

Fire Safety Proposals – Service Action Plan

Recommendation 1:

Ensure Fire Statements submitted to the council by developers/builders as part of the Planning process are robust and address all known fire safety issues.

Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets.

Comments from Service: *Both the 2021 London Plan and the Gateway One process require fire statements to be submitted as part of certain applications. In addition, the HSE has become a statutory consultee for applications including relevant buildings submitted since August 2021. The aim of this is to ensure that fire safety is being considered as early as possible in the process. Assessment of detailed fire safety plans is carried out at Building control stage.*

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
This is an ongoing 'business as usual' activity.	Planning and Building Control	Ongoing

Recommendation 2:

Investigate the promotion of “Commonhold” with our PRP partners, builders, and developers.

Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets.

Comments from Service: *The government has committed to comprehensive reform of the leasehold system, with ‘The Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent)’ Act (2022) being the first of two new pieces of legislation which will deliver improvements to commonhold. The Act restricts ground rents on newly created long residential leases (with some exceptions) to a token one peppercorn per year. This effectively restricts ground rents to zero financial value. The intention is to make leasehold ownership fairer and more affordable for leaseholders. A Bill on broader leasehold reform is expected in the third session of this Parliament which will include: the abolition of marriage value and lifting restrictions on lease extensions. In addition, the Commonhold Council has been established to advise the government on the implementation of a reformed commonhold regime.*

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
Using THHF’s Development sub-group, the implications of ‘commonhold’ and how it affects affordability can be highlighted and reviewed by this forum with RPs encouraged to ensure that they publicise the implications and advise and promote the reforms to their residents.	THHF/ Partnership Officer	Ongoing

Recommendation 3: Explore regular quarterly meetings between the Mayor/officers and leaseholders.		
Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets.		
Comments from Service: <i>The Mayor’s Office already facilitate quarterly ‘Ask the Mayor’ Q&A sessions for residents. The session held on 22 July 2022, focussed on building safety, including cladding, followed the fire at New Providence Wharf last summer. Residents who face issues with building safety had an opportunity to ask questions and get answers to these issues. This session was well-attended and received. These sessions already provide a mechanism for residents of all tenures to voice concerns. It is suggested that a further session on Fire and Building Safety is incorporated into the planned sessions for the new municipal year.</i>		
Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
Mayor’s Office to consider if future ‘Ask the Mayor’ sessions can include a session or sessions on Fire and Building Safety within the timetable for the forthcoming municipal year.	Mayor’s Office	By 31 March 2023
Recommendation 4: Further publicise the council’s building safety pledge to residents, building owners and PRPs		
Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets.		
Comments from Service: <i>The building safety pledge is regularly tweeted and promoted via the council’s social media presence, when appropriate and newsworthy. The pledge remains an ongoing priority within the council’s communications programme.</i>		
Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
This is an ongoing communications activity which involves: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. horizon-scanning; and 2. ensuring the council’s website and communications are updated in accordance with the latest information and government policy/legislation. 	Senior Communications Officer	Ongoing

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Recommendation 5: <i>Set up a fire safety portal that contains clear information for homeowners, tenants, leaseholders and clarifies the role of Housing Associations, builders, and developers</i>		
Comments from Service: <i>Already completed.</i>		
Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
Already Completed with web-site revamp.	Fire Safety Team	N/A
Recommendation 6: <i>Ensure the council's revamped website explains how the BSF application process works to leaseholders and builders/developers submitting bids.</i>		
Comments from Service: <i>Already completed.</i>		
Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
This remains a 'business as usual' activity. The relevant content on the council's website will be updated as and when any new information or material is provided by the government.	Fire Safety Team	N/A

Recommendation 7:

Explore with the LFB and other London boroughs using CIL money to purchase firefighting equipment

Financial Implication: *Currently unclear*

Comments from Service: *CIL is governed by regulations that say it must be spent to support infrastructure. The regulations define infrastructure with examples such as schools, roads, etc. The essence of this is that it must be public infrastructure that supports the strategic development of the area. Certain firefighting equipment could potentially be considered to meet these criteria. The potential purchase of a 64m aerial appliance to be located in Tower Hamlets following the fire at New Providence Wharf was raised at a full council meeting. The LFB have set out that it plans their resource on a London-wide basis, moving operational vehicles around to provide cover in areas that have high demand at any given time. Consideration of the location of aerial appliances is therefore based on which location would enable the LFB to have the best pan-London response possible so that all areas receive adequate coverage in the event of a fire. They have also stated that there are practical limitations that impact on efforts to purchase a 64m aerial appliance to specifically serve Tower Hamlets. However, the LFB have suggested they would welcome a conversation on other potential interventions.*

Spending of CIL is approved through the council's Capital Programme governance, ultimately requiring a decision by the Mayor in Cabinet.

