

Questions and Answers from Charecroft TRA Open Meeting Thursday 6 July 2017

- BRE** Building Research Establishment
EG Ernie Gray – LBHF Principal Manager Planned & Capital Works
FRA Fire Risk Assessment
GC Graham Coupar – LBHF Fire Safety Compliance Consultant
JM Jane Martin – LBHF Director of Property Services
LBHF London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham Council
LFB London Fire Brigade
LH Lisa Homan – LBHF Cabinet Member for Housing
PK Paul Kavanagh – LFB Borough Commander
SF Cllr Sue Fennimore - Addison Ward councillor & LBHF Deputy Leader
SC Cllr Stephen Cowan – LBHF Leader

LH thanked all residents for coming to the meeting. She explained this was one of a series of meetings held since the Grenfell fire. She advised it had been very important to hold a meeting for the Charecroft residents in view of the Shepherds Court fire in August 2016. The purpose of the meeting was to provide more information and reassurance.

PK explained he had overall responsibility for fire safety in Hammersmith & Fulham. He wanted to reassure residents about where they live.

PK advised that the Grenfell fire had been unprecedented and in 23 years of service he had not seen a such a fire - buildings don't react to fire in that way. He advised the investigation would highlight all the reasons for the fire.

Shepherds Court Fire

PK advised in the case of the Shepherds Court fire the building worked as it should have. The fire was caused by a faulty tumble dryer on the 7th floor, the fire doors stopped the spread of the fire internally and the fire went up the outside of the building.

The stay put policy worked for the residents where their flat wasn't affected by the fire. Residents in fire affected flats, including where the fire started, all got out safely.

Fire Safety in blocks

The blocks and flats have been designed to contain a fire. Smoke alarms in the property warn of a fire at the earliest stage. If your flat is affected by fire or smoke you should leave and close the door(s) behind you.

LFB is advising residents to know their plan for evacuation. **LFB** can carry out free home fire safety visits.

If your property is not affected, the advice is to stay in your flat. **LFB** will access the flats where the fire is and deal with it. This advice is given so that the fire crew can get to the affected area quickly and not be slowed down by a large number of residents evacuating.

How are you safe?

The best advice is to stop a fire starting in the first place – you can do this by checking electrical appliances and being aware when cooking. **LFB** can give basic fire safety advice and can fit smoke alarms as part of home visits. **LFB** encourage residents to book in for one of these visits.

LFB crews regularly carry out inspection visits so they are familiar with the estate. You will see them more often at present as they are carrying out reassurance visits.

LFB has a good working relationship with the council which began long before the Grenfell Fire.

Questions and Answers

Q. Are sprinkler systems being put in and how would they work in individual properties?

JM A. The council has made a commitment to fit sprinkler systems to blocks of six floors and above. We are looking at putting them in communal areas and if they are put in flats they could be zoned so only the sprinkler in the affected area would go off. There will be a full consultation before the works are started.

Q. Should lifts be used when there is a fire?

PK A. The advice is not to use lifts in a fire – you could get stuck or the lift shaft could fill with smoke. If your escape route is compromised, go back into your flat and block up all the doors. Call 999 and advise where you are.

Q. Are the gas pipes on the landings safe and should they be boxed in?

GC A. The gas pipes were installed by National Grid. They are a steel pipe with threaded or welded joints. They are in all four blocks and shouldn't be boxed in.

*Q. Was the spread of the Shepherds court fire caused by the plastic panels that were installed five years ago. I have a copy of the **FRA** for Woodford Court obtained under a freedom of information request and it looks like a copy of the one for my mother's block.*

GC A. Panels were sent away in May to **BRE** to test. We are expecting the results by 27 July 2017. We have made a decision to replace the panels and this will happen in about 8 weeks. We are planning to put back a toughened glass frosted panel which will be endorsed by C S Todd.

The panels on all four blocks will be replaced. For Bush, Roseford and Woodford Courts mast climbers will be used. There will be no access needed for Shepherds Court where a mixture of mast climbers and scaffolding will be used. The **FRAs** for all four blocks have been renewed last week by C S Todd. When we receive them back we will carry out any works identified. We also have fire wardens on site.

