

**THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA
HOUSING AND PROPERTY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
4TH MAY 2017**

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

FIRE AT TRELICK TOWER – 19TH APRIL 2017

This report provides the Committee with an overview of the fire that took place at Trellick Tower on the 19th April 2017.

FOR INFORMATION

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On Wednesday 19th April 2017 at approximately 9.20pm a fire broke out on the private balcony of flat 195 Trellick Tower which is located on the 27th floor. The resident was at home when the fire started and followed the fire procedure for the building correctly and was escorted from the flat by her neighbour and then evacuated the building.

2. RESPONSE TO THE FIRE

2.1 The London Fire Brigade (LFB) responded quickly and extinguished the fire. The LFB evacuated some residents and other residents chose to evacuate themselves. The LFB alerted RBKC and the Emergency Planning Team sent a Liaison Officer to the scene. TMO were alerted and sent the duty Estate Services Assistant to the scene. Officers liaised with the emergency services and appraised senior duty staff who kept the TMO Chief Executive and the Director of Housing appraised. No further RBKC or TMO Officers were required to attend the scene as the residents who evacuated were allowed to return to the building at approximately 11.20pm - once the fire brigade had completed the necessary safety checks.

2.2 No one was injured during this incident. Further, the fire did not spread and was contained within the flat of origin indicating that the levels of compartmentation - both between neighbouring flats and also between the flat and the communal areas - are of the required level. With the exception of the front entrance door of the neighbouring property (damaged when entry was forced) and several properties affected by water ingress (due to firefighting operations), property damage was restricted to flat 195 only.

3. FLAT 195

- 3.1 Due to the extent of damage in flat 195 (kitchen and balcony badly damaged and glazing separating these completely lost), the family was unable to return and temporary accommodation was arranged for that night. Currently the family remain in a hotel with arrangements in place to relocate them to another flat within Trellick Tower on Wednesday 26th April. It is anticipated that they will remain at this flat until the necessary work to Flat 195 is completed, however, TMO Officers will continue to support this family until they are able to return home.
- 3.2 One other family chose not to return to their flat but to stay with friends on the night of the fire but they have since returned to their home.

4. COMMUNICATION WITH RESIDENTS AT TRELICK TOWER

- 4.1 On the morning following the fire TMO Officers visited the block and called at each flat on the 24th, 27th and the 30th floors and spoke to residents to check they were well and to see if any required assistance. This was followed up later the same day with a letter hand-delivered to all Trellick Tower residents advising of the circumstances of the fire and re-iterating the fire procedures which are set out in the Fire Action Notices installed within each lift lobby. Additionally, a response was provided to specific queries raised by the Residents Association.

5. INVESTIGATION INTO CAUSE OF FIRE & COMMUNICATION WITH LONDON FIRE BRIGADE

- 5.1 The Metropolitan Police and LFB undertook investigations into the cause of this fire and these were completed and the flat returned to the TMO in early afternoon on the 20th April. It may be some time before the cause of the fire is confirmed formally, however, there has been a great deal of speculation that this was due to careless disposal of smokers' materials from one of the private balconies located above flat 195 but this remains unconfirmed. It appears that when the heat of the fire became sufficiently elevated, as you would expect, the integrity of the glazed door separating the balcony from the kitchen was eventually lost, allowing the fire to spread to the kitchen. However, by that stage the family had escaped to safety. There was significant damage to the kitchen but the remainder of the flat suffered only from smoke damage.

5.2 There has been speculation in the media about “insufficient water pressure” in the building, however, the TMO confirm that they had not been made aware of any issue with water pressure. TMO Officers spoke to and met with LFB Officers on the morning following the fire and provided them with copies of the inspection and maintenance compliance certificates for the wet rising main at this building which was used by the fire fighters to fight the fire. Further, an on-site meeting is scheduled for 25th April when the LFB crew who attended the fire will have the opportunity to demonstrate in the presence of TMO Officers and specialist contractors the procedure they followed during the fire.

6. FIRE PROCEDURES AT TRELICK TOWER

6.1 In common with all but a very small number of TMO-managed residential blocks Trellick Tower has a “stay put” fire strategy as confirmed by the TMO’s specialist Fire Consultant and clarified in the Fire Risk Assessment. This has also been shared with the LFB. This fire procedure is set out in Fire Action Notices displayed in each lift lobby and confirms that, in the event of a fire, initially only the residents in the flat where the fire originates need evacuate as other residents will generally be safe to stay put. On attendance, the London Fire Brigade will make an assessment and if evacuation of any other flats is required, this will be initiated. However, residents who prefer to evacuate themselves are, of course, free to do so. To support this approach tenants’ flats have been fitted with electrically operated (with battery back-up) smoke and heat detectors which ensure that they receive early warnings of fire and can evacuate safely.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 In conclusion, whilst it is always a concern to have had a fire, what is clear in the review of the incident to date is that all the work undertaken by the TMO to ensure adequate fire procedures and fire safety systems at this block worked well on the day. Additionally, partnership working with RBKC and the London Fire Brigade had a positive impact on minimising the disruption to residents enabling them to return to their homes within two hours of the fire. Work to support the displaced resident is ongoing and further liaison with the LFB is also ongoing.

FOR INFORMATION

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Background papers used in the preparation of this Report:

None

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