

**THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA**  
**TENANT MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION LIMITED**

**TMO BOARD 8<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2009**

**REPORT BY HEALTH AND SAFETY ADVISOR**

**FURTHER UPDATE ON FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to further update the TMO Board on progress made with the Fire Risk Assessments on the Communal areas of Council blocks. A briefing note entitled Fire Safety in Tower Blocks was circulated at the July Board, a report for information was presented to the September Board and an update was provided to the September Operations Committee.
- 1.2 The TMO Board is asked to note the further progress made in the area of Fire Risk Assessments.

**FOR INFORMATION**

**2.0 Introduction**

- 2.1 The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 which came into force in October 2006 requires "responsible persons" i.e. those in control of premises to carry out "a suitable and sufficient assessment" of the fire risks to which people are exposed. Additionally, premises controllers must ensure that there are adequate fire precautions to ensure the safety of all persons legally on the premises.
- 2.2 The Regulations apply to the communal areas of residential blocks but do not extend to individual self-contained domestic dwellings.

**3.0 TMO's approach to Fire Risk Assessments**

- 3.1 A risk-based approach has been agreed with the Council and the Fire Brigade and 110 potentially high risk properties have been identified.
- 3.2 Five Consultants were invited to tender to carry out the fire risk assessments in the communal areas of these blocks. Following receipt of tenders, Consultants were interviewed by a panel consisting of TMO and Council Officers and a Consultancy partner, Salvus Consulting, has now been appointed.

3.3 Salvus Consulting attended a briefing meeting with TMO Officers on 7<sup>th</sup> September and agreed the following –

- start date of 24<sup>th</sup> September 09
- work programme to be completed within 6 months
- the highest priority blocks within the 110 have been identified and will be assessed at the beginning of the programme
- TMO will be immediately alerted to any urgent situations that the Consultants encounter via an “Outline Cautionary Report”
- A target of one week from completion of the assessment to delivery of the report and associated plans was agreed
- Residents will be notified in advance of the imminent fire risk assessment in their block. This letter will advise that the Consultant will need to inspect / assess some of the flat entrance doors and will request residents’ cooperation. (Consultants will each carry a letter of authority from the TMO which can be shown to any resident who has concern. This letter will detail a TMO contact number where residents can raise any queries.)

3.4 A further meeting was held with Salvus on the 24<sup>th</sup> September to enable them to have sight of our fire safety policies, procedures, planned maintenance contract etc. The feedback from this meeting is that generally the TMO have good fire safety policies and procedures in place, however, these have not been consistently documented. Therefore, the TMO must review and update our Fire Safety Policy and Procedures to more accurately and comprehensively reflect our good practice. The TMO Health & Safety Team has now started work on this review.

#### **4. Introductory meeting between Salvus Consulting and the Fire Brigade**

4.1 A meeting to introduce the Consultancy Partner to the Fire Brigade’s Fire Safety Officers took place on 16<sup>th</sup> September and the Fire Brigade commented as follows –

- FB require the entire property portfolio to be assessed within three years and to have the remedial works undertaken and properties to be fully compliant with the Regulatory Reform Order within five years.
- FB acknowledge the need to be flexible in approach and accept that for the Council’s housing stock a Building Regulations “Approved Document B” approach / solution will often not be possible. (FB require “safe buildings and not necessarily compliant ones”.)
- FB “more than happy” with the proforma that Salvus intend to use for TMO fire risk assessments and emphasised their particular interest in the “quantitative mechanisms” to be used
- Fire Safety Team would like one of their Officers to accompany the Consultant on each of the first five assessments and then subsequently on a further six assessments chosen randomly later in the programme.
- FB confirmed that although these assessments are confined to the communal areas, the flat entrance doors should be included because they form part of the escape route. (These doors “must be a minimum of 30 minutes fire resisting and self-closing with letter boxes below the neutral plane”.)

- FB further confirmed the standards that they would be looking for in terms of ventilation and fire resistance of the primary escape route in a building with a “defend in place strategy” i.e. where residents should only evacuate if the fire is actually within their dwelling - as this applies to the majority of our properties.
- FB considered that secondary means of escape that leave residents on a roof and not at a place of safety at ground level would be unacceptable.

## **5. On-going liaison with Fire Brigade**

- 5.1 The Fire Brigade agreed to produce a report following their attendance at the first five fire risk assessments and then a further meeting with the TMO Officers, Council Officers and the consultants would be convened.
- 5.2 Monthly monitoring meetings have been scheduled between the TMO, the Council and the Consultant. The Fire Brigade are keen to monitor ongoing progress with the assessments and with any remedial works which are required in order for buildings to comply with the fire safety legislation. Therefore, we have given a commitment to invite Fire Safety Officers to meet with us on an on-going 4-monthly basis.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendation**

- 6.1 Board are asked to note progress made with prioritising and completing communal area fire risk assessments which has been agreed with the Fire Brigade is progressing as per the proposed timeframe. In particular, Board are advised of the start date of 24<sup>th</sup> September, the six-month timetable and the Fire Brigade’s approval of our approach and our programme.
- 6.2 A further update report with details of completed assessments and any associated Recommendations / Action Plans will be brought to the next Board meeting. It is hoped that we will, by then, be better able to clarify the level of resources required to ensure our buildings comply with the legislation and from where these resources can be made available.

**JANICE WRAY**

**HEALTH & SAFETY ADVISOR**