

Scrutiny Scoping Group - Fire Safety

31 October 2017

Time 9.30 am **Public Meeting?** YES **Type of meeting** Scrutiny Board and Panels

Venue Ground Floor, Civic Offices

Membership

Barry Appleby Representative of the DAGLA

Councillor Philip Bateman MBE

Councillor Greg Brackenridge

Bob Deacon Wolverhampton Tenants Association

Councillor Louise Miles

Councillor Mrs Patricia Patten

Sue Roberts Wolverhampton Homes Tenants Board
(Chair)

Karen Ryder One Voice

Councillor Paul Singh

Councillor Jacqueline Sweetman

If you have any queries about this meeting, please contact:

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Agenda

- | <i>Item No.</i> | <i>Title</i> |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | 9.30 - Feedback from the previous meeting
[Tea and Coffee will be available.
Please note that the minutes of the previous meeting will be sent to follow] |
| 2 | 10.00 - Wolverhampton Homes
[Lesley Roberts – Chief Executive
Simon Bamfield – Head of Commercial Services and Stock Investment.] |
| 3 | 11.00 - Wolverhampton Homes - Concierge Service
[Lesley Roberts – Chief Executive
Darren Baggs – Assistant Director of Operations.] |
| 12.00 - 13.00 - LUNCH | |
| 4 | 13.00 - School Safety
[Phil Reilly – Health and Safety Advisor
Natalie Barrow – Health and Safety Advisor.] |
| 5 | 14.00 - Emergency Planning and Resilience (Pages 1 - 6)
[Mick Shears, Resilience Officer will provide a presentation to the Group followed
by a question and answer session] |
| 6 | 15.00 - Next Steps |

Scrutiny Scoping Group - Fire Safety

Minutes - 19 September 2017

Attendance

Members of the Scrutiny Scoping Group - Fire Safety

Mr Barry Appleby
Cllr Philip Bateman MBE
Cllr Greg Brackenridge
Bob Deacon
Cllr Patricia Patten
Sue Roberts
Ryder
Cllr Paul Singh

Part 1 – items open to the press and public

Item No. *Title*

- 1 **Apologies for Absence**
Apologies were received from Cllr Miles and Cllr Sweetman.
- 2 **Declarations of Interest**
There were no declarations of interest.
- 3 **Draft Terms of Reference for Group**
The Group considered its remit and boundaries and the Chair clarified that the Group would be considering buildings owned by the Council and also those that were outside of Council control.

Areas for discussion could include clarification as to who was responsible for checking buildings and requirements on leaseholders. The Chair confirmed that the Group would be able to make comments on areas that could then be fed back to Government even if the decision was outside of the Council's remit.

The Chair also confirmed that that the Fire Service could not be paid to check the buildings as they also had an enforcement role.

It was stated that in the past the Fire Service had been familiar with all of the buildings and that knowledge such as where the fire hydrants were was vital. The Chair agreed and stated that the Group needed to understand how processes were being managed, were the people managing them suitably trained and who was doing the monitoring (including during any modernisation processes).

The Group agreed that it was important to understand how the Council dealt with any immediate aftermath to an incident and whether emergency planning procedures were in place and tested. Important areas included ensuring that people had ready access to accommodation.

The Group indicated a need to find out what the data held by the Council and by Wolverhampton Homes was like and whether we could accurately advise how many people were resident in each flat.

The Group also queried what training was provided for residents.

The Group also commented on the responsibility of the Landlord to provide adequate fire evacuation procedures for residents and stated that not all residents would be able to read evacuation notices and that some deaf residents would require vibration pads and visually impaired residents might require notices to be in braille or to have flashing detector alarms rather than just sound alarms.

Resolved: That the Terms of Reference be agreed.

4 **West Midlands Fire Service**

The Group welcomed Jason Holt – Station Commander and Pardeep Raw - Team leader for Black Country North fire safety team - Watch Commander.

The Fire Service had two main areas of focus which were prevention and protection.

In relation to prevention, representatives of the fire Service would go out to businesses to ensure that premises were safe for employees. Operational crews would also carry out safe and well visits with the aim of visiting every domestic dwelling across the West Midlands.

The question was raised as to whether specific staff were assigned to dwellings where vulnerable people lived and it was confirmed that there was a Vulnerable Persons Officer who would be assigned once a vulnerable person had been identified.

The question was raised as to whether the Fire Service were aware of how successful they had been in visiting the 36 tower blocks in the City and whether there were any additional constraints in visiting tenants rather than private home owners.

