fire safety concerns about Peabody and St Mary's towers on the Whitecross Estate.**

Local councillors have several concerns, including:

- Waking watch staff not wearing hi-vis vests or displaying identification;
- Waking watch staff using tables and chairs in the fire escapes, blocking what would be the only escape route in the event of a fire;
- Fire hazards in communal areas, including an old door, a bed frame and a mattress.

These matters were reported to Peabody, and councillors were assured that staff would receive extra training on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> June.

On the evening of Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> June, waking watch staff reported to councillors that they had not received extra training, nor had they been given advice on blocking fire escapes. Some staff had not been issued with hi-vis vests.

Councillors are concerned that these issues are creating additional fire hazards and contributing to resident anxieties about fire safety.

Ashling Fox, the Chief Operating Officer of Peabody, has agreed that this is not good enough and has advised:

- A fire drill was completed with both waking watch teams on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> June. Both were completed in under 15 minutes and feedback has been given to the supervising team which should improve their performance. A further drill will be conducted next week.
- The Peabody Head of Fire Safety has explained to staff that they are not permitted to take breaks in stairwells and any smokers must be well away from the building.
- Communal areas have now been cleared and waking watch staff have been provided with somewhere to store personal belongings.
- Issues with evening waking watch staff will be picked up with the contractor and housing management team on site. Random spot checks will be carried out and activity will also be monitored by caretakers.
- The estate services team has been asked to remove any further bulk waste swiftly.
- A written Q&A document will be distributed to residents, and local councillors will be invited to comment on this before it is issued.
- The Fire Brigade Borough Commander has been invited to the next Peabody residents meeting.

**Ashling Fox, Chief Operating Officer, Tara Agarwal, Director of Technical Compliance and Quality; and Alison Muir, Group Director of Resident Services, have agreed to attend the meeting and answer the committee's questions.**