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
Further conversations needed with LFB to understand potential for any CIL compliant uses.	Planning and Building Control	Ongoing

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<p>Recommendation 8: Continue to lobby the government with our PRP partners for increased funding for independent advisory services at every opportunity.</p>		
<p>Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets.</p>		
<p>Comments from Service: <i>This activity is embedded in the council’s communications programme as a regular activity. The recently updated and revised council webpages on fire safety contain links to independent advisory and support services for leaseholders.</i></p>		
Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
<p>This remains an ongoing communications activity with:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. continued horizon scanning to identify government consultations; and 2. to use opportunities to work/liaise with the DLUHC. 	Senior Communications Officer & Fire Safety Team	Ongoing
<p>Recommendation 9: Raise gathering of economic data/cost implications of building safety issues at the London Housing Directors Fire Safety Group meeting to enlist the support and collaboration of other councils and PRPs.</p>		
<p>Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets.</p>		
<p>Comments from Service: <i>This is an ongoing activity as we continue to raise these costs with the London Housing Directors Fire Safety Group at every opportunity.</i></p>		
Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
Continue to raise this as an issue at every possibly opportunity at London Housing Directors Fire Safety Group.	Divisional Director Housing & Regeneration	Ongoing

Recommendation 10:

Review the findings of the final LFB report into the fire at NPW with our PRP partners, building owners and developers and consider commissioning our own independent research.

Financial Implication: Budget/funding required for commissioning any research (Karen Swift)

Comments from Service: *The final LFB report into the fire incident at NPW will provide a considered and thorough investigation into the causes and learning from the incident. Once the final LFB report is published, this will be accessible to RP partners, and will no doubt provide learning and insight which will be incorporated by the council and RPs into good practice and tenancy management. The service does not have the additional financial resources to commission further independent research.*

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
The learning and any recommendations arising from the LFB's final report will be discussed as part of ongoing and continued discussions with THHF and with building owners and developers to ensure that they become embedded.	Fire Safety Team /Partnership Officers	Pending potential proceedings by LFB

Recommendation 11:

Work with our PRP partners and building owners and developers to implement the Building Safety database.

Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets.

Comments from Service: *The council is investing resources in a robust database to hold information about buildings that the government has asked boroughs to collect data on and to identify materials of concern. This database will not be shared. A database would be of minimal assistance because it relies on the council holding information about all buildings. There are over 1000 buildings over 18M in Tower Hamlets. Data collection is an iterative process.*

Building owners are responsible for the safety of their buildings and should be making residents aware of all building safety concerns pertaining to their buildings. The GLA/Mayor of London recently launched a good practice guide for building owners in relation to the timely sharing of information with residents. [EWS1 Best Practice Guidance | GLA \(london.gov.uk\)](https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/what-we-are-doing/guidance-for-building-owners) - urging building owners to proactively disclose building safety information to both current and prospective residents. This information should include fire risk assessments (FRAs) and any other life safety documentation

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
As stated, the data we collect is for a government database and cannot be shared. Improvement are being made internally to how this data is being held with a new database management system underway.	Fire Safety Team	Procurement of new database: May 2022 - Sept 2022 (depending on procurement/legal capacity to process contracts)

Recommendation 12:

Explore the feasibility of contributing to the Building Safety Map with our PRP partners and building owners.

Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets.

Comments from Service: *The LA cannot put information out into the public domain in the form of a map or any other format. Affected residents should already know from their building's owner if their building is affected or has fire safety issues.*

This information is exempt from disclosure under Section 38(1) of the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) (2000).

Disclosure of this information may be likely to endanger the physical or mental health of any individual - (this could be the applicant, the supplier of the information or anyone else). Releasing this information could cause unnecessary fear or panic and/or risk health and safety of those living in tower blocks.

In addition, this information on the safety of buildings has been provided to the council in confidence. Section 41 of the FoIA (2000) sets out an exemption from the right to know where the information requested was provided to the public authority in confidence by another person, company, local authority or any other 'legal entity'.