It was stated that in a tower block the Fire Service would have jurisdiction in the public areas only so could look at areas such as fire escapes and compartmentalisation. As with private dwellings, people living in tower blocks would request a free visit from the fire service.

Site Specific Risk Inspections (SSRI) were also carried out in targeted areas such as tower blocks and every tower block had been highlighted and would therefore be visited. During the visit the Fire Service would make themselves available to residents and safe and well visits could be carried out there and then or future appointments made.

The Fire Service Confirmed that resources were not an issue and that resources would be planned to accommodate public need. It was confirmed that statistics relating to safe and well visits were available if requested.

The Group recommended that communications regarding the safe and well visits could be increased as there were people who thought they were not entitled to them and confusion over other similar providers who charged for such a service. The Group agreed on the importance of getting the message out that the service was available, it was provided by the Fire Service and that it was free.

The group agreed that Councillors could help to promote the service in their wards.

The Group queried what the Fire Service did during an inspection.

It was stated that during a SSRI the response side of the service would go out on the fire engine and evaluate means of escape and access, how many residents were in the block, where the water supplies were and any other areas required for a response to a fire. In relation to protection audits were carried out under the Fire safety legislation of all communal areas, every fire door would be checked, stairwells checked and all areas of compartmentalisation.

However, it was confirmed that what went on behind the door of a private dwelling fell under different legislation. The Group queried what would happen if during the inspection, it was noted that a front door was not the recommend type under current guidance. The Fire Service stated that they would highlight this to the resident and write to the Responsible Person which could be the leaseholder or the landlord.

The Group questioned the approach taken during any visit in relation to signage. The Fire Service stated that note would be taken as to whether the signage was adequate, they would point out if it was faulty or did not work and follow this up with the relevant responsible officer. The Group queried whether signage was looked for in different formats such as different languages or braille and stated that signage had to meet the needs of the residents. The Fire Service also confirmed that fire alarms were not always used in blocks of flats as they were not intended for simultaneous evacuation.

The Fire Service confirmed that they did more than a basic look but that it was not usual to consider the demographic of the residents unless the building was designed for a specific need such as a nursing or retirement home in which case the signage would be specific to residents' needs.

It was also confirmed that all residents were given a booklet informing them of areas such as electrical issues and anything that could affect them in an emergency. This booklet was produced in several languages but not in braille. It was also confirmed that Fire Service Officers providing training and advice would take time to ensure that residents understood the information contained in the booklet and that they were comfortable with any processes.

The Fire Service stated that in Birmingham there was an agreement regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation that if a tenancy agreement changed that the Landlord would let the Fire Service know and they would arrange to carry out a safe and well visit with the new residents. This was built into the tenancy agreement.

The Fire Service stated that they had a very good relationship with Wolverhampton Homes and that visits had been done and areas for improvement pointed out and timescales agreed. Visits were also often made on an interim basis to see how improvements works were being carried out and in some cases Wolverhampton Homes had invited the Fire Service back to monitor progress. Should deadlines not be met then the Fire Service would enquire as to the reasons and if progress was still not made then enforcement action could be taken.

Some concern was raised by group members that tenants should not be treated differently to leaseholders and that it would be unfair to expect them to abide by more rules than those who owned their own properties. The Fire Service responses that it made no difference to them who or in what capacity the person was who lived in the premise, everyone was treated in the same way.

The Group queried the role of the Fire Service in relation to the fitting of cladding and it was confirmed that the Fire Services might comment on what the building regulations said or if they saw something in breach of regulations but cladding was not something that was checked during a fire safety audit.

The group considered whether there should be a disability access audit as standard especially as local authorities moved more towards the independent living agenda.

The Group requested clarity as to the stay put advice that had been given in relation to Grenfell. The fire Service stated that this advice was given when a block of flats was not designed for simultaneous evacuation and that stay put had been proven to work in the past and that this advice had been reiterated at tenant meetings.

The Group moved on to considering access issues for the Fire Service when attending a call and whether in most cases they could get close enough to the building. The Fire Service stated that the same procedure was followed whether the call be for a pan fire or if flames were spreading outside of the windows. A pre-determined number of officers would be sent to the scene and plans would be put into place. If these plans did not go as expected, then this would be fed back in and new plans put in place. If the fire crew could not get the required access, then this would again be fed back into the process and fed into any plans for that area. It was confirmed that a hydraulic platform would only reach up to 6 floors and a high rise was classed as 8 floors and above. Again, this was an area that had been reconsidered and when looking at cladding all building 6 floors and above were considered.

