

## **THE LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN**

At a meeting of the **HOUSING FIRE AND BUILDING SAFETY PANEL** held on **THURSDAY, 23RD OCTOBER, 2025** at 6.30 pm in Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Judd Street, London WC1H 9JE

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE PRESENT**

Gulbahar Begum (Co-Chair) in the Chair, Jason McIntyre (Co-Chair), Silvia Kirk (Deputy Co-Chair), Cei Barraclough, Ryan Heng, Simon Murray, Tezar Miah, Gavin Haynes, Michal Jankowski, Maria Jacobs, and Councillor Steve Adams, Councillor Sagal Abdi-Wali, Councillor Anna Burrage, Councillor Tom Simon,

### **MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ABSENT**

Councillor Pat Callaghan, Councillor Kemi Atolagbe, Councillor Lorna Russell, Brian Levey, Francis Dias, Gillian Farrugia, Jo Rose, Thomas Watkins

**The minutes should be read in conjunction with the agenda for the meeting. They are subject to approval and signature at the next meeting of the Housing Fire and Building Safety Panel and any corrections approved at that meeting will be recorded in those minutes.**

### **MINUTES**

#### **1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Pat Callghan, Francis Dias and Brian Levey.

#### **2. ANNOUNCEMENTS**

##### **Webcasting**

The Chair announced that the meeting was being broadcast live to the internet and would be capable of repeated viewing and copies of the recording could be made available to those that requested them. Those participating in the meeting were deemed to be consenting to being filmed.

#### **3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST OF ITEMS ON THIS AGENDA**

There were none.

**4. NOTIFICATION OF ANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR DECIDES TO TAKE AS URGENT**

There were none.

**5. MINUTES**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2025 be approved as a correct record.

**6. FIRE & BUILDING SAFETY CHARTER ANNUAL REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Property Management

Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, took the meeting through the report and he along with Sinéad Burke, Head of Property Asset Management, following a question advised the meeting that there would be a duty on social landlords to ensure all its social housing had an Electrical Installation Certificate, this would apply from spring 2026. Tenants would be required to allow access to their homes to enable the Council to undertake the electrical testing required, something that the Council was already undertaking and it was expected that the duty would align with the approach being followed by the Council.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted

**7. RESIDENTIAL PERSONAL EMERGENCY EVACUATION PLANS**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Property Management

Michał Jankowski, Head of Resident & Building Safety, took the meeting through the report and he along with Gavin Haynes, Director of Property Management, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Officers felt that the overall number of Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessments that would be expected from the percentage of residents across all high-rise buildings would be in the region of 1 to 2% of households. That estimate seemed to align with the general proportion of disabled residents in the area. Officers

would provide further clarify on this following an analysis of the response rate compared to what was expected, to the Panel.

**ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (MJ)**

- The vulnerable residents, that would require this approach referred to people with mobility issues or had cognitive challenges that could affect their ability to evacuate during a fire. Hearing impairments were also considered, although this didn't always mean someone needed help evacuating. For example, if someone couldn't hear the alarm, the Council would recommend installing a flashing beacon or vibrating pillow, but that didn't necessarily mean they needed evacuation assistance. Each case would be considered holistically. Some residents might have temporary impairments, but if they lived with someone who could help them evacuate, that reduced the risk. The Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment was the first step, and it considered lifestyle and living conditions. The outcome of that assessment helped identify a specific group of residents who might need tailored support. Should a person be identified as needing a Person-Centre Fire Risk Assessment then officers would visit them in person to clarify the level of need and support required. Officers would provide the Panel with a copy of the Council's Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessment Policy.

**ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (MJ)**

- The Government Guidance regarding Person Centred Fire Risk Assessments did not apply to all the Council's properties at this moment in time, though officers would still provide someone with one even if they were outside the scope of the regulation.
- When undertaking an assessment officers would consider whether another person in the home, e.g. a full-time carer would be able to help support the person should they need to be evacuated. This would only be referenced if supported by the resident and this information would then be included in the documentation that would be available to the Fire Brigade. This process would not be used to pass on the liabilities of the Council onto the person supporting the resident.
- Officers advised that they had been developing ideas to improve outreach including developing relationships with the voluntary and community sectors. As part of this approach a recent Safety Action Day had been held at the Town Hall, where officers engaged with voluntary sector organisations to begin building relationships. Also, as part of this work posters had been placed in local pharmacies and GP surgeries to raise awareness. Officers had also met with heads of primary schools to promote the initiative and proposed a partnership to develop a fire safety awareness campaign aimed at children. The aim was to reach parents through their children.
- Officers explained that buildings over 11 metres in height—typically five to six storeys—had been brought into the scope of the new legislation. The Council had approximately 400 to 500 buildings of this height, but only 16 were operating