EG advised we will also be replacing the windows on all four blocks. We've been sharing information and consulting with the TRA and once we have the results from the **BRE** we will share with the TRA.

We are widening the original scope of works to include all **FRA** works on all blocks.

Q. Do we have timescales for the works?

EG A. We are at present pulling together a programme and as soon as we have timescales we will share with residents.

Q. Will you need access to my flat to replace the windows?

EG A. We'll have to come into your flat to replace the windows. We're aware of the previous bad experience residents suffered when the windows were previously replaced. Residents and their properties will be treated with respect and appointments will need to be kept.

LH A. As councillors we're much more proactive at monitoring our contractors. This is a political commitment and we will not accept poor performance or behaviour from the contractors.

Update on fire safety (JM)

- Sprinklers – as advised there is a commitment to install sprinkler systems in all blocks of six floors and above. Full consultation will be carried out.
- Concierge service- we'd welcome your feedback on whether you'd like the service extended.
- Adapter swap scheme – we've been swapping cube adapters for the multiple gang sockets with a long lead.
- Front doors: if **LBHF** has installed a fire door and you've removed it and replaced it with your own front door, the **LBHF** will install a replacement fire door free of charge.
- Unauthorised alterations to properties: **LBHF** will reinstate flats so they are fire safe and won't take any action against the leaseholder/tenant.
- There will be no cost implications for leaseholders for the replacement windows and panels.

Q. We previously had glass louvre windows on the communal landings which let out smoke. Are the current windows on the landings adequate?

PK A. It is for the Local Authority to declare a building safe this is not for **LFB** to do.

GC A. One of the recommendations from the new **FRAs** undertaken last week is to remove the mesh from the windows to ensure there is adequate ventilation. The mesh will be removed very shortly. The windows on the communal landings will be replaced as part of the window replacement programme.

Q. You said on landings the gas pipes shouldn't be boxed in but the gas pipes inside the flats are boxed in. Is this safe?

GC A. The gas pipes in the flats are much smaller so it's safe for them to be boxed in.

Q. Is the petrol station below Roseford and Woodford safe?

PK A. Petrol stations appear to be very vulnerable but they have an isolator switch for the petrol tanks that is activated if there is a car fire.

Q. *Is the site compound at Roseford Court a fire risk and will it stop emergency vehicles from attending a fire?*

PK A. The fire crews regularly visit the blocks and look at the access and will raise if there are any issues.

EG A. **LFB** have visited the site and advised verbally all is fine with the site compound but we're waiting for confirmation in writing.

Q. *Why were the results of the testing carried out by Veritas on the panels following the Shepherds Bush Court fire negated?*

PK A. After every fire there is an investigation by **LFB**. Veritas work for **LFB** and carried out some basic testing on the panels. **LFB** wrote to **LBHF** and advised them to carry out some further investigations based on the Veritas results. **LBHF** took the advice and had already sent a sample of the panels to the **BRE** before the Grenfell fire.

Resident A. I was one of the residents who had to move out after the fire and the building worked as it should - the fire was contained and did not spread into the communal areas. I feel very safe.

Update from SF

SF introduced herself as one of the ward councillors and deputy leader of **LBHF**. She advised residents she was on the ground soon after the fire of 19 August supporting residents and she fully understood residents' concerns. The fire was caused by a Whirlpool tumble dryer and we take your safety very seriously.

SF stated the leader of **LBHF**, Stephen Cowan and local MP Andy Slaughter were also at the meeting. She also advised the current administration believed "don't do *to* residents but do *with* residents" and this is how the window replacement will be carried out.

Update from SC

SC, the Leader of **LBHF**, thanked the residents for coming and for asking questions. He also thanked **PK** for coming to our resident meetings. **SC** advised that there would be a residents' working group to look at fire safety, this is in the spirit of "working with you."

He outlined the new fire safety measures advised by **JM** and added that **LBHF** would replace Hotpoint white goods.