The Fire Service stated that following Grenfell each brigade had been given a list (there were 600 nationally) showing those buildings which had been identified as cladded. West Midlands Fire Service was at the centre of this operation and were liaising with every fire service across the country. The Fire Service had visited every single block within a week to check areas such as access and egress and whether the cladding was aluminium composite.

There was close liaison with the operational side with response officers looking at their activities considering what had happened and ensuring that all residents were kept informed as to what they were doing. Council representatives also met with the Fire Service at the majority of the tower blocks to help reinforce the message and the work being carried out. If there was cladding on a tower block the advice was then to send a sample to the national testing body and if the cladding failed, then the tower block would be revisited with the Responsible Person and a plan of action drawn up.

It was noted that there was some overlap in legislation regarding responsibility for communal areas. The Fire Service was the enforcing body and where something was discovered in breach of the regulations then the Landlord would be informed. The group queried who was responsible for front doors and it was stated that this depended on the lease agreement, the enforcing authority would still be the Fire Service but who was being enforced against could differ.

The Group queried who was in charge in an emergency fire situation and it was confirmed that this would be the Incident Commander. The Incident Commander would make a tactical plan and if they felt that the situation was escalating they could bring in whatever resources were required to manage the situation.

It was stated that there was currently a very good working relationship between the Fire Service and Wolverhampton Homes with no apparent weaknesses.

The Group queried the data that the Fire Service would have in an emergency and it was stated that crews now had mobile data terminals that allowed them to access data from visits and safe and well checks and included information in access and road width and the type of premises that was on fire (e.g. chemical plant).

The question of sprinklers was raised and the Fire Service stated that yes, they would recommend but only in the same way that they would recommend adequate compartmentalisation as part of ensuring a building had adequate fire precautions in place. Caution was also given to wait until the final report into the Grenfell Tower fire before making recommending and major fire initiative and the cause was still to be determined.

5 **Wolverhampton Homes**

The Group welcomed Mrs Lesley Roberts – Chief Executive of Wolverhampton Homes and Mr Simon Bamfield - Head of Commercial Services and Stock Investment.

The question was raised as to who was responsible for fire safety at Wolverhampton Homes and it was confirmed that there was a policy which specified how this responsibility was delegated. At the moment, the responsibility and duty of care sat with the Stock Investment Manager who was a specialist member of staff for fire safety and he was supported by specialist health and safety officers.

The Chair raised the question of training in relation to these staff and it was stated that the Stock Investment Manager (Myk Kazuba) had great support from external partner organisations and in particular Sam Bunch, a fire safety consultant from Jacobs who was an ex fire fighter and Graduate Member of the Institution of Fire Engineers (Mr Bunch also held a NEBOSH General Certificate and IOSH Fire Safety Management qualification). It was also confirmed that there was a specialist fire safety advisor within the Health and Safety Team and that this officer liaised regularly with the Fire Service.

The question was raised as to whether the officer with responsibility for carrying out the risk assessments had access to information as to where the disabled tenants were and whether the officers carrying out the training had disability access training or awareness of disability access needs. It was stated that there was a good general

awareness of disability access issues and that in 2010 a piece of work had been carried out to look at accessibility in high rise blocks and that this was continuously under review (an example of this was new signage being put up at a lower level).

Mr Bamfield also stated that the fire risk assessment procedure was very prescriptive and focused on the inhabitants in the block of flats and their ability to escape safely. It was also confirmed that the concierge staff had very good relationships with the residents that they looked after.

The question was then raised as to the training provided to the concierge staff and that if there was a fire what their role would be. Mr Bamfield confirmed that the Fire Service would take control in the event of a fire and that the concierge staff would be on site to provide what information they had in relation to the residents. It was confirmed that the concierge staff had training in relation to areas such as the use of evacuation chairs and had some experience of evacuating residents as there had been a number of different incidents over the years such as floods.

Mrs Roberts confirmed that separate fire safety training would be provided for concierge staff and that this was scheduled for December and would be carried out by a reputable company. Mrs Roberts also confirmed that there had been general training on fire safety to date and that the Manager was a former fire fighter. The role of the concierge staff was to ensure that all fire safety measures were in place. The Group stated that it was good to see that fire checks were part of the daily routine and the chair queried whether the daily checks were monitored. It was stated that yes, the Manager monitored the checks with staff to ensure that everything was being picked up. Anyone who spotted anything that might pose a fire risk had a responsibility to report it and the concierge always had to sign off each daily check list.

