

Appendix 1 – Fire safety and the Council’s response to the Grenfell Tower Tragedy

A. Introduction

1. This appendix provides a progress update on Fire Safety issues in Barnet following the report provided to the Housing Committee in June 2017, including progress with developing a package of fire safety improvement works for the council properties managed by Barnet Homes.

B. Barnet Council Housing Stock

2. The Council is responsible for approximately 15,000 homes in the borough, which are managed by an Arm’s Length Management Organisation (ALMO) Barnet Homes.
3. As reported previously, Barnet Homes have robust arrangements in place for carrying out fire risk assessments (FRA’s) on a regular basis, and in addition undertake a range of other activities as part of managing fire safety of the Council’s Housing Stock, including regular testing of equipment (including smoke alarms in all tenanted homes), capital investment, the installation of premises information boxes, and close working with the London Fire Brigade (LFB).

Response to Grenfell Tower Fire

4. As previously reported, it has been established that three blocks at Granville Road (Granville Point, Harpenmead Point and Templemead Point) used a cladding system containing similar aluminium composite material panels to those used at Grenfell Tower, although the insulation comprised of a non-combustible mineral fibre material.
5. Over the summer, the Government carried out tests on the individual panels and entire cladding system of the type used at Granville Road, and these both failed. The Council had already decided to remove the cladding system which is now completed and Barnet Homes are now working with consultants and contractors to identify a suitable replacement system, with the aim of installing this by Winter 2018.
6. In considering options for recladding, reports on the government’s large scale fire safety tests have been reviewed and attention paid to systems that have passed these tests. Consideration is also being given to using solid aluminium panels rather than ACM which were used in the tests and passed
7. As a new cladding system at Granville Road will not be in place over the coming winter, it is proposed that the Council provides financial assistance to residents to meet additional fuel costs associated with reduced thermal insulation following removal of the cladding.

8. The Housing Committee also agreed that Barnet Homes should be instructed to carry out a review of fire safety measures in the Council's twenty eight¹ high rise blocks to identify any measures that are required to move beyond legislative compliance to deliver best practice in fire safety including consideration of sprinkler systems, improved fire and smoke alarm systems and other measures.
9. Barnet Homes have progressed the review over the summer, and in addition to the recladding works at Granville Road, have identified a package of potential works to improve fire safety, including some which would not have been identified through standard fire risk assessments which should be considered as high priority.
10. Whilst these high priority works (shown as Category 1 in the table below) do not represent an immediate threat to the safety of residents, it is important that they are carried out as soon as possible.
11. Work has also been undertaken to consider additional measures that could enhance fire safety, including sprinkler and fire detection systems. The following table provides a prioritised summary of this including estimated costs:

Category (in order of priority)	Scope	Est. Cost (cumulative)
Granville Road Recladding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replacement cladding for 3 blocks with ACM panels • Compensation for additional fuel costs for residents at £15 per week per household from October to May inclusive 	£8,122,900
<u>Category 1</u> – High priority works. These works are required to maintain the fire integrity of the building over and above that required by the FRA and to enable an effective response to be provided in the event of a fire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works to improve the fire and smoke stopping provisions within buildings (compartmentation) • Replacement of doors to provide a higher level of fire and/or smoke resistance • Provision of increased air ventilation to gas systems in some locations • Some works to provide improved access for emergency services, particularly the LFB 	£9,220,433 (£17,343,333)
<u>Category 2</u> – These elements of work would seek to reduce the time taken to alert people at risk or to provide measures to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade works to replace existing fire detection (alarm) systems within dwellings and linking new systems to central control panels • Some signage works 	£5,781,482 (£23,124,815)

¹ 2 blocks at Grahame Park that are due to be demolished in early 2018 have been removed reducing the total to 26

enable residents to more effectively vacate areas at risk. These works would also enable further information to be provided to the LFB in event of a fire.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some emergency lighting works • Some elements of smoke ventilation • Some works to provide improved access for emergency services, particularly the LFB 	
<u>Category 3</u> – These elements of works would seek to suppress fires in a more effective manner and minimise the impact of smoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of sprinkler systems within dwellings within blocks of flats with 10 or more storeys to reflect building regulation requirements for new buildings • Some emergency lighting works • Some smoke ventilation systems 	<p>£10,150,693 (£33,275,505)</p>
<u>Category 4</u> – These works would be considered as beneficial to the block but assuming all Cat 1 and Cat 2 works are undertaken they are unlikely to add any major life preserving benefit. They would however provide further enhancements of fire safety and/or management of the block.	Works included within this category primarily relate to the provision of improved storage facilities for residents.	<p>£627,576 (£33,903,081)</p>

12. At this stage it is advisable to defer implementation of Category 2, 3 and 4 works until the outcome of an independent review of the building regulations and fire safety which is being led by Dame Judith Hackitt. This review is expected to produce an interim report later this autumn and a final report in the spring 2018. This will avoid undertaking any work that subsequently proves to be non-compliant.
13. It is proposed that a final set of proposals that take full account of the Hackitt Review are presented to Housing Committee June 2018, along with a further updated HRA Business Plan that takes into account any additional expenditure required.
14. The total estimated cost of the recladding works and Category 1 works identified above is £17.3m, and it is recommended that the capital budget for fire safety works is increased from £10m to £17.5m to accommodate this.
15. A review of the HRA Business Plan shows that a £17.5m programme could be accommodated within the HRA, although this would constrain the ability of the HRA to support other capital projects, including the building of new homes.
16. A separate report to the Housing Committee provides more information about the HRA Business Plan, and officers continue to discuss the possibility of financial assistance with the Government.

