

Bi-monthly meeting – LFB Fire Safety & KCTMO H&S

1st April 2014 at 10am at Network Hub, Kensal Road.

Present:

LFB - Suhail Dadabhoy & Daniel Hallissey

KCTMO - Claire Williams, Michael Lyons, Janice Wray & Anthony Cheney (part of meeting)

Notes of meeting

1. Apologies

Nick Comery had retired on the previous day & the newly appointed Fire Safety Team Leader had not yet taken up her post. Confirmation of who will attend this meeting from the LFB Fire Safety Team to be decision for new Team Leader.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Janice advised that the compartmentation works at Gillray House and the three neighbouring blocks at Cremorne Estate are due to start on site in approximately three weeks. The Fire Risk Assessor has been consulted on the specification and will be asked to post-inspect the completed works at the first flat.

3. Lift Shut-ins

Dan had circulated the details of LFB attendance at lift shut-ins in March. Janice had highlighted the KCTMO properties and this was handed round the table. Anthony Cheney, TMO Contract Manager, attended to discuss the LFB approach to lift shut-ins and identify what action could be taken to minimise this and reduce the charges we are currently incurring. Dan confirmed that the LFB policy is only to attend in cases of medical emergency. However, it was clear from the information provided that people not in any medical distress are regularly being released. Anthony sought clarification on what checks the LFB call-handlers make when they receive a report of a shut-in from a member of the public. Dan advised that in every case they ask the caller to confirm that they have already tried to contact the engineer.

Dan advised of his previous work with City West Homes to effectively reduce the volume of LFB attendance at lift shut-ins in their stock. He confirmed that the scale of the problem had been much greater than at the TMO. Publicity and signage in lifts had played key roles in addressing this. Anthony confirmed that whilst our newer lifts have 2-way communication we do still have a number of older lifts but that signage is present in these lift cars confirming the number to ring in the event of a shut-in. Dan recommended that consideration be given to extending this information & including an instruction not to ring the LFB.

Anthony confirmed the out of hours response times built into the new lift maintenance contract were to aim for attendance within forty-five minutes but definitely within one hour.

Janice, Anthony and Michael agreed to draft an article for the next Link magazine – advising of procedures, new contractor, LFB position etc. - consider information on website etc. It was acknowledged that calls are not only from persons shut-in the lift, but are also often from residents who hear the alarm and any publicity should be aimed at both parties.

Janice requested that the LFB reinstate the system of notification by e-mail following each lift shut-in that had worked well in the past. This would allow us to investigate promptly and prevent repeated shut-ins at lifts with intermittent faults which we may not otherwise be made aware of. Dan agreed to try once more to reinstate this.

4. Fires in TMO properties since previous meetings

Janice advised the group of three incidents –

- on the 19th February there was arcing and smoke emanating from an electrical intake cupboard at Blantyre Tower in the Worlds End Estate. Investigation confirmed the absence of a drip tray in the riser cupboard located directly above had allowed water to seep through during cleaning. (A drip tray is now being fabricated for this area.) The LFB had attended and isolated electrical supply. Whilst this was a relatively minor incident it did cause considerable disruption for residents as the power supply to the dwellings was not reinstated for many hours.
- On the 6th March there was a small fire caused by carelessly discarded smoking material on the private balcony of a leasehold flat at 23 Dartrey Tower, Worlds End. The LFB were alerted and had to force entry as the family were not home at the time.
- LFB attended a small fire on the ground floor of the communal staircase at Whistler Tower, Worlds End Estate, on the 18th March and had confirmed this was due to careless disposal of cigarettes in an area where there was a small amount of combustible waste. This had generated a large volume of smoke and Dan confirmed that the tenant who had reported this had been very anxious and had been kept on the phone by the call centre and given fire survival guidance until the crew arrived.

Interrogation of the LFB's summary of fires identified a further TMO property at 22 Ingelow House. This was confirmed as a small, accidental fire within the dwelling which occurred on 12th March at 16.03.

5. AFD false alarms

Suhail confirmed that he would circulate this information at a later date and would provide in advance of future meetings.

6. Grenfell Tower, Barandon, Hurstway & Testerton Walks – follow-up from joint site visit

Claire advised that this had been a really helpful on-site meeting and that subsequently we had instructed Carl Stokes to investigate the issues raised and produce a report collating all of the inspection and maintenance reports etc. Claire and Janice are currently progressing the recommendations from Carl's report. The issue of firefighting strategy (LFB's attendance & procedures at the block) had been raised by Matt Ramsey, however, it was our understanding that this was for the LFB to advise of their approach or any changes they require us to instigate. Dan confirmed that each of his watches had been instructed to visit this area to and familiarise and that

he would report back on any issues. (Janice advised that on the issue of the dry risers, these had been colour-coded to help the LFB. A coloured stripe had been painted across the bottom of the riser box and the corresponding outlet in the walkway above had been painted with the same colour stripe. Dan was unaware of this and agreed to advise his staff.)

Claire advised the group that the contractor is currently being appointed for the major works at Grenfell Tower and it is anticipated that the work will commence on site in June and will be of 14/15 months duration. We had sought clarification from the LFB on what standard of calculations are required in relation to the ventilation system – hand calculations or CFD (computational flow distribution). Unfortunately, Matt Ramsey had advised that the fire engineers had a significant backlog and could not advise / assist. After some discussion Suhail, who confirmed that he was the Fire Engineering Liaison Officer for the team, asked Claire to e-mail him the requirements and the fire strategy document and he would endeavour to get an answer on this. Claire stressed the urgency of this and confirmed she would provide this information later the same day. She emphasised that this is complicated by the fact that this appears to have been an experimental system with no historical information available. Claire further queried whether there may be a need to have the equivalent of a pre-application meeting with the fire engineers. Suhail agreed to confirm.