The question was raised as to how much was known regarding people with disabilities living in the flats. It was thought that information was now held in relation to 80 to 90% of residents but care also had to be taken to respect tenants' privacy. It was also confirmed that less was known regarding leaseholders as these often didn't want to provide the information and it was sometimes the case that they sublet the flat and this information was not available. Mrs Roberts stated that they had requested a visit to each leaseholder flat but that this could not be enforced and that any requests to the Government to strengthen powers over leaseholders would be welcomed.

Mrs Roberts confirmed that leaseholders as well as tenants received a pack outlining what to do in case of an emergency.

A question was raised regarding warnings that had been given prior to the Grenfell fire and members of the group questioned whether anything similar had been received by Wolverhampton Home including any serious complaints or concerns raised by residents.

Mrs Roberts stated that a lot of correspondence was received but that it was generally complimentary and that concerns over fire safety had never been raised. All questions and responses were published on the Wolverhampton Homes website.

The group queried the relationship between residents and Wolverhampton Homes and it was confirmed that the Residents Association met regularly and to date no concerns regarding fire safety had been raised. There was however no complacency as residents and officers were constantly and actively looking for areas that might be of concern and policies and procedures were constantly evolving such as the use of sprinklers in the bin rooms.

The Group considered the fact the corporate manslaughter charges might possible be brought against staff with responsibility for the Grenfell Tower and the question was raised as to whether areas such as this had ever been considered by Wolverhampton Homes and whether legal advice had been sought. Mrs Roberts stated that the events in Grenfell would never be forgotten and that Wolverhampton Homes had a clear governance structure in place which set out responsibilities clearly and of which all staff were aware. The Board of Directors had received both legal and health and safety advice and were equipped with the necessary skills and training. Mrs Roberts confirmed that the Board were fully aware of their responsibility to protect the public and that the Board was very good at challenging officers. Mrs Roberts also stated that the Board had a Health and Safety champion who attended officer meetings and that reviews were always carried out as to events that had occurred in the previous month.

The Group agreed that this was very encouraging information. Mrs Roberts stated that if required a set of papers from one of the meetings could be provided to the Group as an example of the work carried out along with the reviews that were done in relation to all fires.

The Group questioned the action taken by Wolverhampton Homes following the Grenfell fire. Mr Bamfield stated that the first requirement had been to complete a template sent out by the DCLG requesting information on all high-rise blocks. Mr Bamfield confirmed that this request referred to all high-rise tower block in the area and not just those that were the responsibility of the Council and as such partner organisations had be liaised with. Mrs Roberts stated that cladding had now been checked and that she was confident that it was fine. Mrs Roberts also confirmed that the sanctuary run block in Heath Town had cladding that had been specified by the City Council before it had been transferred but that their own tests had not been carried out, it was however confirmed that there was no aluminium composite cladding. It was also confirmed that the student accommodation had been checked and that there was 20% ACM and that due to this 2 blocks had been evacuated with plans in place to have the cladding removed; there were no other blocks of concern.

A query was raised as to the fact that cladding on one block of flats had been tested but not another that had the same cladding even though the cladding had been put up at different times. Mrs Roberts stated that she would look into getting both sets of cladding tested.

The question was raised as to emergency and evacuation policies and whether Wolverhampton Homes had a plan and whether Mrs Roberts was the lead on this. Mrs Roberts confirmed that yes there was an emergency plan and that this would swing into action prior to the full Council plan taking effect. The date of the last test of the emergency plan had been 2015 and that this had included communications and rest centres. Mrs Roberts confirmed that in the event of an emergency there would be enough beds to accommodate all residents from a tower block.

The chair confirmed that 6 out of 18 high rise block had now been tested and queried why this was the case when the advice from the Fire Service had been to test all the high-rise blocks. Mrs Roberts stated that this advice had not been provided to her directly but confirmed that every block had been visited and advise sought. At the time of the incident all testing had to be carried out by a Government allocated agency and that it was only testing ACM cladding. Wolverhampton Homes had a good record in relation to what was on all its blocks and those with mineral wool wall systems were not deemed at risk of fire.

