

<b>Committee(s)</b>	<b>Dated:</b>
Barbican Residents Consultation Committee Barbican Residential Committee	17 January 2022 27 January 2022
<b>Subject:</b> Fire Safety Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Community & Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> 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 June 2021.

### 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 June 2021. 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 will be carrying out new Type 3 FRA's for all the Barbican residential blocks in the current financial year. Following a Corporate procurement exercise, Turner & Townsend has been appointed to undertake the next round of FRA's for both Housing and Barbican. Turner & Townsend has commenced work on our social housing estates and, it is expected that work on the Barbican Estate will commence in February/March this year.

## **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 showed 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. Following the completion of a compliant procurement exercise, we appointed Guardian Consultancy Services Limited to carry out a full audit and 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. The Fire Door Audit has been progressing well across the Barbican Estate and, nearly half of all blocks have been completed. The audit is expected to be completed by the end of January, with final written reports submitted by the end of February. Once the audit is complete and, all reports have been analysed, we will be able to procure and commission a Design Team for the project.

## **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 June 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 June 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. 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. In August last year, the LFB carried out formal ad-hoc fire safety inspections on all three towers on the Barbican Estate. A few minor recommendations were made at the time of the inspections and, these were acted upon immediately. There have been no formal reports from the LFB as a result of these inspections. We understood that the LFB would carry out further inspections of the three towers every three months however, this has not happened presumably, due to resource issues and other commitments.

### **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 (but non-intrusive) compartmentation survey, we now had a much clearer understanding of the extent of the deficiencies with the existing compartmentation/fire stopping and consequently, the extent of the remedial work that is required.

21. Following a compliant competitive procurement exercise, a Gateway 5 'Authority to Start Work' Report was submitted to the Projects Sub Committee and the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC) in September/October last year and, the following recommendations were agreed:

- That the appointment of Guardian Consultancy Services Limited to deliver the Fire Safety Improvement Works at the Frobisher Crescent Residential Premises is approved.
- That additional budget of £1,175,375 is approved to reach the next Gateway, subject to confirmation of funding. This comprises £1,102,875 for the tendered works contract and, £72,500 for fees and staff costs.

- Note that approval of the Resource Allocation Sub Committee is required, firstly to reallocate additional funding to cover the increased cost of this essential scheme and secondly, to draw down the full funding for its delivery.
- Note the revised project budget of £1,202,875 (excluding risk).
- Note the total estimated cost of the project at £1,202,875 (excluding risk).
- Note that a costed risk allowance is not considered necessary for this project.

22. Since the submission and approval of the Gateway 5 report, approval has subsequently been granted by the Resource Allocation Sub Committee to reallocate additional funding to cover the increased cost of this essential scheme and, to draw down the full funding for its delivery.

23. Following the appointment of Guardian Consultancy Services Limited, an open hybrid 'Meet the Contractor' event was held with Frobisher Crescent residents on 6 December 2021 to discuss the scope and timing of the works and, to give residents the opportunity to meet the contractor and to ask questions about the delivery of the project. The meeting was well attended and, the level of discussion was extremely useful and informative. Residents input has been invaluable in helping identify potential further areas of investigation and, in helping clarify some areas of uncertainty in relation to the layout of services within the individual apartments.

24. With the agreement and co-operation of residents, some intrusive pilot works were carried out just before Christmas last year and, these went some way to confirming some of the assumptions made in the original compartmentation survey, as well as, identifying the need for further detailed surveys in specific locations.

25. The substantive works to the project began on 10 January this year, with further intrusive surveys and investigation works. As part of the Communications Strategy for this project, the contractor and relevant officers meet monthly with nominated representatives of Frobisher Crescent residents and, open resident meetings are being held monthly.

26. The success of this project is heavily reliant on the co-operation of Frobisher Crescent residents, as well as the collaboration and support of the Corporation's Planning and Building Control Teams. In addition, 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**

27. 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.

28. 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.

29. 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.

30. Unfortunately, as reported to this Committee previously, progress with the fire safety audit has been significantly delayed by COVID-19 and associated resource issues on the part of Arup. To date however, Arup has completed its desktop analysis and site survey of Andrewes House and, a draft report has been received. Work has started on Cromwell Tower with, two further blocks, likely to be Ben Jonson and Mountjoy, to follow. Arup is expected to complete this commission by the end of March 2022.

### **Fire Safety Signage**

31. 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.

32. 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 now complete.

33. 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. To address the concerns of residents, the fire signage works on the Barbican Estate were suspended.

34. Following further discussions with the Corporation's Planning Team and, a compliant procurement exercise, we appointed rePurpose Architects to develop and produce a bespoke Fire Strategy Document for the Barbican Residential Estate that would analyse the existing fire safety signage on the Estate and, set out the proposals for, and reasoning behind the new fire safety signage for the various blocks.
35. The Fire Strategy Document has been completed and submitted to colleagues in Planning for consideration. We have subsequently been advised that Listed Building Consent is required for these works due to a lack of clarity around the Estate Management Guidelines. Reform Architects has now been appointed to prepare and submit a detailed application for Listed Building Consent.
36. The Fire Strategy Document has been submitted to the LFB for comment and, the LFB has confirmed that it is "in line with the LFB's expectations". The document has recently been shared with members of the Asset Maintenance Working Group and, we will be taking into consideration any comments and observations received.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Fire Safety Action Plan

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