

<b>Committee(s):</b> Barbican Residents Consultation Committee Barbican Residential Committee	<b>Dated:</b> 22/01/2024 11/12/2023
<b>Subject:</b> Fire Safety Update	<b>Public</b>
<b>Which outcomes in the City Corporation's Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?</b>	<b>1, 2, 12</b>
<b>Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>If so, how much?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>What is the source of Funding?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Judith Finlay Executive Director of Community and Children's Services	<b>For Information</b>
<b>Report author:</b> David Blane, Health and Safety Advisor, DCCS	

### Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide Members of this Committee with information on how the City of London Corporation (the Corporation), through its Housing Property Services Team, is ensuring that its homes on the Barbican Residential Estate are managed in a way that meets compliance with current health and safety legislation, best practice, and regulatory standards relating to fire safety.

This report also provides an update for Members on the progress that has been made in relation to fire safety matters since the last report submitted to Committee in March 2023.

### Recommendation

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

### Main Report

#### Background

1. This paper is intended to give further updates arising from the detailed report brought to this Committee in September 2017, and to 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 and new issues raised for record 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.
  - Electric vehicles, Lithium-ion batteries
  - Hot works
2. Subsequently, further update reports have been brought back to Committee on a regular basis with the last one being in March 2023. This paper is intended as a further update.

## **Fire Risk Assessments**

3. As Members will be aware from previous reports, following a corporate procurement exercise, Turner & Townsend was appointed to undertake the next round of FRA's for both Housing and Barbican. Turner & Townsend has now submitted its completed FRA's for all blocks across the Barbican Estate. These FRA's are available for viewing on the Corporation's website and are updated as new FRA's are undertaken.
4. Now that the FRA's are complete, we are producing a new Action Plan from the FRA's, which lists the recommendations for all blocks on the Barbican Estate. This new Action Plan will form the basis of future reports to this Committee.
5. The thematic issues identified in the FRA's for residential blocks include fire doors, fire signage, emergency lighting, and Premises Information Boxes. Addressing some of the identified actions may fall within large project works and are detailed below.
6. Other FRA actions identified on the day of the assessment will either been addressed immediately or raised for action through repairs and maintenance.

## **Fire Doors**

7. As Members will be aware from previous update reports, officers made a successful Capital Bid for £20million for the replacement of front entrance 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.
8. Guardian Consultancy Services Limited has carried out a full audit and survey of all the doors across the Barbican Estate and, all fire doors have now been identified to enable officers to group the doors into a structured programme based on priority in terms of perceived fire risk. Broadly, this priority is ranked as follows:
- high-rise blocks the towers),
  - blocks with limited cores and most complicated internal arrangements (Ben Johnson, Bunyan Court, Willoughby House),
  - blocks with limited cores and simple internal arrangements (Gilbert House, Mountjoy House, Seddon House, Bryer Court),

- blocks with numerous cores and numerous flats per core (Breton House, John Trundle Court),
  - buildings with multiple cores and limited flats per core (Andrewes House, Defoe House, Speed House, Thomas More House).
9. Reform Architects have been working on initial design to RIBA stage 3 and consultation booklet has been produced for the first set of Tower blocks. This document has been shared with the AMWP and residents of the tower blocks (Lauderdale, Cromwell and Shakespeare) inviting feedback on the proposals. A further letter will be sent to invite further comments before documentation is finalised for a Listed Building Consent application. Planning consultants and Heritage Consultants have been engaged to assist the Corporation's application.
10. Once the application is submitted, final specification will be produced, mock-up produced and destructive testing completed to check the design integrity.

### **Fire signage**

11. This project has taken much longer than we anticipated however, we have now prepared the specification and tender documents and will be seeking competitive tenders in the near future. We are manufacturing some sample signs for residents and/or their representatives to choose from and, these sample signs will be kept in the Barbican Estate Office, along with a hard copy of the agreed Fire Signage Strategy.
12. The Fire Signage Strategy was developed to be as accessible to as many residents as possible and this has taken time. The document was shared twice with members of the Asset Maintenance Working Party and subsequently, with the respective House Groups. There has been very little feedback on the Strategy.

### **Emergency Lighting**

13. Design consultants have provided costs for a light strategy for the Barbican Estate including input from a specialist lighting designer and other sustainability/compliancy consultants. These proposals have been shared with City Surveyors to overview the proposals in line with the Corporation's Climate Action Strategy.
14. The emergency lighting will support lower energy bills across the estate utilising LED fittings in replacement for the existing. Considerations on colour output, light, lighting design will form part of the overall design strategy in accordance to the listed status of the estate.

### **Communication with residents**

15. We continue to communicate with the Barbican residents on fire safety matters as appropriate. We will continue to send out further reminders to residents encouraging them to let us know if they regard themselves as Persons with Restricted Mobility (PRM), so that we can discuss with them any specific needs that they may have in the event of a fire in their home or block.