17. Leaseholders will not be required to contribute to the costs of Category 1 fire safety works undertaken to the 26 high rise blocks. When Category 1 fire safety works are undertaken in conjunction with other works projects, leaseholders will be expected to contribute to other works in accordance with the terms of the lease. A clear breakdown explaining what works leaseholders are being provided financial relief for will be provided as part of the consultation.
18. More work is required to determine the approach to take with regards to leaseholders for increased fire safety works, such as fire detection and sprinkler systems, as the costs associated with these may not always be recoverable, nor may all leaseholders be obliged to have such works undertaken to their homes. More work will be carried out by officers to develop more detailed proposals on this issue.
19. Leaseholders will not be required to contribute to recladding removal and replacement works at Granville Road.

C. Registered Providers

20. As reported previously there are approximately 7,000 homes managed by RPs or Housing Associations in the borough and these are regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), and these are required to carry out fire risk assessments and operate in a similar way to Barnet Homes in managing fire safety in relation to the housing it manages.
21. The Council wrote to all Housing Associations with 10 or more units and have received responses confirming that eight have blocks of flats over 5 stories in height and that all Housing Associations all of which have up to date fire risk assessments.
22. Three of the Housing Associations confirmed that they have ACM cladding on blocks, and for all three this has been tested by the Government and failed. All three Housing Associations have up to date FRAs and plan to replace the cladding. In addition one of the Housing Associations has employed a 24 hour fire warden for the block until the cladding is removed.
23. In addition Sanctuary Housing Association has one block which they hold on a lease in Colindale that has failed the testing. There is an up to date FRA for this block and Sanctuary has stated that the freeholder is responsible any work associated with replacing the cladding.

D. Private Sector buildings (residential and commercial)

24. In the case of privately owned high rise blocks, the Councils' power to act is limited as whilst Barnet Council is the planning authority for most new building works, our

building control service competes with the private sector for the building compliance work. Additionally building control services operate strictly within the building regulations and cannot withhold approval on materials that have been tested as suitable, they can only advise.

25. Owners are required to carry out fire risk assessments and spot checks are carried out by the London Fire Brigade. However, these are restricted checking that fire doors, risers, and alarms are fully functional within the fabric of the building and therefore would not pick up faults in cladding systems or fire compartmentation outside the main structure.
26. As stated above, the Government has instigated an independent review of fire safety and building control regulations, and the Council will suggest that the following additional powers could be sought from the Government in its response to this:
 - The authority to carry out random checks on existing buildings with enforcement powers.
 - A regular 5 or 10 year building fabric inspection and certification process that picks up on wear and tear issues and forces their correction.
27. The Council has identified a number of privately owned buildings with cladding from its planning and building control records, and has issued an advice note to the owners and managers of these buildings.
28. Two privately owned buildings have been identified with cladding that has failed government tests, and the Council has sought assurance that the owners are taking action to address this.
29. The Government have also issued advice to owners of private residential accommodation and offered assistance with the testing of cladding. This is being disseminated via representative bodies for the private residential sector.

Annex B - Barnet Council Fire Safety Action Plan – Oct 2017

Action	Status	Notes
Council Housing Stock		
Granville Road Towers – cladding removal	Complete	Cladding was removed by early October
Granville Road – identify solution for cladding replacement	On going	Barnet Homes working with contractors and consultants
Granville Road – installation of new cladding system	Not started	To commence spring 2018 and fully complete by Winter 2018 Residents to be compensated for additional fuel costs
Complete surveys of all council tower blocks to identify best practice options	Complete	Update to Housing Committee 23 October
Undertake high priority works identified in surveys	On going	Additional resources to be requested from Housing Committee and Policy and Resources Committee
Finalise package of additional measures	On going	Await outcome of Govt. Review of Fire Safety and Building Regulations Spring 2018
Registered Providers (RPs)		
Contact RPs for confirmation that their Fire Risk Assessments are up to date and to identify any high rise blocks they managed within the borough	Complete	All have responded and confirmed location of building and that FRAs are up to date.
Work with Government and RPs to ensure actions to address any fire safety concerns are addressed.	On going	3 RPs have confirmed they have blocks with ACM panels that have failed tests and they are planning to remove these. More details requested.
Private Sector Residential and Non residential		
Identify private dwellings in the borough potentially at risk	Complete	2 sites identified – information on mitigations requested from owners.
Issue briefing note for owners and managing agents of private sector buildings	Complete	Advice note produced and sent to owners 26 June 2017
Publicise letter from Government for private sector owners offering assistance with cladding	Complete	Place link on Council web site Include reference in briefing note
Council non- residential		
Barnet House -complete actions from fire risk assessment	Complete	All actions will be completed by July 2017
Colindale – new council headquarters – fires safety strategy	Complete	Strategy in place
Actions from fire risk assessments for commercial units beneath residential	On going	All actions will be completed during 2017