

## **Fire Risk Assessments in high risk blocks**

### **Introductory meeting between Consultant and Fire Brigade 16<sup>th</sup> September 09**

#### **Present:**

Abigail Acosta (AA)	TMO Project Manager
Janice Wray (JW)	TMO Health & Safety Adviser
Adrian Bowman (AB)	TMO Health & Safety
Andrew Furness (AF)	Managing Director - Salvus Consulting
Steve Wain (SW)	Team Leader - Salvus Consulting
Angus Sangster (AS)	LFB – Team Leader Fire Safety
Steve Reade (SR)	LFB – Fire Safety

#### **Apologies:**

Valerie Sharples                      TMO Project Manager

### **1.      Introductions**

- 1.1      JW asked everyone to introduce themselves. AA also advised that in the short term Valerie Sharples would be handing over the project management to her.

### **2.      Summary of Project – Scope of Works / Roles & Responsibilities**

- 2.1      JW confirmed that the Council and the TMO, in liaison with the Fire Brigade, had agreed to adopt a risk-based approach to communal area fire risk assessments and following competitive tendering and interviews Salvus Consulting had been appointed. This project requires Salvus to carry out FRAs at each of the 110 “high risk” residential blocks and also any related reviews as necessary. Salvus have confirmed their start date as 24<sup>th</sup> September and have further agreed to complete this work within a 6-month time period.
- 2.2      JW asked AS if he wished to comment on the scope of works and AS referred to the recent high level meeting he had attended with TMO and Council Directors and Executive Directors. He reiterated the FB’s requirements which were outlined at that meeting. Specifically, -
- to have the entire property portfolio assessed within three years and
  - to have the remedial works required for properties to be fully compliant with the RRO completed within five years.

Additionally, AS stressed that the FB desire was for “safe buildings and not necessarily compliant one “.

### **3.      High risk properties – updated with priorities**

- 3.1      JW circulated copies of the spreadsheet listing the high risk properties. JW confirmed that these had been identified using a criteria that had been agreed with the Council and copied to the FB. This list included all high-rise blocks (above 7 floors), all sheltered housing complexes, all temporary

accommodation blocks, blocks with secondary means of escape which do not comply with current standards, blocks where the FB have raised concerns etc. JW explained that from this list we have now highlighted in red the priority properties we wish Salvus to assess early in their programme.

- 3.2 JW asked AS if he had any queries on this list. AS asked if this list had been produced by the TMO or the Council. JW confirmed that the Council had added one specific point to the agreed criteria for identifying these properties but had accepted the list of properties the TMO had subsequently put forward.

#### **4. Salvus FRA Proforma**

- 4.1 AS advised that he was “more than happy “with the Salvus proforma and he emphasised that he was particularly interested in the quantitative mechanisms. He further advised that he would like one of his team to accompany the Consultant on the first five inspections / assessments and then perhaps randomly on a further six assessments later in the programme. AF welcomed the FB involvement and JW agreed to forward the programme to the FB. AS offered to produce a report following these five assessments and all agreed that this would be helpful. It was also agreed that we should invite the FB to a further meeting following these initial assessments so that they can present their report and comment on our approach. JW confirmed that once FB report had been provided she would forward onto the Council.
- 4.2 Collette O'Hara had been unable to attend the meeting but had sent some comments which SR presented. Specifically, she had raised a query on who would be responsible for the Evacuation Plans. AF stated that their role would be to point out requirements and highlight any deficiencies and assist TMO to meet their responsibilities. However, JW agreed that clearly the responsibility for these would be the TMO's.
- 4.3 There was also some discussion about timescales for the various priorities but these were considered to be reasonable by all present.
- 4.4 Salvus also confirmed that they would produce an “Outline Cautionary Report” for any urgent matters that were identified.

#### **5. Fire Brigade Standards & Requirements for FRA's**

- 5.1 SW advised that he was keen to establish early on what standard of fire safety is to be achieved. Specifically, what are the minimum expectations of the fire authority? AS advised that he was aware of the wide range of Council blocks and he accepted that the FB would need to be flexible and not stick rigidly to an Approved Document B approach as this would clearly not be feasible.
- 5.2 AS felt it would be helpful to give Salvus an example and used that of Gillray House, Cremorne Estate, SW10. This block is purpose-built consisting of seven floors plus ground with two flats in each level, no dry riser and no lobbies. It is of solid construction (circa 1955) and the compartmentation

appears to be good. Each flat on 4<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> floor has access to a secondary means of escape staircase which takes the residents to the roof from where they can descend an identical staircase in the adjoining block. However, they could then only escape via a neighbour's flat and it is extremely unlikely that access would always be available. Therefore AS view is that this is not a viable escape route. AS unsure how this can best be addressed. AF advised that Salvus in the business of solving problems and although they had no knowledge of this block their initial suggestion would be to upgrade the single escape route.

- 5.3 AS advised that it was his view that in many cases the flat entrance doors are not good enough. SW agreed that in his experience with similar residential blocks the main areas of concern were the standard of the flat entrance doors and standard of the safety in the shaft - which included any storage within this area.

- 5.4 There was some discussion about acceptable standards and AS confirmed the following –

Flat entrance doors should be a minimum of 30 minutes fire resisting and self-closing with letter boxes below the neutral plane.

“Defend in place” strategy plus dry riser present = 30mins plus 30mins

“Defend in place” strategy with NO dry riser = 1 hour plus 1 hour

Ventilation - prefer automatic openable vents as opposed to openable vents and located at top of staircase

Not keen on handheld extinguishers on means of escape unless there are trained people who can use these when needed.

Not keen on alternative means of escape that “dumps people on a roof” and does not enable them to get to a place of safety at ground level.

- 5.5 SW sought clarification on the standard required for operational intervention. AF suggested fire-fighters looking for “72D”??

- 5.6 SW emphasised that the RRO requires protection of people in staircases and the issue of protecting people within flats was less clear as powers limited to common parts. He anticipated two different scenarios for “defend in place” – one where there is automatic fire detection and one where there is not.

- 5.7 SW advised the Fire Officers that he had a meeting with the TMO on 24<sup>th</sup> September in order to evidence all the relevant policies and procedures. He felt it important to do this at the beginning of the programme as any deficiencies in these could be flagged up and resolved ASAP.

## **6. On-going liaison**

- 6.1 As discussed earlier the FB would be invited to another meeting once they had produced their report on the first five assessments. Additionally, they would be invited to meet with us on a 4-monthly basis to monitor progress.

## **7. Any Other Business**

- 7.1 SW advised the FB that Salvus would be using the older graphic signs and symbols in their plans.
- 7.2 JW advised that she had almost finalised the lists of medium-risk and low-risk properties and would forward this to the FB in due course.

### **Distribution:**

#### **Those attending plus:**

Liam Good	TMO Director of Technical Services
Ann Muchmore	Council Client-side Officer