*Photographs illustrating the fire safety concerns are appended.*

Floor 10



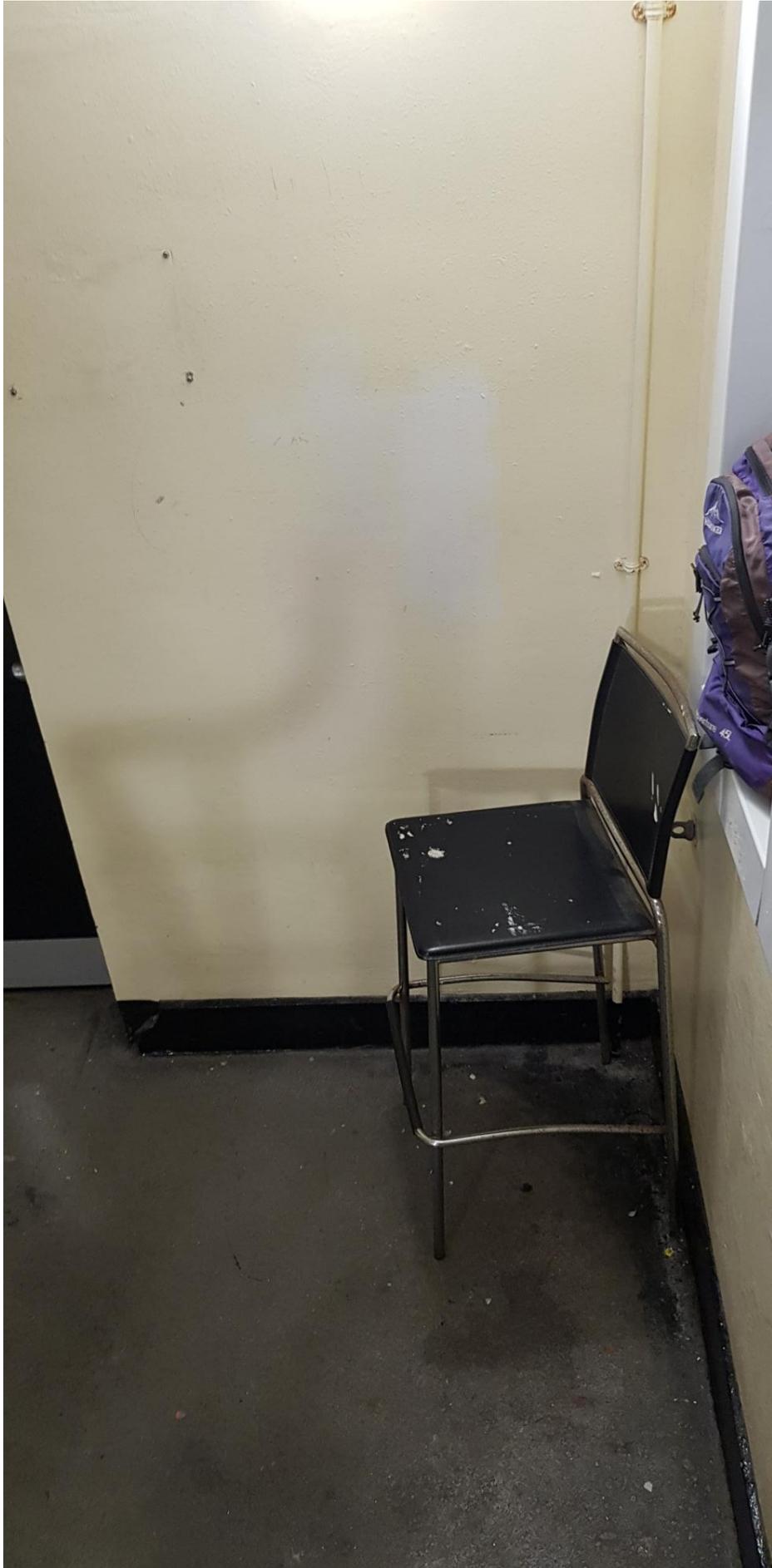
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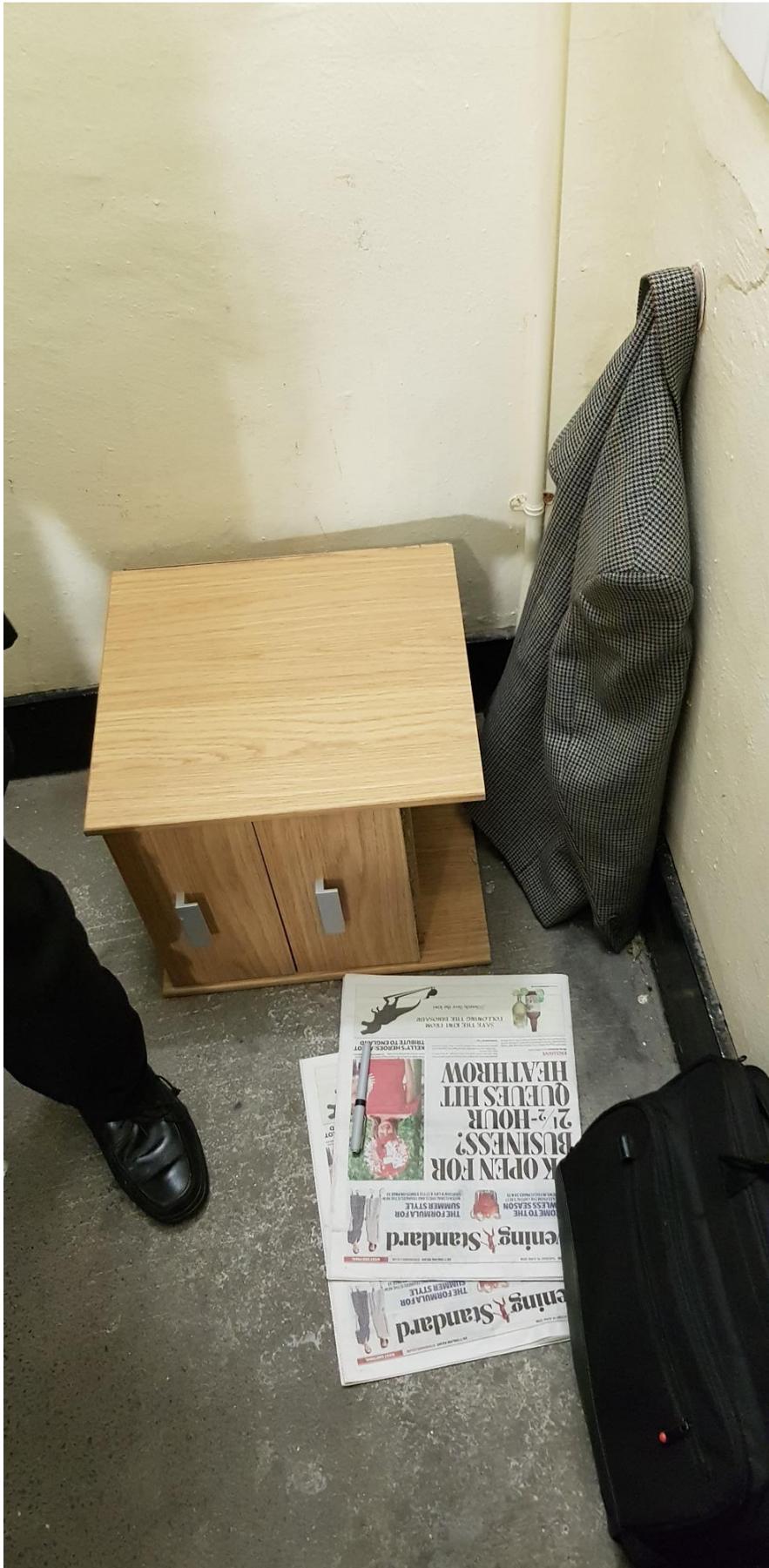
















1st  
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