

# Progress of HRSSC's Fire Safety Action Plan

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# Background



- The Action Plan arose from recommendations made by HRSSC following a Fire Safety scrutiny review undertaken in May 2021 following the fire at New Providence Wharf.
- The report, detailing the recommendations of the review with its supporting action plan, was approved by the Mayor and Cabinet in November 2022.
- Officers are bringing this back to the Committee to provide an update on the progress made in delivering the Committee's recommendations from which the plan was developed.
- Members will see from the Action Plan that the Actions against the Committee's recommendations fall into one of several categories:
  - Ongoing as 'Business as Usual'
  - Complete
  - Actions which cannot be progressed due to resource and legal implications



# Actions incorporated as BAU (1)



Recommendation	Impact
<p><b>R1: 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.</b></p>	<p><b>Assurance provided to public</b> – as 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 (Health and Safety Executive) has become a statutory consultee for applications including relevant buildings submitted since August 2021. Assessment of detailed fire safety plans is carried out at Building control stage.</p>
<p><b>R2: Investigate the promotion of “Commonhold” with our PRP partners, builders, and developers.</b></p>	<p><b>THHF’s Development Sub-group have agreed to discuss this topic as an Agenda item at their meeting in February 2024.</b></p>
<p><b>R4: Further publicise the council’s building safety pledge to residents, building owners and PRPs</b></p>	<p>Continued horizon scanning ensures that Comms Team are <b>able to update web content and communicate to residents and all stakeholders any changes in policy or legislation. Council’s pledge woven into these communications</b></p>
<p><b>R8: Continue to lobby the government with our PRP partners for increased funding for independent advisory services at every opportunity</b></p>	<p>We continue to do this at every possible activity through any consultation response activities, our meetings with DLUHC and discussion at relevant London Council and GLA meetings <b>for the benefit of residents</b></p>
<p><b>R9: 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.</b></p>	<p>Again, as per R8. we continue to raise these issues at any given opportunity – <b>ensuring that this remains a lobbying pressure on the government.</b></p>



# Actions incorporated as BAU (2)



Recommendation	Impact
<p><b>R10: 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.</b></p>	<p>Work has been done and continues to be undertaken by the THHF Asset Management subgroup on fire safety aspects (with the LFB) such as PEEPS (Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans PIB's (Premises Information Boxes) and ensuring RPs are doing more to update and monitor Building Safety Plans. This also includes advice around 'staying put' and evacuation policies for high rise buildings. This provides <b>assurance that we and RP partner have taken learning from the final LFB report and continue to work to improve safety aspects across the borough's social housing provision.</b></p>
<p><b>R11: Work with our PRP partners and building owners and developers to implement the Building Safety database.</b></p>	<p>The data that we collect on behalf of the government cannot be shared, we have procured a new database from Civica to ensure we meet the requirements of the government's building data base which is scheduled to go live from end of October 2023. <b>This will provide for the better collation of data to inform the government where there are building safety issues which need to be addressed for the benefit of resident safety and well-being.</b></p>



# Actions incorporated as BAU (3)



Recommendation	Impact
<p><b>R13: Continue to meet with LFB and PRP partners to develop a joint Fire Safety Engagement Plan.</b></p>	<p><b>Council Officers meet with the LFB and RP partners as ongoing BAU.</b> In March 2023, the LFB introduced a new draft LBTH Risk Management Plan which sets out that the LFB will work with partners (including the council and RPs) to mitigate any identified risks. The LFB has launched this year a Community Forum which takes a pan-London approach to engaging residents, and they have sought nominations from RPs for resident reps from Tower Hamlets to join the forum and who will help to shape Fire Safety Engagement. The LFB encourages THHF partners to use the LFB's Borough Risk Management Plan as the basis of a joint Fire Safety Engagement Plan.</p>
<p><b>R15: Establish a Tower Hamlets Fire Safety Forum with LFB and THHF partners to examine evacuation procedures and to promote appropriate fire alarms and signage.</b></p>	<p>A separate forum has not been set up because this is facilitated through the THHF sub-group meetings, and these issues are addressed with residents who are included 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, which <b>benefits knowledge among all partners and provides assured continuous improvements to Fire Safety</b></p>
<p><b>R16: Establish a Resident and Landlord Fire Safety Forum to ensure effective resident involvement and collaboration in all relevant fire safety issues.</b></p>	<p>A pan-London wide panel across all boroughs for residents to feed into the LFB's strategy and approach to fire safety has already been created and interested tenants of RPs in the borough have been approached to participate. <b>Residents who engage have an opportunity to become involved and can share their lived experience of fire safety issues.</b></p>



# Actions which are completed



Recommendation	Impact
<b>R3: Explore regular quarterly meetings between the Mayor/officers and leaseholders</b>	The 'Ask the Mayor' sessions are no longer being used as a vehicle for engagement with residents. The Mayor has fortnightly surgeries to hear directly from residents. Leaseholders of private high rise residential building can talk direct to officers in the Fire Safety Team within the council for further information.
<b>R5: Set up a fire safety portal that contains clear information for homeowners, tenants, leaseholders and clarifies the role of Housing Associations, builders, and developers</b>	This action was completed before Cabinet approved the Action Plan in November 2022 and is updated as and when government policy changes are announced.
<b>R6: Ensure the council's revamped website explains how the BSF application process works to leaseholders and builders/developers submitting bids.</b>	This action was completed before Cabinet approved the Action Plan in November 2022 and is updated as and when government policy changes are announced.



# Actions that the council cannot progress due to resource implications or legal constraints



Recommendation	Reason
<p><b>R7: Explore with the LFB and other London boroughs using CIL money to purchase firefighting equipment</b></p>	<p>Discussions were had with the LFB about the potential use of CIL for fire equipment last year. There were operational and practical issues associated with the proposal to fund a 64m appliance for the borough that meant it was not taken forward at that time. Other equipment asks were explored but were found not to be consistent with the use of CIL.</p>
<p><b>R12: Explore the feasibility of contributing to the Building Safety Map with our PRP partners and building owners.</b></p>	<p>Commentary in the Action Plan explains the reasoning why we cannot build a Building Safety Map across the borough with RP partners and building owners. The council cannot put information out into the public domain in the form of a map or any other format as this information is exempt from disclosure under Section 38(1) of the Freedom of Information Act (FoIA) (2000) where 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 also cause unnecessary fear or panic and/or risk health and safety of those living in tower blocks.</p> <p>The LFB continue to encourage RPs through the relevant THHF subgroups to use the LFB's High Rise Building Data Portal. Regulations include a requirement for responsible persons of high-rise blocks of flats to provide information to the Fire and Rescue Services to assist them to plan and provide an effective operational response – they are only required to provide up-to-date electronic building floor plans and information for all high-rise residential buildings that are at least 18 meters or at least seven floors.</p>
<p><b>R14: Work with PRP partners and LFB to develop a fire safety video and other engagement/comms material to promote fire safety</b></p>	<p>While work was advanced with RP Partners and the LFB to develop a fire safety video, regrettably the LFB withdrew from this project due to other resource constraints. However, Members can note that the LFB have an Engagement Strategy in place and continue to work with the council and RPs to promote fire safety. The LFB has now indicated, as of October 2023, that there may be some capacity to work with the RPs to revisit the development of a Fire Safety Video and communication material which will be explored at future meetings with the relevant THHF Sub-groups.</p>



# Recommendations to the Sub-Committee



The Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the progress made to date in delivering the recommendations from the scrutiny review as set out in the Action Plan emanating from the original report to Cabinet in November 2022.
2. Approve the closure of this Action Plan.

