

Fire Risk Assessments in high risk blocks

Progress meeting 26th January 2010

Present:

Janice Wray (JW)	TMO Health & Safety Advisor
Ann Muchmore (AM)	RBKC Client-side Officer
Andrew Furness (AF)	Salvus Consulting – Managing Director
Russell Thompson (RT)	TMO Interim Director of Asset & Engineering
Abigail Accosta (AA)	TMO Project Manager

1. Apologies

Valerie Sharpies	TMO Project Manager
Adrian Bowman	TMO Safety Advisor

2. Minutes of previous meeting

2.1 AF confirmed that following the request from the LFB Fire Safety Team he and his colleague Steve Wain had reviewed the assessment for 9 Colville Sq and confirmed that this was an accurate reflection of the potential fire risk at this block and did not intend to amend it.

2.2 In response to the concerns raised by the LFB's Angus Sangster about the level of information on the block structure contained in the report, AF advised that Salvus had made some small changes to the introductory pages to supplement the existing information and they were confident this would now meet requirements.

2.3 With regard to the standard-setting meeting that Salvus and the TMO had requested of the LFB, AF advised that after much chasing he now has a date.

Action: AF to advise of date for standard-setting meeting

2.4 JW still to provide the draft letter for residents outlining their evacuation plan etc. to Salvus for comment. There was then a lengthy discussion about the desirability of having a notice in the main entrance of each block to document the emergency procedure in relation to that specific block. This would have the advantage of being accessible to all – residents, visitors, contractors and staff – however, it would obviously only be available in one language, unless diagrams were used instead. Therefore, JW felt that this should be done in addition to sending a letter to the residents (which could be offered in the core languages). Clearly this notice would need some consideration and should be framed and made aesthetically pleasing to ensure that if was not removed in some of the blocks where residents have shown an aversion to notices in communal areas.

Action: RT asked JW to raise with TMO Executive Team & possibly raise with Area Review Boards

Action: JW to e-mail draft letter to Salvus for comment

- 2.5 JW confirmed that, unfortunately, Salvus have yet to receive from us the evidence of the following –
- (a) that our contracts require “making good to fire-resisting standards” following repairs and
 - (b) Inspection records / attendance sheets etc. to demonstrate that our contractor (RGE Services) is actually carrying out the testing and maintenance that is required by our contracts and specification.

Action: RT to chase up

- 2.6 AF advised that, with regard to un-etched glazing in fire doors etc., the only way to ensure that this is compliant with BS476 is to involve an engineer. Clearly for Georgian-wired glazing etching is not necessary to demonstrate fire resistance. JW advised of a recent case where this had been raised and, fortunately, we have been able to check the specification (which confirmed BS 476-compliance) and get the contractors to confirm. However, this would not be possible in cases where glazing was older. RT advised that in these cases a decision would need to be made based upon the risk of leaving the glazing, engaging an engineer to investigate its fire resistance and replacing the glazing with appropriately rated glass. AF advised that this approach should be clearly documented.

Action: RT & JW to clarify and document the TMO approach to safety glazing

- 2.7 Gillray House
- JW summarised the position with this block - 19.5 meters in height and as it exceeds 18 meters, a dry riser would be required if construction was being undertaken now. However, block was originally constructed with no dry riser installed. LFB very anxious that this be installed retrospectively and FRA now gives this an “amber” rating which commits the TMO to proceeding with the installation. However, in view of the anticipated cost, disruption etc. and the pressure on our existing resources JW needed to be convinced that there was not an alternative to installing a riser. She had suggested installing a thermal link on the refuse chute and hard-wired detection within each dwelling in the block – as this would clearly improve the fire safety of the residents and provide detection within the riskiest areas of the block i.e. within the dwellings. AF advised that the purpose of a dry riser in a high rise block is to mitigate the risk to the firefighters whereas installing detection within the dwellings etc. enhances the protection of the residents but does nothing to mitigate this risk. However, AF advised that this is one of the issues he intends to raise at his meeting with the LFB – so JW to hold off progressing this until AF can feedback.

Action: AF to raise with LFB and report back

Action: JW to chase surveyors for quotation on installation of a riser at Gillray House (unit cost if this were to be repeated at all 4 blocks at Cremorne, at Lonsdale House and also Longlands Court.)

3. Reports and Plans received to date

3.1 JW advised that she had prepared a report for the Operations Committee last week and at that point we had received 45 completed FRA reports. Many blocks also now have dates booked for their assessments and on the whole the programme appears to be on schedule to complete within the agreed 6-month timescale.

3.2 AF advised that there were a number of items that were appearing on every report and it would be good to get these resolved. For example, confirmation of electrical checks and proof that these were being carried out (maintenance report / attendance record etc. required). However, AF asked that we record that, in his view, having quality controlled / audited every completed report produced by his assessors to date, very few fire safety issues are being identified compared to many other organisations. AF stated that TMO blocks were clearly well-maintained, subject to effective regular inspection and storage / obstructions etc. were generally only problems in a very small number of blocks.

3.3 AF referred to an issue that he had raised with JW about plans for the sheltered housing schemes. As these are relatively complex and detailed AF felt that they could not be produced within the existing contractual arrangements and he had made a few suggestions to how else these could be taken forward. One of his suggestions was to seek a copy of the zone / layout plan for the fire alarm system as this may be sufficient to meet our needs. JW confirmed that she had asked Keith Fifield, our senior electrical engineer, to liaise with our maintenance contractors to obtain these. These had not yet been forthcoming and JW agreed to chase Keith again.