The Chair stated that not testing was not acceptable and Mr Bamfield confirmed that the Government had now modified its testing regime and were testing all combinations of cladding. Mrs Roberts confirmed that there were ongoing in depth discussions with the Board but that on balance testing cladding that was closer to a render could generate more concern and that the best advise at the moment was to wait for the outcome of the Grenfell investigation and the recommendations from Government.

Mrs Roberts also confirmed that there were conflicting opinions and advice regarding testing and whether existing cladding should be removed or a replicate piece tested.

The group thanks Mrs Roberts and Mr Bamfield.

6 **Health and Safety**

The group welcomed Mr Phil Reilly - Health and safety Advisor at the City Council.

Mr Reilly was a Health and Safety Advisor and acted as a liaison between the Council and Wolverhampton Homes. Mr Reilly confirmed that the Housing Management database was shared with the fire Service and that within 12 hours the Council as landlord was informed of any incidents or fires and that all information was then be passed onto the relevant department.

Mr Reilly stated that there was a Social Housing Fire Safety Group part of the remit of which was to monitor any repeat incidents to ascertain if these were due to vulnerable residents who needed additional support or guidance.

Mr Reilly stated that following the Grenfell fire he had met with the Fire Service and carried out an audit and inspection of the high-rise blocks.

The question was raised as to what action was taken if the Fire Service reported problems in accessing a block of flats. Mr Reilly confirmed that when carrying out a Site-Specific Risk Inspection (SSRI) consideration was given as to whether the appliance and platform could gain access and that if there were concerns then this was tested and appropriate action could then be taken. The question was raised as to whether a hydraulic platform had visited the Graiseley Estate, Mr Reilly stated that he would check this.

Mr Reilly confirmed that he had a very good relationship with Wolverhampton Homes and that the Chief Executive was very proactive in her approach to fire safety.

Mr Reilly stated that prevention was the first directive and agreed that sprinklers were useful in some situations but as yet there was no evidence that having sprinklers would have prevented what happened in Grenfell. The Chair stated that some

residents felt that they were being ignored in their requests for sprinklers due to cost. Mr Reilly responded that there had been 4 incidents recently when communal alarms had sounded and that all residents had stayed put and followed the advice given, there was no evidence that they would try to evacuate the building unless directed to by the Fire Service.

Mr Reilly stated that when he had visited all the blocks with the fire Service after the Grenfell Fire he had been reassured by the faith that the residents had in the service and advice being provided to them and that they did not appear concerned or voice any worries.

The Group queried whether Mr Reilly was aware of any plans to carry out fire alarm tests to ascertain how residents would react and to ensure that they were aware where the muster points were. Mr Reilly stated that there were no plans he was aware of but that this was a good idea to help reinforce the stay put policy and to ensure that residents knew what to do and where to go in an emergency. Mr Reilly confirmed that he would provide a written response regarding evacuation and muster points.

7 **Corporate Landlord**

The group welcomed Mr Tim Pritchard – Head of Corporate Landlord and Mr Neale Shore - Compliance Officer.

The Group welcomed Mr Pritchard and Mr Shore. Mr Pritchard confirmed that the remit of Corporate Landlord included the Council's assets, facilities management and projects and works. Mr Shore stated that there were 165 corporate properties and 58 community schools and that the department was currently in the process of ensuring that these had a managed fire risk assessment programme in place. Corporate Landlord had only recently taken over the function for the buildings in June 2016 and for the schools in April 2017 so work in relation to this was still in the early stages.

The Chair queried what action had been taken since the Grenfell fire to check the cladding on school buildings. It was stated that the Council was awaiting information to be returned by the schools and as yet very little information had been received. Mr Shore confirmed that 10 fire risk assessments had been commissioned and that this was a rolling programme through 2018/2019 by the end of which assessments would have been carried out on all schools. Academies were not currently part of the rolling programme which was just looking at the 58 community schools. Mr Shore also confirmed that the focus now was on properties where people were resident rather than business properties.

A query was raised in relation to fire risk assessments and the Civic Offices especially in relation to disabled people and barriers that had breaks in them. Mr Shore stated that he would provide a written response in relation to this.

Mr Shore confirmed that Corporate Landlord were also working closely with Mr Sam Bunch, a fire safety consultant from Jacobs who was an ex fire fighter and Graduate Member Institution of Fire Engineers.

Mr Pritchard stated that now Mr Shore was in role that data and information could start to be collected to enable the team to understand how things stood now but it was confirmed that areas of high risk were being addressed with immediate effect.