Claire confirmed that works would not start on site until a construction traffic management plan – on which the LFB will be consulted - has been approved. Additionally, the work to the communal ventilation / extraction system is being prioritised in the programme.

There was some discussion about parking difficulties and the possibility of installing “No Through Road” sign was mooted.

7. Enforcement Action / Deficiency Notices & Correspondence with LFB

Janice confirmed that two Deficiency Notices had been received in the previous week – one following Matt Ramsey’s audit of Elm Park House back in November 2013 and one for Grenfell Tower following the recent on site meeting.

Janice advised that the notice for Elm Park House raised issues about the smoke ventilation arrangements in the block and their maintenance, escape routes from the basement car park and suitably fire-rated lessee flat entrance doors possibly not being self-closing. She further advised that the smoke ventilation shafts for this building are passive systems which use natural air flow and have no mechanical or forced air systems. At the time of the last FRA “no louvred vents were obstructed or appeared to be blocked or damaged”. The system was also inspected by Cofleys, our specialist contractors, on 20th December and they advised “these are natural draught vents from the ground floor to the roof. These vents can also be traced to each landing from ground floor to floor 10.” Therefore, as these are passive vents no specific maintenance is required. The car park is located under the block and is an entirely separate compartment with its own FRA and escape routes are clear. Finally, at the previous meeting there was extensive discussion on leaseholder doors. In particular, Janice had outlined the procedures the TMO has in place both to highlight potential non-compliance of leaseholder doors and to address non-compliance once it has been identified. Nick had confirmed that the TMO had made significant progress with this and was doing what is reasonable. Further, as these doors are demised to the leaseholder they have control and are the responsible person in relation to this issue. Janice welcomed clarification of what further action the legislation and the purpose-built guide could reasonably expect from a

landlord / managing agent in these circumstances. Suhail agreed to discuss with his team and respond.

With regard to Grenfell Tower, Michael advised that the ppm contractor had provided documentation confirming this system was serviced in February 2014 and no problems were highlighted. However, the contract with this contractor has now ended and we have instructed the new contractor to inspect this system and report back on any issues that need addressing in order to ensure the system is fully operational. Michael agreed to report back on this.

8. FRA issues

Janice advised that 18 non-compliant leasehold doors remain and we continue to work to reduce this figure further. Most of these lessees have given a commitment to progress the necessary replacement / upgrading works, however, we are working with Environmental Health to see how any necessary enforcement could be progressed.

9. LFB familiarisation / fire safety exercise – Siichester Estate

The possibility of carrying out a further familiarisation exercise – this time at Siichester estate – has been highlighted previously but with strike action etc. it had not been progressed. Dan advised that this will now be considered in the light of training for the coming year.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 LFB “Plan your escape” Campaign

Dan advised of this new initiative from the LFB. This is information for landlords and tenants available through the LFB website and it addresses some of the issues raised by the Lakanal House fire.

10.2 Sprinklers

Dan advised that the Borough Commander had asked for an update on our position in relation to fitting sprinklers. This is an LFB priority and locally this issue is being highlighted again because of a recent fatality in a sheltered scheme in North Kensington (Hardy House). Janice advised that the TMO Chief Executive and RBKC's Director of Housing were in agreement that, as our sheltered schemes had been assessed by the LFB and were not considered to present a high risk, we would consider installation of sprinklers within an individual flat if the degree of fire risk was considered to be very high e.g. in the case of a vulnerable resident with restricted mobility (who may struggle to evacuate) and where the fire risk was elevated due to excessive cigarette use etc.

10.3 Pirate Radio transmission equipment on roof of Markland House

The TMO have recently been experiencing further problems with pirate radio activity on the roof of one of the Siichester high-rise blocks and have had to again replace the borough-specific GERDA locks with bespoke GERDA locks which are individually keyed. This has proved to be the only effective method of preventing access. Unfortunately, this is inconvenient for anyone legitimately accessing these areas because they must contact the duty caretaker and arrange to collect the key from the estate office. Dan confirmed that Adrian had written advising of these arrangements and that he had arranged for an “underwrite” (message at the bottom of the call) to be added to each call to this estate. Dan queried how long we were likely to maintain this arrangement and

Janice advised that this was likely to be some time. Therefore, Dan to investigate whether this info can be added to the LFB's operational risk database as well.

Michael advised that in his previous position at Brent Housing Partnership they had installed prison grade doors as a deterrent in these situations and asked whether the LFB would carry the keys for such doors if the TMO decided to adopt the same approach. Dan's view was that this would potentially be problematic as key security in tenders cannot be relied upon and as such he would discourage this.

10.4 TMO links with London Cyrenians

Suhail sought clarification of our relation with this organisation and Janice confirmed that the hostel at 41 Cambridge Gardens is maintained by TMO but let to and managed by this organisation. The FRA was most recently reviewed in August 2013 and a copy could be provided at Suhail's request.

10.5 Fire Extinguishers

Michael advised that, as per the FRAs, we are currently removing extinguishers from communal areas of our blocks (with the exception of sheltered housing schemes). He sought a view from the LFB on the possibility of extending this to remove extinguishers from plant rooms and addressing this by requiring contractors who need to access these areas to carry their own extinguishers. They would also have responsibility for servicing and maintaining these appliances. Suhail referred him back to the risk assessor for a definitive view.

11. Date of next meeting

Suggested date of 4th June not convenient for Michael and an alternative date to be sought. To be advised.

Distribution:

Those Attending