Action: JW to chase TMO electrical section for fire alarm zone plans for sheltered schemes

4. Salvus Management Report (Fire Safety Policy and Procedures)

4.1 Janice had prepared a list of queries she wanted to raise with Salvus and these were circulated and discussed. Responses given as follows (numbering relates to the points on the Management Plan) –

- (3.1) JW advised that training records are available from the H&S or HR Team

- (3.2) Assessing Staff competence – AF recommended that we use a training matrix to clearly identify peoples roles, responsibilities and our expectations of them and how these can best be met
- (4.1) JW advised that the TMO intend to amend Community Officer's monthly inspection checklist to enable them to document checks on fire routes, exits, emergency lighting, storage / obstructions on these etc etc. In addition the possibility of formalising the caretaker procedures with fire safety checklist that they could perhaps be completed on a weekly basis (paper, PDA etc.) should be investigated
- (4.1) Salvus "unclear how defects are managed" – JW advised that reports go to line manager, H&S team, repairs, engineers, landscape section etc. as necessary. They are also discussed at regular 1-2-1s and where progress is not swift there is the opportunity to raise with Union Rep, with H&S Team, at H&S Committee, with Executive Team etc.. AF advised that this just needs to be outlined in the Action Plan
- (4.2) "No evidence of formal checks on waste management " – JW advised that this is included in the daily checks carried out by the caretakers
- (4.3) Requirement on post inspections – JW asked AF to clarify. AF advised that clearly post-inspections would not be required following every job, but particular attention should be paid to works with the potential to breach compartmentation
- (5.3) TMO have comprehensive records on gas servicing within tenanted dwellings – but assessor did not request sight of these
- (5.3) With reference to leasehold properties JW advised that we currently write to all leaseholders annually encouraging them to have their gas appliances serviced and advising them that if they sublet their flats they would assume the responsibilities of a landlord and they would be required to service the gas appliances. AF advised that JW document this information in the action plan
- (6.1) TMO sometimes unaware of fires in their properties. JW advised that the one being referred to had not been reported to the TMO by the tenant or by the LFB...what can we do in these situations? AF suggested publicising the need to report these in The Link etc.
- (6.2) Where fire alarms exist - drills, false alarms etc. should be recorded in the on- site log book – JW agreed to ask the fire safety trainer to reiterate the requirements as part of the trg
- (7.1) Fire procedures are covered with new staff as part of the Induction trg – both formal course and the H&S 1-2-1 induction
- (8.1) "sharing info with other responsible persons" – who? AF advised that this is important were there are several occupiers in a building
- (9.1) JW advised that the TMO Emergency Plan is available to all staff on the Intranet. AF confirmed that this would be sufficient providing all staff have access to the intranet. JW advised that this is the case.
- (9.2) JW concerned that despite repeated requests for information and standards from the LFB none had been forthcoming. What further action could TMO take? AF advised that records be kept of these attempts and confirmed that he has also been making his own requests to meet with

the LFB at a high level to resolve some of these issues – and a meeting has finally been scheduled.

- (9.3) Requirement for “formal procedures to deal effectively with fire safety issues associated with disabled or vulnerable people.” JW outlined the TMO’s current approach and asked AF to clarify this requirement. AF suggested that a formal documented system needs to be implemented.

6. Health & Safety

6.1 No issues at this time.

7. Invoicing

7.1 AF not aware of any issues.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Trellick Tower Deficiency Notice

JW advised that following completion of the FRA the LFB had decided to serve a Deficiency Notice on the TMO. All points raised had already been highlighted by the FRA and the TMO was already working towards a programme of works to address these issues. Additionally, the Notice gives us 1 year to comply. AF was surprised that this action had been taken and asked for a copy of the Notice for subsequent discussion with the LFB.

RT asked AF to elaborate on the status of a Deficiency Notice. AF advised that these are generally served where there has been a breach of statutory duty.

8.2 AF raised the subject of intumescent paint and advised that in his view this was expensive and often unnecessary – especially if being applied to bare concrete. He was aware of our restricted resources and as the assessor had noted this present in a number of block he thought he would raise it with us. JW advised that we generally did not use this that we had for a number of years tried to achieve Class 0 spread of flame in communal areas whilst redecorating by use of stripping etc. However, she agreed to investigate.

8.3 RT asked JW to ensure that the issues of flat entrance door inspections and replacement / upgrading and installation of smoke alarms by placed on the Technical Services and the H&S Service Plan.

Action: RT & JW

8.4 AF advised that he had been raising fire safety issues and particularly the lack of consistency amongst the various FBs and within each FB with the Chief Officers Association. In his role on the IOSH FRA Committee he has had the opportunity to engage with a number of groups – CLG, LFB etc. – and he would continue to raise concerns on our behalf and on behalf of other clients.

9. Date of next meeting – 23rd February at 10am in Monet Room at Charles House

Distribution:

Those attending plus:

Valerie Sharpies

Adrian Bowman

Lomette Pemberton

Project Services Manager

Assistant Safety Adviser

Head of HR & OD