Mr Pritchard confirmed that a questionnaire from the Department for Education had been completed and that this covered all community schools and that the Council were fully compliant with this. It was confirmed that the survey had dealt with buildings that were four storeys and above or that were residential.

Regarding buildings such as i10 it was noted that there was cladding and that this had been assessed by Mr Bunch who had also evaluated the evacuation plan and fire risk assessment and advised that at the moment this was sufficient and no further action needed to be taken. The Chair agreed that cladding was acceptable if mitigating systems were in place and that buildings needed to be looked at holistically. The Chair did however state that the cladding should be tested and it was confirmed that this would be the case if there was any uncertainty as to its composition. Unlike residential flats in buildings such as i10 there was an evacuation plan and when the alarm sounded everyone would leave the building.

The question was raised as to whether the risk assessment for the evacuation had included areas specifically focused on blind people, those with guide dogs or hearing impaired people. It was confirmed that a response would be provided regarding this.

The Group queried whether there was a plan in place for any of the Council owned buildings to be used in the case of an emergency. Mr Pritchard confirmed that if the need arose then the buildings would be made available and that work was carried out with the emergency planning and resilience team.

Phil Reilly - Health and Safety Advisor

Query 1 regarding Hydraulic Platform;

A hydraulic platform has visited the Graiseley Estate following a request made by myself during the high rise inspections. This information had not been passed to back to me. Information confirmed this afternoon were as follows. The HP was found to be able to access the blocks however there were concerns that it was very tight also if residents parked inappropriately access would be difficult. I have agreed with wmfs to revisit this to again check access and also to provide a formal response which can then be escalated and provide basis for any remedial works if required.

Query 2 regarding high rise muster point;

A full evacuation would only take place within a high rise block during a serious fire situation. This would be after phased evacuation from around the fire floor. The evacuation would be managed by wmfs and also any area for mustering would also be directed by wmfs on a dynamic risk based decision. e.g. the carpark may full of emergency vehicles or be subject to falling debris etc. Following this the duty would be passed primarily to WH (every fire situation in WH stock is attended by duty supervisor) or WCC depending upon severity of incident.

Neale Shore – corporate Landlord

Query 3 regarding Civic Centre disabled staff egress through the barriers at ground floor level in the event of an evacuation scenario.

I have reviewed today with the Head of Facilities and advise that;

- The stairs leading to the barriers do not form part of an escape route as they are not fire protected
- Notwithstanding, to the left of the barriers (viewed as leaving the building), there is a glass door which opens automatically in the event of full alarm activation or can be manually opened by an emergency door release adjacent to the door (a green break glass button)

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Section 41 Member Role Description

In addition to the responsibilities and competences set out in the member role description, members appointed as lead members for their constituent authorities, under Section 41 of the Local Government Act 1985, are required to:-

- answer questions put to them at meetings of their constituent council relating to the discharge of functions of the Fire and Rescue Authority;
- report back to their constituent authorities on the work of the Fire Authority, in accordance with any requirements within their authority's procedural standing orders, overview and scrutiny processes, or other monitoring arrangements.

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Who is the responsible, competent and relevant person?

12th Oct 2016

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the terms “Responsible Person”, “Competent Person”, and “Relevant Person” are introduced. If you’re not sure who in your organisation is responsible for fire safety or are unsure as to your duties, we’re here to help provide the information you need to stay informed, safe and in control.

So how do you know if you’re the responsible, competent or relevant person?

The Responsible Person



In this Order “responsible person” means—

- a. *in relation to a workplace, the employer, if the workplace is to any extent under his control;*
- b. *in relation to any premises not falling within paragraph (a)—*
 - i. *the person who has control of the premises (as occupier or otherwise) in connection with the carrying on by him of a trade, business or other undertaking (for profit or not); or*
 - ii. *the owner, where the person in control of the premises does not have control in connection with the carrying on by that person of a trade, business or other undertaking*

In most circumstances the owner, employer or occupier of the premises is responsible for ensuring and maintaining correct fire safety and procedures – known as the “responsible person”.

If you’re unsure who the “responsible person” of your premises is, you should contact the person in charge of the workplace and ensure that adequate and correct fire safety measures are in place.

Under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, the responsible person is required to – following a risk assessment – implement appropriate fire safety measures to minimize the risk to life from fire, and to keep the assessment up to date.

Our [Fire Risk Assessment service](#) involves a Fire Safety Management Audit that will fully inspect how the Responsible Person is managing fire safety and will provide [training](#) to improve your current practices.