under a simultaneous evacuation strategy. This strategy involved an interlinked fire alarm system across all floors and communal areas, meaning all residents would be alerted and asked to evacuate if a fire occurred anywhere in the building. This approach increased risk for residents compared to the more common “stay put” or “defend in place” policies, where individuals could remain safely in their flats during a fire in another part of the building. Officers explained that this increased risk was one of the reasons the Government had included these buildings within the scope of the new regulations. Officers would provide a list of the specific 11 plus metre buildings with simultaneous evacuation strategies in place.

**ACTION BY: Director of Property Management (MJ)**

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted

**8. UPDATE ON COMMERCIAL PROPERTY FIRE COMPARTMENTATION REMEDIAL WORKS PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Development.

Martin Olomofe, Head of Property and Stephen Shapiro, Commercial Property Lead, took the meeting through the report and they gave the following key responses to questions:

- Officers reported that works were at an early stage and were being carried out as properties became vacant. Tenants had been terminating leases or vacating throughout the process, and the Council had been monitoring this closely to begin works as soon as possible. It was in the Council's interest to re-let the properties quickly, and efforts were made to prioritise units where tenants were planning to assign their leases.
- Discussions had taken place with tenants so that the Council could potentially secure access for a period of vacant possession, particularly where the nature of the business was changing, to allow works to be done. There were difficulties where businesses were still trading, which limited the ability to do the work as it affected the businesses and their trade.
- Officers acknowledged that progress was still at an early stage but noted that one of the report's recommendations was to provide an update in three to six months. It was expected that noticeable progress would be made by then. Officers agreed to include a simple bar chart in future reports to help monitor progress across the wider programme.

**ACTION BY: Director of Development**

- Officers were expecting to have completed the remaining surveys by February 2026.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted and an update be provided in six-months time

**ACTION BY: Director of Development**

**9. PERFORMANCE ON COMPLIANCE Q1 2025/26**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Property Management

Sinéad Burke, Head of Property Asset Management, took the meeting through the report and she along with Gavin Haynes, and Michal Jankowski, gave the following key responses to questions:

- Officers had raised concerns with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) that no requests had been received this year to submit assessment reports for review, despite the BSR having already called in all tranche one buildings submitted last year—totalling 13. No tranche two buildings had yet been called in. Officers were concerned that the BSR might call in all tranche two buildings at once later in the year, noting that the Council was preparing all tranche 2 safety case reports in any case.
- Recent national statistics from the BSR showed significant delays in assessment due to resource constraints. Of the 1,400 reports called in across the country, only 170 had been assessed. Of these, 125 were rejected and just 45 successfully issued. The Council had achieved four of those 45 approvals.
- The report outlined a projected timeline for assessments: 12 buildings this year, 18 next year, 22 the following year, and 121 in the final year. Officers confirmed that the Council was well ahead in compiling reports and was prepared to submit them. However, they expected to receive multiple requests for further information from the BSR, requiring amendments to documents and incorporation of additional surveys and clarifications.
- In some cases, the Council had challenged the BSR's requests and had asked for a clear timetable for when cases would be called-in but the BSR had responded that they were not in a position to provide this. Officers were working towards their expected timeframes, but the situation remained uncertain due to national delays.
- The Council has 2344 emergency lighting systems across its portfolio. These were communal lighting systems which had battery backup so that they would still operate in a power failure. Typically, they were in blocks where the communal areas were external. Deck access blocks were less commonly identified as needing these systems as the walkways had the benefit of street lighting.

