

Non-Executive Report of the: COUNCIL Wednesday 18 November 2020	
Report of: Asmat Hussain, Corporate Director, Governance and Monitoring Officer	Classification: Unrestricted
Motion for debate submitted by an Opposition Group	

Originating Officer(s)	Matthew Mannion, Head of Democratic Services
Wards affected	All wards

SUMMARY

1. Council Procedure Rule 11 allows for time at each Ordinary Council meeting for the discussion of one Motion submitted by an Opposition Group. The debate will follow the rules of debate at Council Procedure Rule 13 and will last no more than 30 minutes.
2. The motion submitted is listed overleaf. In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11, submission of the Opposition Motion for Debate will alternate in sequence between the opposition groups. This Opposition Motion is submitted by the Conservative Group.
3. Motions must be about matters for which the Council or its partners has a direct responsibility. A motion may not be moved which is substantially the same as a motion which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the previous six months; or which proposes that a decision of the Council taken in the previous six months be rescinded; unless notice of the motion is given signed by at least twenty Members.
4. Notice of any proposed amendments to the Motions must be given to the Monitoring Officer by Noon the day before the meeting.

MOTION

Set out overleaf is the motion that has been submitted.

8 – Opposition Motion by the Conservative Group – Regarding Fire Safety & The Security of The Housing Sector in Tower Hamlets

Proposer: Councillor Andrew Wood

Seconder: Councillor Peter Golds

This Council notes:

That 282 buildings in Tower Hamlets have registered for the government's £1bn building safety fund to fix cladding issues. That the local authorities with the next highest numbers of affected buildings were Manchester with 136 buildings, 130 in Newham, 127 in Westminster, 126 in Southwark, 102 in Greenwich.

That this list does not include most housing association properties which have a separate application process.

That this list also does not include other buildings with non-ACM cladding issues but where there are other fire safety issues. And it also does not include any building under 18 meters in height.

It is therefore probable that the total number of buildings affected by fire safety issues in Tower Hamlets may be between 300 and 400. Tens of thousands of residents must be affected by this.

That there is almost no information in the public domain about which buildings are affected except for some examples quoted in Council documents (Maltings and Brewster) or where residents have advertised their problems.

That some of these buildings were built by developers still active in the Borough although some buildings affected were built decades ago.

The NLA Tall Building Survey 2020 shows 78 tall buildings in the planning pipeline in Tower Hamlets with 18 completed in 2019. Both numbers substantially in excess of any other Borough.

It is clear that Tower Hamlets is the home of both the most tall buildings (as well as tallest) and the greatest number of buildings with fire safety issues

This Council further notes:

That residents face huge uncertainty in two areas;

1. Living in buildings whose fire safety is suspect or where regulations are now different, who may now have 247 fire wardens and emergency evacuation procedures;
2. Living with huge financial uncertainty that could result in bankruptcy, inability to sell their properties, increased service charges or financially crippling bills;

That housing associations may also face financial pressures for similar reasons.

The draft Building Safety Bill which puts the financial onus on homeowners rather than those who built, approved, signed off or regulated those buildings.

That some buildings were approved by Tower Hamlets Council own building control team.

That as yet except for national charities like Leasehold Knowledge Partnership and

neighbour assisting neighbour there is no local help nor advice available. Residents are having to become experts on these issues but with no support nor assistance.

That on the 13th November 2019 an amended motion 11.1 Motion regarding Restoring Fairness to the Leasehold System was adopted by Tower Hamlets Council and that the CMA issued its investigation report in February 2020.

This Council resolves:

- That we need to compile a database of every affected building of all types, so that we capture in detail the kinds of problems, types of buildings, height etc;
- That list needs to be published in a summarised and anonymised way so that we understand the scale of the issue in Tower Hamlets, how many residents live in unsafe buildings?;
- That where developers are submitting new planning applications but have unresolved issues in their older buildings which they have chosen to not help resolve that they justify why they should be allowed to build again;
- That we establish using s106 or New Homes Bonus funds a Help & Advice team for a time limited period (3 years tbc), whose role it is to advise residents and to keep them informed as well as ensure developers and managing agents are aware of their responsibilities;
- That LBTH provide assistance with access to planning permission/building regs if required for Fire Remediation and also access to technical drawings for older buildings which are not on the LBTH portal for free if the purpose is to deal with fire safety issues;
- That the High Density Living Supplementary Planning Document be expanded to focus on the management issues caused by tall buildings as well as fire issues even if it can only include recommendations;
- That we ask government to expand the funding available to deal with these issues as it cannot be right for home owners to foot the bill for failures in regulation and oversight by professionals and government;
- That where a building has fire safety issues and where the s106 remains unspent that it be spent on resolving these issues, it would be unfair for residents to have to pay s106, which remains unspent and then again to fix their homes;
- That the same is done for any buildings that gained New Homes Bonus for us.