

LABOUR GROUP AMENDMENT

12.4 Motion on The Purchase of a 64-Metre or Taller Turntable Ladder for Tower Hamlets Residents

Proposed by: Cllr Eve McQuillan

Seconded by: Mayor John Biggs

The Council Notes:

- June 14th marked the day four years ago when a fire broke out at Grenfell Tower killing 72 and leaving many more injured, traumatised, and homeless.
- This motion puts on record the bravery of our firefighters and recognises the especially important work that they do. In our own borough, crews were on site within 4 minutes of the first 999 call from New Providence Wharf and we are immensely grateful for the work they did to protect residents' lives.
- Tower Hamlets has more tall residential buildings than anywhere in the country. These buildings are predominately located on the Isle of Dogs and in Aldgate.
Whilst blocks should be designed to ensure that fires are contained within the area of the building in which they begin, we know that 293 high-rise buildings have applied to the government's building safety fund because surveys have found that they are not fully fire safe. This is the highest number for any local authority in England. Mitigation has been put in place to reduce risk to residents and their homes in the event of a fire.
- ~~As we saw with the New Providence Wharf incident of May 7th, fires in tower blocks can start at any time.~~
- ~~As more high-rise schemes are built which individually house many occupiers, the need to locate a Turntable Ladder of at least 64m or taller where the supertall residential buildings are, i.e. Isle of Dogs and Tower Hamlets, is urgent.~~
- ~~292 high-rise privately-owned blocks in Tower Hamlets are in need of fire safety remedial work, having applied to the government's Building Safety Fund, the highest number of any Local Authority in England.~~
- Residents living in social housing across the borough are also in high rise towers.
- LFB is responsible for ensuring that fire fighters have the equipment and infrastructure they need in the event of a fire. LFB holds the expertise necessary to do this properly.
- Council officers and THHF meet regularly with the LFB to work in partnership to protect residents in the event of a fire, and to do all we can to prevent fires starting. There was also a briefing held for councillors following the New Providence Wharf Fire.
- LFB have told councillors that fires in high-rise blocks are fought using their internal systems in the overwhelming majority of cases.

- ~~Tower Hamlets councillors had a meeting with the Tower Hamlets London Fire Brigade Commander on the 30th of June 2021 regarding fire safety infrastructure in the Borough and lessons learnt from the New Providence Wharf incident of May 7th.~~
- ~~This motion puts on record the bravery of our firefighters and recognises the especially important work that they do.~~
- London Fire Brigade are working within a time of budget restraints with the LFB having to find £10 million of savings in 2020/21 and £15 million in 2021/22 in a way that does not affect the frontline services they provide to Londoners.
- ~~Tower Hamlets does not have a 64m tall Turntable Ladder, that could minimise risk and support our firefighters during a live fire event.~~

The Council Further Notes:

- The borough hosts several high-rise socially owned or ex-social properties.
- Irrespective of whether these properties have cladding issues or fire safety defects, their occupiers need protection in the event of a fire and suitable equipment that could be at the site almost immediately.
- ~~A tall ladder will benefit all in the high-rise community of Tower Hamlets, whether leaseholder, shared owner, renter, right-to-buy lessee or social tenant.~~
- ~~This is a safety issue, not a tenure issue.~~
- LFB has 15 32m tall ladders in London (11 active, 4 reserve) and these are set to be joined by three new tall ladders to be based in Dagenham, Old Kent Road and Wimbledon fire stations.
- ~~The location of the 64m ladders is determined by LFB, who will locate them in places so that the average response time for anywhere in London is 12 minutes.~~
- Unfortunately, none of these ladders will be housed in Tower Hamlets, an area of intense redevelopment and whose comparatively unique high-rise terrain (in the UK context), especially in the Isle of Dogs and surrounding area, ~~demands that sort of fire safety infrastructure to be hosted locally.~~ Many buildings in Tower Hamlets are considerably taller than 64m.
- ~~In any case, a fire in a tall building now automatically triggers the dispatching of a ladder to the affected site, it can take some time for these to arrive, especially in traffic whilst the average response time is 12 minutes, it may take longer for a ladder to reach a fire.~~

The Council Resolves:

- The Mayor will contact Fiona Twycross to ask her to ensure that the siting of the new tall ladders will be optimal for residents in Tower Hamlets and to explain to us and residents lessons learnt from tall building fires and the steps the LFB are taking to both better safeguard and reassure residents.
- The Council to investigate through working with the LFB whether purchasing a further 64m ladder to site in the borough would be beneficial in the event of a fire in a tall building in the borough.

- Dependent upon this, the Council should work with the LFB to determine where it would be best to site a 64m ladder. This would depend on a variety of factors including the capacity of fire stations and the road network, alongside the likely need for this ladder in other boroughs.
- Dependent upon this, with the LFB and statutory partners, neighbouring boroughs, housing associations and the private sector the council should explore options for the provision of an aerial fire and rescue platform at least 64m or taller to be based in Tower Hamlets, if the LFB deems this necessary.
- If the provision of a further aerial platform was deemed to be a priority, but without funding, the council consider using CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) which is generated by new developers, towards such a purchase, noting that S106 funds cannot be used for this purpose according to legislation, and further noting that the revenue costs of operating an additional appliance would be a matter for the LFB.

- ~~The Council to investigate with statutory partners, housing associations and the private sector options for the purchase of a tall aerial fire and rescue platform of at least 64m or taller to be based in Tower Hamlets.~~
- ~~The council uses its existing and considerable s106 and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) funds, most of which have been generated by intense redevelopment of the Isle of Dogs and surrounding area, but also seek to secure donations from developers and other private sector stakeholders.~~
- ~~Once the funds are raised for the Tall Ladder the Council works with LFB to identify the appropriate aerial equipment for the borough. LFB will have the expertise to work related to operation of aerial equipment needed to tackle a fire in high rise towers.~~
- ~~That the Council works with LFB to identify the designated location of the aerial equipment in the borough whether it is at Millwall or Poplar fire stations which are ideally placed, on top of the heavily built-up Isle of Dogs dominated by multi-occupancy apartments buildings, many of which compete to be amongst the tallest in Europe. Or a relevant location identified by LFB.~~
- ~~The council seeks to investigate that life-saving infrastructure is located closer to the area with the biggest concentration of high-rise and high-density residential developments in the entire United Kingdom.~~
- ~~Since Tower Hamlets regularly clinches the top spot for number of new homes built in the country, it is essential that this housebuilding achievement is matched by world-class fire safety infrastructure, including adequate water pressure and a Turntable Ladder of at least 64m or taller.~~