- The Council had two types of systems; in street properties the systems were usually self-testing. This meant that they had a device which could auto-test and be reported online. For these systems (about 650) the automatic test was run monthly. Purpose built blocks usually had manual systems, meaning that the test required an operative to visit and complete the tests. These systems had a monthly “flick test” where the operative switched the lighting to battery supply to check it worked, a 6-monthly 1-hour drain down test where the operative ran the lights off the batteries for an hour to check they remained on, and an annual 3-hour drain down test which was similar but the test lasted 3 hours.
- Officers explained that the safety case regime differed from the safety case report. A safety case needed to be opened for each building and treated as a live document. Although resource constraints limited progress, there was nothing preventing the Council from opening cases for all buildings. The process was prioritised by tranche, as this was the first time such work had been undertaken.
- Previously submitted reports would likely to have changed if requested again, and that reports were part of a five-year cycle requiring regular updates. Officers recognised the importance of keeping reports under constant review and updating them as needed, especially in response to major changes such as the installation of evacuation lifts or changes to evacuation strategies.
- Much of the safety case content focused on the Council’s safety management system, which did not change frequently. It was confirmed that inspections and surveys were ongoing, and work would continue proactively rather than waiting for the BSR to call in buildings. The Council had raised with the BSR the issue of the delays at their end with them directly.
- The Council had already obtained Building Assessment Certificates, which provided a strong indication that the work completed so far met regulatory requirements. This placed the Council ahead of other landlords who had not yet undertaken similar preparation.
- Officers would include in the next report information regarding how the Council was resourcing the requirements arising from the Building Safety Act, a breakdown of the outstanding cases by how long they had been outstanding; workstream issues arising from Awaab’s law; also they would include information in a future report on the real time information they were able to capture on safety cases through the new software they were using.

**ACTION BY: Director of Property Management**

- It was noted that while the safety processes were prescriptive in terms of timing and procedures, managing them across a large housing stock was challenging. To support proactive safety management, an internal stock condition survey had been underway for approximately a year. This included the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), which helped identify potential hazards in nearly 50% of homes to date. Officers

acknowledged that some hazards were seasonal, but the survey provided a useful overview of likely risks.

- On the reactive side, significant improvements had been made to the call-handling process. A new script had been introduced for call centre staff to help them identify potential Category 1 hazards when residents reported issues. Staff received training to visually recognise serious risks, even without technical qualifications. When a Category 1 hazard was identified, the system escalated the case automatically.
- Officers highlighted the use of the Council's Made Tech system, which streamlined the process. Surveyors would be using a device that generated a resident-friendly report using AI, explaining the issue and outlining next steps. This helped improve communication and speed up response times.
- It was noted that having the right operatives in place remained essential to delivering the service effectively.

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report be noted

**10. FORWARD PLAN**

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Property Management.

The Director of Property Management agreed to ask that the Chair of the Chalcots Phase 2 Independent Review look at the PFI Configuration and the role the Council played in this, and this be included in the report.

**ACTION BY: Director of Property Management**

**Lift Protocol**

Officers confirmed that work had been underway to visit all tenanted homes over the coming year, which would help improve the Council's understanding of resident vulnerability. While caretakers had previously provided some insight into which residents might need support, the tenancy visits were expected to strengthen this intelligence.

The Council had also been using a text messaging service to alert residents during incidents. For example, during a recent lift outage at Chalcots, the resident caretaker responded quickly, opening-up communal areas so residents could access facilities such as toilets and refreshments.

If a lift outage were to last longer, officers explained that a protocol would be put in place. For outages lasting a few days, staff would attend the site, carry out door-knocking, and assess residents' needs—such as help with collecting medication or

groceries. In more serious cases, temporary decanting of residents would be considered in partnership with Adult Social Care.

It was noted that the most recent outage had been managed effectively, with a strong on-site response from the caretaker and good co-ordination across services.

Officers would develop a lift protocol that would be available to view on the Council's website.

**ACTION BY: Director of Housing (MJ)**

**New items in bold**

**28<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Compliance performance report (Standing item)

Annual Review of the work of the Panel

Redefinition of High-Rise Buildings (subject to publication by government)

Structural Survey Programme

Grenfell Phase 2 Inquiry Update (subject to publication by government)

**14th April 2026**

Compliance performance report (Standing item)

LFB Annual Report.

**Fire Compartmentation Remedial works programme update (subject to the view of the Borough Solicitor that it does not fall foul of the pre-election period rules)**

**To be Programmed**

Updated Decent Homes Definition

Chalcots Stage 2 Independent Review report

**RESOLVED –**

THAT the report and action tracker updates be noted

**11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIR CONSIDERS URGENT**

There were none.

The meeting ended at 7.45 pm.

**CHAIR**

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**MINUTES END**