The Competent Person



The competent person or fire risk assessor need not possess any specific academic qualifications but should:

- *understand the relevant fire safety legislation and the associated guidance documents (<http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/firesafety/firesafetylaw/>);*
- *have appropriate education, training, knowledge and experience in the principles of fire safety;*
- *have an understanding of fire development and the behaviour of people in fire; understand the fire hazards, fire risks and relevant factors associated with occupants at special risk within buildings of the type in question; and*
- *have appropriate training and/or experience in carrying out fire risk assessments.*

There is no defined skillset or training designated for the “competent person”, however, they must show a competency in all areas equal to (or greater than) the complexity of problems to be tackled. The competent person must display an ability to identify a problem when seen and suitably assess its relative importance in relation to the safety systems in place.

The Relevant Person



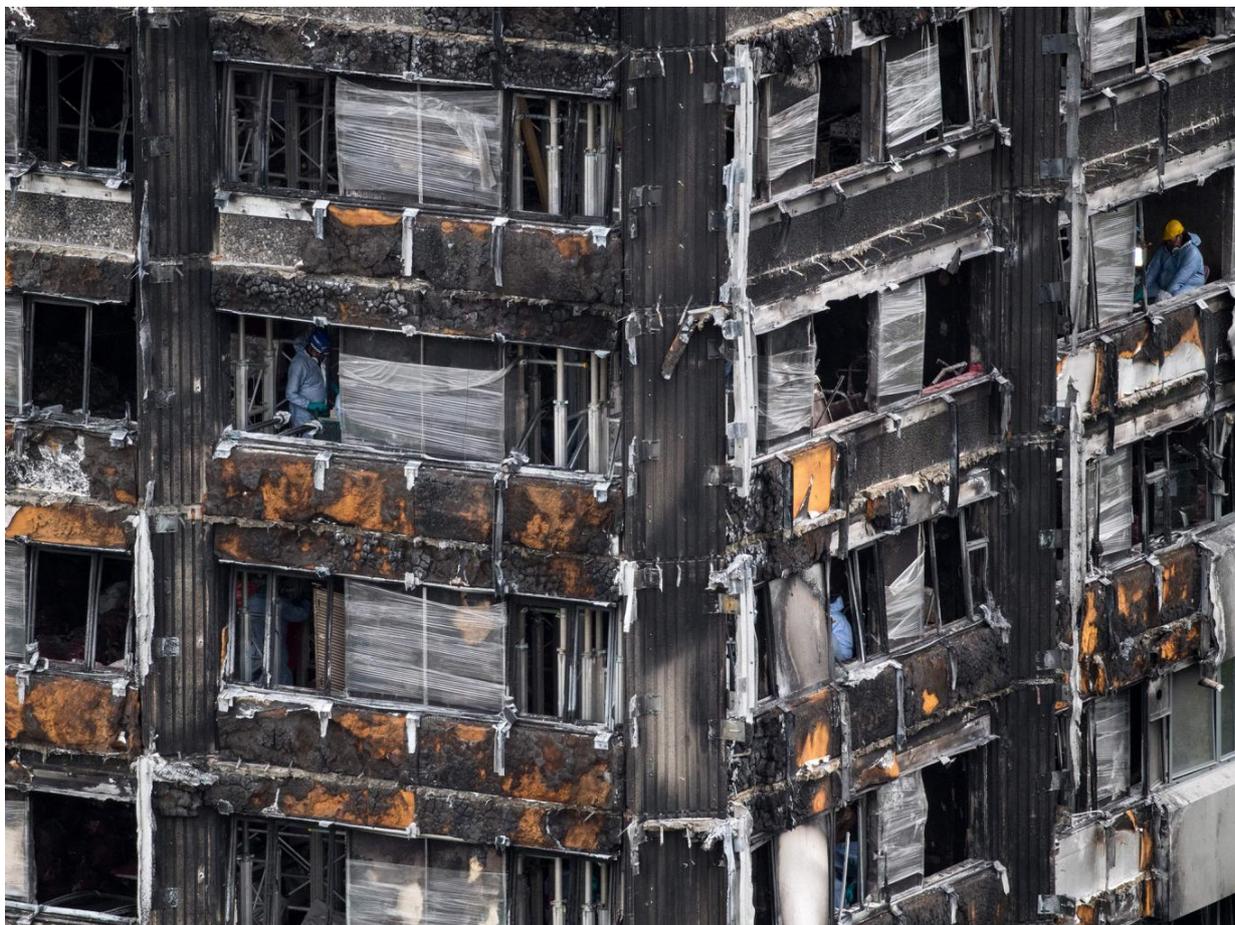
The relevant person refers to any person, including responsible and competent persons, who are or may be on the premises and any person in the immediate vicinity of the premises who is at risk from a fire on the premises.

