

Committee(s)	Dated:
Barbican Residents Consultation Committee Barbican Residential Committee	14 June 2021 28 June 2021
Subject: Fire Safety Update	Public
Report of: Director of Community & Children's Services	For Information
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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 December 2020.

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 work,
 - inspections by the London Fire Brigade (LFB),
 - potential future improvement works.
2. Subsequently, further update reports have been brought back to Committee on a regular basis with the last one being November 2020. This paper is intended as a further update.

Fire Risk Assessments

3. As Members are 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 Corporation's website.
4. 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.
5. 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.

6. Up until recently, the FRA's for the Barbican residential blocks had been done annually. The FRA's from January/February 2018 have again been reviewed and mandated in line with the Corporation's auditing procedures for FRA's.
7. 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.
8. Whilst, understandably, our focus has been on continuing the progress we are making on the improvements identified in the Action Plan appended to this report, we are looking to carry out new Type 3 FRA's for each of our residential blocks of flats on our social housing estates later this year. Following a Corporate procurement exercise, Turner & Townsend has been appointed to undertake the next round of FRA's for Housing and Barbican. We are currently in discussion with Turner & Townsend on the development of a schedule for carrying out the new FRA's.

Fire Doors

9. As Members will be aware from the previous update report, random sample testing of a three front entrance door sets to individual flats in the Barbican Estate has been carried out. It should be remembered that all three door sets, when installed, complied fully with the Building Regulations that were in force at that time. However, the destructive testing has shown that all three door sets tested failed to meet the modern standards for fire resistance.
10. At its meeting on 16 March 2020, Members agreed with the recommendation of officers that consideration needs to be given to replacing front door sets to all residential properties on the Barbican Estate with new modern replacements that comply with Approved Document B – Fire Safety of the Building Regulations.
11. In accordance with the expressed views of Members, Officers made a successful Capital Bid for £20million for the replacement of front door sets to all residential properties on the Barbican Estate.
12. At its meeting on 15 March 2021, Members approved a Gateway 2 Report for the Barbican Fire Door Replacement Programme, which provided for the following:
 - approval of a budget of £275,000 for internal staff costs and professional fees to reach the next Gateway;
 - noting the total estimated cost of the project at £20,000,000 (excluding risk).
 - noting the risks contained in the Risk Register.
13. We have recently completed a procurement exercise and, awarded the contract for the full survey of all the fire doors across the Barbican Estate. This will not only confirm the numbers and scope of the Barbican Fire Door Replacement Programme but, will also identify and highlight the areas of compartmentation that are associated with the fire doors. The survey will identify the various door types and risks to enable a structured and prioritised door replacement schedule to be developed, along with the brief and scope for the appointment of the Design Team.
14. A more detailed update on the Barbican Fire Door Replacement Programme is included as a separate item on the agenda for this meeting.

Communication with residents

15. 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.
16. Except for 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 March 2021. Detailed information on fire safety remains available on the Corporation's website.

Estate Management

17. 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.

London Fire Brigade (LFB)

18. At the time of the last update report in November last year, 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.

19. Although the LFB attends the Barbican Estate on a regular basis to carry out routine safety inspections, provide advice to residents and, to discuss fire safety related matters with officers, there have been no further formal ad-hoc fire safety inspections on the Barbican Estate since the last update report in November 2020. Officers continue to maintain a healthy working relationship with the LFB and regularly consult with and seek the advice of the LFB on fire safety matters.

Frobisher Crescent

20. Members will be aware from the previous Fire Safety Update Report to this Committee that following the completion of a detailed and specialist survey undertaken by Guardian Consultancy Services Limited, the full extent of the deficiencies with the existing compartmentation/fire stopping and, the extent of the remedial work required had been identified.

21. Officers subsequently made a successful Capital Bid for £600,000 to fund the necessary remedial works to the communal areas and individual dwellings in Frobisher Crescent. A Gateway 1-4 Project Proposal & Options Appraisal Report was submitted to the Projects Sub Committee and the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC) in September last year and, the following recommendations were agreed:

- A total revised estimated project cost of £800,000 (including staff and consultancy costs of £100,000).
- Approval for the expenditure of £60,000 for staff and consultancy fees to reach the next stage of the Gateway process.
- Note that 'in principle' funding of up to £550,000 for this scheme was agreed as part of the 2020/21 annual capital bids, with draw down being subject to the further approval of the Resource Allocation Sub-Committee. A bid for additional resources will be required to meet the funding shortfall of £250,000 against the estimated cost of £800,000.
- That approval is given for Option 1:

- To undertake a compliant procurement exercise for the fire safety improvement works to residential levels 7, 8 and 9 at Frobisher Crescent on the Barbican Residential Estate.
- To seek Chief Officer approval for a contractor to be appointed to carry out the fire safety improvement works to residential levels 7, 8 and 9 at Frobisher Crescent on the Barbican Residential Estate.