16. Detailed information on fire safety remains available on the Corporation's website.

### **Estate Management**

17. Barbican Estate Office (BEO) 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.

18. Residents are asked to ensure that they do not place combustible items in areas that form part of their means of escape. If residents do see such items or have concerns, please raise this with Barbican Estate Office.

### **Fire Related Incidents on the Barbican Estate**

19. There have been no fire related incidents on the Barbican Estate since those reported in the last fire safety update in March 2023.

### **London Fire Brigade (LFB)**

20. Members will be aware from previous reports that the LFB have and continue, to undertake frequent inspections across the Barbican Estate. These inspections ensure regulatory compliance within the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and to ensure that appropriate FRAs are being carried out.

21. The LFB additionally attend the Barbican Estate on a regular basis to carry out routine safety inspections, undertake familiarisation tours to ensure their operational response remains effective, and provide advice to residents.

22. The LFB continue to provide specific home fire safety advice, either through material via their website or direct Home Fire Safety visits.

### **Electric vehicles and Lithium-ion Batteries.**

23. With the increasing ownership of electric vehicles, e-scooters, e-bikes, newer mobility scooters and mobile technology (laptops, mobile phones etc); equipment owners, residents, landlords and fire and rescue services are becoming more aware of complexities of dealing with fire related incidents involving Lithium-ion (Li-on) batteries.

24. Electric vehicles, e-scooters, e-bikes, newer mobility scooters and mobile technology are predominately powered by Li-on batteries. These batteries vary in size and configuration depending on their use and application. Larger batteries may be found in Energy Storage Systems (ESS) and vehicles, whilst smaller batteries are used in laptops and mobile phones with lots of intermediate

applications. Batteries are arranged in series to increase voltage, and in parallel to increase capacity.

25. Fires arising from these types of batteries are usually identified as initially from around the result of the following conditions:

- Internal manufacturing defects (material defects, construction, contamination).
- Physical damage (during assembly, shipping, handling, waste disposal, accidental during product use).
- Electrical abuse (overcharging, over - discharging, short circuit, non-approved charging equipment).
- Thermal abuse (exposure to high temperatures).

26. The rapid development of fires from such equipment can be overwhelming, especially if occurring within confined locations and indoor areas.

27. Concerns around electric vehicle fires within confined areas, such as Barbican Estate car parks, is continually reviewed as new or revised fire safety guidance and legislation is produced. The Corporation, through its Fire Safety Department, has produced internal guidance on The Corporation's approach to this matter.

28. Factors around battery hazards, charging stations, location, structural standards, facilities to support fire service attendance, fire detection and sprinkler systems are considered within this guidance. This document should be utilised when considering new installations and where reasonably practicable, to existing installations.

29. Site visits have been arranged between representatives for Barbican residents, Officers and The Corporation's Fire Safety Advisor to discuss this issue and future planning.

30. E-scooters, e-bikes, newer mobility scooters and mobile technology raise further concerns, especially around their numbers and location within residential properties.

31. With the increase in the number of fires that Fire and Rescue Services are attending and through social media video footage showing the unexpected rapid development of a fire from such equipment, owners of such equipment and devices should consider where these items are stored and when they are charged.

32. E-scooters, e-bikes, newer mobility scooters should not be stored and/or charged near front doors or restricting means of escape from the residence. All equipment and devices should only be charged using approved charging devices and leads and not overnight when residents are asleep.

33. The London Fire Brigade have information and advice contained within their website on fire safety advice and more specifically on this subject.

## Hot Works

34. *Hot works*; are when, activities take place which have the potential to create a fire event by the activity being undertaken.
35. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) defines hot work as the: ‘use of open fires, flames and work involving the application of heat by means of tools or equipment.’ Common types of hot work include:
- Welding, brazing, and soldering.
  - Grinding and cutting.
  - Thawing pipes.
  - The use of open flames, blow-lamps, and torches.
  - Using bitumen and tar boilers.
  - The use of hot air blowers and lead heaters.
36. This is not an exhaustive list, but it does include the most common examples of hot work. All hot work can pose significant health and safety risks when carried out without proper controls.
37. Both The Corporation’s Fire Safety and Insurance departments have an agreed approach to this type of activity and a guidance note of this has been produced.
38. The key points are:
- Hot works are to be eradicated by design where possible.
  - Permits will never cover work in flammable / explosive atmospheres.
  - Only persons who have received training from a hot work passport scheme, accredited provider and have in-date certificate can undertake hot works in the CoL portfolio.
  - Companies are to adhere to the RISC authority joint code of practice, covering some key points and the detailed City’s specific, requirements listed in the guidance.
39. Permission to undertake Hot Work activities will only be authorised by the Fire Safety and Insurance Departments upon written request and satisfying the criteria laid out within the guidance.

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