

Committee(s)	Dated:
Barbican Residents Consultation Committee Barbican Residential Committee	02 September 2019 16 September 2019
Subject: Fire Safety Update	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
Report author: Paul Murtagh Assistant Director Barbican & Property Services	

Summary

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress that has been made in relation to fire safety matters since the last update report submitted to Committee in September 2018.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note, consider and comment on the report.

Main Report

Background

1. In September 2017, a detailed report was brought to this Committee to update Members on the City of London Corporation's (the Corporation) approach to fire safety on the Barbican Estate. The report informed Members of the progress we had made with matters such as:
 - fire risk assessments,
 - communication with residents,
 - estate management,
 - fire safety maintenance and improvement works,
 - inspections by the London Fire Brigade (LFB),
 - potential future improvement works.
2. Subsequently, further update reports were brought back to Committee in November 2017, March 2018 and September 2018. In addition, at its meeting on 4 June 2018, the Committee received a report entitled 'Fire Safety Review', which informed Members of the work that has been done on potential improvement works to enhance the safety of the CoLC's Barbican Residential Estate and its residents

in the event of fire. The report also sought guidance from Members on the strategic direction the CoLC should take in its future approach to fire safety.

3. This paper is intended as a further update.

Fire Risk Assessments

4. As Members will be aware, Frankham Risk Management Services Limited completed FRAs for each of the residential blocks on the Barbican Estate in January/February 2018 and, as agreed by Members, these were published on the CoLC's website.
5. At its meeting on 17 September 2018, Members were first presented with the 'Specific Hazard Identification and Action Plan Template for Fire Risk Assessments', which lists the recommendations from all the FRA's on the Barbican residential blocks. Officers continue to work on the various recommendations contained within the Action Plan and good progress is being made. An updated version of the Action Plan is included at Appendix 1 to this report.
6. Carrying out FRA's under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (RRO), is a vital and legally required part of the CoLC's fire safety strategy for its residential portfolio. The RRO does not specify how often FRA's should be carried out or reviewed. However, the Local Government Association (LGA) has published guidance on fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats, which recommends the following procedure for FRA's:

Low-rise blocks up to 3-storeys built in the last 20 years

- reviewed every 2 years;
- redone every 4 years.

For blocks with higher risks (such as age), or those more than 3-storeys high

- reviewed every year;
- redone every 3 years.

7. The FRA's for the Barbican residential blocks have been done annually for the last 3 years. The FRA's from January/February 2018 have again been reviewed and mandated in line with the Corporation's auditing procedures for FRA's.
8. Clearly, simply carrying out FRA's is worthless if they are not updated regularly and the improvement work identified is not undertaken. As Members will be appreciate, a considerable amount of fire safety work has been done, is being done and is scheduled to be done to maintain the Barbican residential blocks at the required standard.
9. There is no requirement for, or value in, commissioning further FRA's this year and the focus will be on continuing the progress we are making on the improvements identified in the Action Plan appended to this report. This includes carrying out

more intrusive Type 4 FRA's that focus on areas highlighted by the recently completed Type 3 FRA's.

Fire Doors

10. As Members will be aware from previous reports, random sample testing of a limited number of front entrance door sets to individual flats in the Barbican is being carried. This has been a very long-drawn-out process as a result of the planning requirements relating to the temporary and permanent replacement door sets and, the lack of available testing facilities across the country.
11. So far to date, we have tested one door set in Shakespeare Tower, one in Thomas More House and one in Breton House. The door set in Shakespeare Tower was found to have provided fire resistance of 36 minutes, which is greater than the 30 minutes fire resistance it was designed to provide. However, the door set did not perform well in terms of smoke resistance. The two door sets at Thomas More House and Breton House were tested early in August and, the results may not be available until after this meeting. We are looking to carry out destructive testing on one further door set, possibly in Willoughby House and, this will provide us with information on the door sets to almost all the flat types on the Barbican.
12. Once the door testing is complete and, the results have been submitted and analysed, officers will bring a detailed report back to this Committee with options and recommendations as to any improvements that are deemed necessary.