Recent guidance published by the GLA/Mayor of London : [EWS1 Best Practice Guidance | GLA \(london.gov.uk\)](https://www.london.gov.uk/asset-management/asset-management-guidance) (on 28 February 2022) advises building owners that they should talk directly to their residents and inform them of fire safety issues in their buildings. This information is also held by the government and received by them via data returns and any information that the council receives should be held confidentially although we may share with the LFB.

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
RPs meet within the Asset Management Sub-group to discuss estates and management of the physical estate. Building Safety is becoming an increasing topic of discussion of this group and building owners prepare for the implementation of the Building Safety Act.	Building Safety Owners/THHF	Ongoing

Recommendation 13:

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Continue to meet with LFB and PRP partners to develop a joint Fire Safety Engagement Plan.		
Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets.		
Comments from Service: <i>The LFB have a Fire Safety Engagement Plan in place. Since the NPW fire, the level of engagement by the LFB with residents has increased rapidly, achieving good positive engagement. The council, THHF partners and the LFB have been working together since June 2021 to develop a joined-up approach to ensure Fire Safety messages are heard and seen by all residents.</i>		
Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
<p>Meetings with the LFB, THHF Executive and/or Housing Management sub-group take place periodically where there are specific issues or updates that need to be discussed. One of the actions arising from the meetings around New Providence Wharf, was that the THHF Housing Management sub-group take forward Recommendation 14.</p> <p>A representative from the LFB used to regularly attend the THHF Public Realm sub-group meetings to update staff on fire hotspots, discuss fire incidents on a quarterly basis and provide advice. The sub-groups are currently under review and this work will be slotted into the work-path of one of the revised sub-groups.</p>	THHF, Partnership Team and Senior Communications Officer	Ongoing
Recommendation 14:		

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Work with PRP partners and LFB to develop a fire safety video and other engagement/communication material to promote fire safety.		
Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets.		
Comments from Service: See comment on previous recommendation. <i>The LFB has engaged with residents to shape a local community safety plan and recognises that there are vulnerable residents in the borough who are seldom heard, particularly from BME communities. The council with THHF partners shares their respective outreach activities and informs the LFB of suitable events where they can attend and are working with the LFB to deliver a co-ordinated programme of engagement and activities to promote fire safety, including the development of a fire safety video for residents.</i>		
Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
This activity is ongoing and links in with the continued communications activity of the council and the horizon scanning which is shared with RP partners. The THHF Housing Management sub-group are working together to produce communications material with a video which will place residents as the primary promoters of the need for everyone to be involved in keeping themselves and others safe from fires. We want to involve residents from minority and disadvantaged groups with lived experience in the video.	Senior Communications Officer/Partnership Officer and THHF	Ongoing
Recommendation 15:		

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Establish a ***Tower Hamlets Fire Safety Forum*** with LFB and THHF partners to examine evacuation procedures and to promote appropriate fire alarms and signage.

Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets.

Comments from Service: *This is an ongoing activity that is discussed within existing meeting arrangements at THHF and it is more appropriate that these structures are used rather than to create a separate structure. Each building will have its own unique evacuation procedure – either ‘stay put’ or evacuate in the event of a fire safety incident, this will depend on the physical/design features of the building. The owners of each building will work with the LFB to ensure that the correct advice is given to residents in the event of a fire incident. Similarly the LFB will continue to advise owners on the correct fire alarm systems and signage required for an individual building.*

Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
This is an ongoing business as usual activity which rather than to create and hold a separate forum, can be facilitated through the THHF sub-group meetings, and can address these issues and include residents at these meetings as and when their engagement and input are required. THHF sub-groups provide an opportunity for discussion and to share good practice	Partnership Officer and THHF	Ongoing

Recommendation 16:

Action Plan

Establish a <i>Resident and Landlord Fire Safety Forum</i> to ensure effective resident involvement and collaboration in all relevant fire safety issues.		
Financial Implication: None – can be accommodated within existing establishment and budgets. (See recommendation 15)		
Comments from Service: The ‘Ask the Mayor’ sessions (see Rec 3) provides a forum for all residents irrespective of tenure to engage and raise fire safety concerns and, when held on the matter of fire safety, was well attended. As a borough with over 1,000 tall buildings it would be impractical to engage with all residents and landlords.		
Action	Owner(s)	Deadline
Recent guidance published by the Mayor of London reiterates that building owners should talking to and actively engaging with residents. As a council we are endorsing the Mayor of London guidance and promoting this to all residents as part of our ongoing Comms Work	Senior Communications Officer	Ongoing