22. The progress with this project has been affected and delayed by the COVID-19 situation and, as a result, on the instruction of the Corporation's Fire Safety Advisor, the following interim works were completed to the residential levels of Frobisher Crescent:

- i. Firestopping to the internal riser cupboards and internal communal corridors to all three residential levels. This work comprised a combination of permanent firestopping solutions, where practical and accessible and, temporary solutions in the form of the installation of 'intumescent' pillows.
- ii. Inspection, testing, repair and certification of all fire doors to the communal corridors and escape routes.
- iii. Allocation and delivery of battery-operated smoke detectors to residents in Frobisher Crescent. It should be noted that, access was difficult and, only 24 residents were handed the smoke detectors. The remaining smoke detectors are stored in the Barbican Estate Office and absent residents were written to, asking them to collect.

23. Following the completion of the specification for the permanent remedial works, a fully compliant procurement exercise was carried out with a closing date for tender submissions of Friday 21 May 2021. There has been considerable interest in this project and, accompanied site visits were arranged for 15 companies expressing an interest in the works. Eight tender submissions were subsequently received and, at the time of writing this report, a detailed analysis of the tenders received is underway. It is expected that we will be able to appoint a suitable contractor in July this year, with an anticipated commencement date early in August. The first step in this process will be for the successful contractor to develop and implement a Communications Protocol for the project to ensure that Frobisher Crescent residents are consulted on the works and kept apprised of progress. As Members will recall, it has been agreed that residents will not be recharged the cost of this work (including the interim works outlined above).

24. As has been explained previously, we continue to work very closely with our colleagues in the Barbican Arts Centre to ensure that all future fire safety works commissioned by the Estate Office for Frobisher Crescent and the Arts Centre are aligned.

Further specialist fire safety survey

25. Due to the unique nature of the Barbican Estate, some Members have previously suggested that a more detailed specialist fire safety survey be undertaken on a representative sample of flat blocks on the Estate. The purpose of this specialist survey would be to review and assess specific fire safety precautions such as:

- Communal fire doors;
- Smoke control measures;
- Fire alarm and fire detection measures;
- Escape routes;
- Ventilation provisions.

26. This specialist survey would also satisfy some of the recommendations of the FRA's that were carried out by Frankham Risk Management Services Limited in January/February 2018 and, will help fill in some of the 'gaps' in our understanding of how the residential buildings will perform in the event of a fire.

27. At its meeting on 16 March 2020, the BRC received a report from officers seeking Member approval to a proposal from Arup, a specialist firm of engineering consultants, to carry out a detailed fire safety audit on a representative sample of four residential blocks on the Barbican Estate. The BRC subsequently approved the following:

- The direct appointment of Arup to undertake a detailed fire safety audit on a representative sample of four residential blocks on the Barbican Estate.
- That the appointment of Arup be progressed by way of an appropriate 'compliant waiver' as directed and agreed by City Procurement.
- That the full cost of the detailed fire safety audit is recoverable, by way of service charge, from all long leaseholders on the Barbican Estate.

28. Unfortunately, as reported to this Committee previously, progress with the fire safety audit has been significantly delayed by COVID-19. However, Arup has now commenced the audit with a desktop analysis and site survey of Andrewes House. Work will next begin on Cromwell Tower with, two further blocks, likely to be Ben Jonson and Mountjoy, to follow. Arup is expected to complete this commission within the next 12 to 16 weeks.

Fire Safety Signage

29. One of the key findings of the FRA's completed by Frankham Risk Management Services Limited in January/February 2018, was the need to need to update and bring up to standard the fire safety signage across all residential blocks on the Barbican Estate. The existing signage was found to be out of date, inadequate, conflicting and, in some cases, incorrect.

30. Following a compliant procurement exercise, Britannia Fire & Security Limited was appointed to carry out this work. In order to benefit from 'economies of scale', the contract for this work also included similar works across the Corporation's social housing estates, which is almost completed.

31. When work began on the Barbican Estate, residents raised concerns with the replacement signage particularly, in relation to the suitability of the signs in the context of the listed status of the Barbican Estate. In order to address the concerns of residents, the fire signage works on the Barbican Estate were suspended.

32. In order to address and resolve the concerns raised by residents, following further discussions with the Corporation's Planning Team and, a compliant procurement exercise, we have appointed rePurpose Architects to develop and produce a bespoke Fire Strategy Document for the Barbican Residential Estate that will analyse the existing fire safety signage on the Estate and, will set out the proposals for, and reasoning behind the new fire safety signage for the various blocks. The Fire Strategy Document is nearing completion and once finalised, will be submitted to the LFB for its consideration and approval. It will also be shared and discussed with members of the BRC Member/Officer Fire Safety Group before its implementation.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Fire Safety Action Plan

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