Communication with residents

13. Members will recall that detailed information, in the form of 'Frequently Asked Questions' bulletins, was produced specifically for the Barbican Estate. This was distributed to all House Groups and to residents through our email broadcast service and has also been posted on the Housing Fire Safety pages on the City's website. This information is reviewed on a regular basis and is updated as the fire safety improvement works progress.
14. With the exception of Frobisher Crescent, which is dealt with separately in this report, there have been no new significant fire safety issues raised by residents since the last update report in September 2018. Detailed information on fire safety remains available on the City's website.

Estate Management

15. Barbican Estate staff continue their work to ensure that balconies, walkways and exits are kept clear from hazards. This includes the removal of combustible material from outside properties, along with any items which might cause a trip hazard for residents or firefighting crews in the event of an emergency.
16. Officers in the DCCS Housing Management team are currently piloting a new automated system of estate inspections that is designed to improve the quality and consistency of inspections as well as, providing a much better facility for recording data, identifying problems, areas of improvement and the monitoring of subsequent

follow up actions. Early indications are that the system is proving to be extremely successful and, if it is concluded that the system does meet our requirements, we will look to extend its functionality to include estate inspections for the Barbican.

Inspections by the London Fire Brigade (LFB)

17. At the time of the last update report in September 2018, it was reported that the LFB was carrying out more frequent ad-hoc inspections on residential flat blocks across the City to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and to ensure that appropriate FRAs are being carried out. Whilst the LFB continues to carry out regular checks and familiarisation visits on the Barbican Estate, there have been no subsequent ad-hoc formal inspections by the LFB. We do understand however, that the LFB will, over the next few months, be carrying out formal inspections in sections of all City's car parks, including the Barbican Estate.
18. It is worth noting however, that officers have developed a healthy working relationship with the LFB and regularly consult with and seek the advice of the LFB on fire safety matters. Members will recall that early last year, the Corporation granted permission to the LFB to undertake an extensive and important training exercise at Cromwell Tower. This was a unique opportunity for the LFB to practice updated procedures and test out new firefighting equipment. The training exercise proved to be very successful and worthwhile, providing valuable experience, knowledge and guidance for both the LFB and the Corporation.

Frobisher Crescent

19. In line with our Fire Safety Improvement Action Plan for the residential blocks on the Barbican Estate, we have recently completed a sample survey of the compartmentation/fire stopping between the communal areas and individual dwellings in Frobisher Crescent. The survey has identified that there are deficiencies with the existing compartmentation/fire stopping that need to be addressed to ensure that the building complies with modern fire safety standards.
20. Tenders are now being sought for remedial works that are required to bring the compartmentation/fire stopping up to the required standard. Some of the work required will be intrusive and will require access into some of the flats. Residents in Frobisher Crescent have been advised of the situation and our proposals for the remedial works required.
21. Members will be aware, that Frobisher Crescent is unique in that, it is a 'mixed' use block combining residential space with the commercial activities of the Barbican Arts Centre. Whilst this arrangement generally works very well, there have been concerns raised about the practicality and efficiency of operating two different fire strategies for the residential and commercial activities.
22. We have recently engaged a specialist fire safety consultant to review the existing fire strategies for the commercial and residential space with the intention of developing a Fire Safety Management Plan for Frobisher Crescent as a whole. We are collaborating with our colleagues in the Barbican Arts Centre to ensure that all

future fire safety works commissioned by the Estate Office and the Arts Centre are aligned.

23. The remedial compartmentation/fire stopping works identified are scheduled to commence in October/November this year and, it is expected that this work and the work to develop a new Fire Safety Management Plan will be completed by the end of March next year.

24. Whilst the issue with the compartmentation/fire stopping is of concern, the overall Risk Assessment of Fire Safety for Frobisher Crescent is 'low'. The design and construction of the three residential floors does incorporate important fire safety measures including:

- secondary means of escape for all flats;
- the installation of hard-wired (plus battery backup) smoke detection, installed to LD3 standard;
- smoke detection in the corridors that is linked to the operation of the fire doors with, an additional activation link to the 24-hour concierge service in Shakespeare Tower;
- appropriate door compartmentation within the corridors.

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