In the simplest terms, the relevant person is anyone that could possibly be affected by a fire (or related) problems at the premises.

If you're unsure who the relevant people are, our thorough **risk assessment** will outline them for you.

Grenfell fire: Police block release of key documents on cladding warning

Authority admits there is 'considerable public interest' in releasing the information but says it fears collapsing police investigation



Police investigators are seen inside the burned out shell of Grenfell Tower this week
AFP/Getty Images

The Metropolitan Police has advised Kensington and Chelsea Council (RBKC) to block the release of correspondence that would shed light on what action was taken to mitigate fire risks at Grenfell Tower, *The Independent* can reveal.

Officers are vetting requests for information on the council's response after it was warned by London Fire Brigade about the potential risks of cladding at Grenfell and other buildings.

The fire service wrote to all 33 London councils on 6 April – two months before the devastating fire ripped through Grenfell Tower claiming up to 80 lives – after concluding that cladding had contributed to another fire in Hammersmith, west London.

But despite repeated requests under Freedom for Information laws about what Kensington authorities did following that warning, the council has refused to provide answers.

In its last response, the council said it had been advised by the police not to release the information amid fears it could interfere with the criminal investigation that officers are carrying out.

Alex Peebles, a solicitor at law firm Duncan Lewis, told *The Independent* that “a mere assertion from the police or the council” that the information was exempt from disclosure was “unlikely to be sufficient” to justify the block.

He added: “The information cannot be withheld just because there may be risks associated with its disclosure. The council or the police must be prepared to give detailed reasons that explain why the disclosure would or would be likely to cause prejudice to others.”

Moyra Samuels, of the Justice4Grenfell campaign group, said: “For the community, nothing surprises us regarding the behaviour of the council. Of course we demand that they are truthful and transparent but we don’t expect them to be.”

LFB’s assistant commissioner, Dan Daly, warned all London councils they should check cladding was up to standard, and “take account of other fire-safety measures already in place in the building as well as potential mitigation measures to ensure that any potential fire spread does not pose a risk to health and safety”.

The warning followed a fire at the Shepherd’s Court flats in Hammersmith in August 2016, which the fire service believed was exacerbated by external panels.

The Met has asked to see any information about Grenfell Tower RBKC is considering for release under Fol, *The Independent* has been told.

The council said the fire brigade’s letter was addressed to its director of housing and was later forwarded to the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO), which manages properties on behalf of the council. In the wake of the fire, the council is dealing with all Freedom of Information requests relating to the work of KCTMO.

KCTMO, which is a non-profit company at arms length from the council, was stripped of its management of Grenfell Tower after the fire. A KCTMO spokesman said: “All Fol queries regarding Grenfell Tower-related matters are being handled by RBKC.

“We have not consulted the Metropolitan Police directly on Grenfell-related matters, as this is also being handled by RBKC.”

The council said it had consulted the Met on a total of seven Fol requests about Grenfell Tower. Four requests have been subsequently denied, including *The Independent’s*, two are in progress and one has been granted.

It said in its rejection notice to *The Independent*: “At this point in time, it is our belief that the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosure.”

In the same letter the council went on to claim the Met had “expressed a view that disclosure would or would be likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime or the apprehension or prosecution of offenders” – but did not elaborate, beyond restating the Met’s belief that it had “reasonable grounds” to think the council and KCTMO had committed corporate manslaughter.

It added: “There is a considerable public interest in the disclosure of information held by the council about the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower, and the cause and spread of the fire.

“Where possible, we will be releasing information that relates to Grenfell Tower. However, there is also a significant public interest in withholding this information so as to not adversely affect the criminal investigation.”

But the Met’s advice did not constitute an order to withhold the information, the force said.

A Metropolitan Police spokesman said: “The MPS is carrying out an ongoing criminal investigation into the cause and spread of the fatal fire at Grenfell Tower. This investigation is one of the most complex carried out by the MPS, outside of terrorism. We are committed to finding answers for all those so deeply affected by the tragedy.

“The MPS will consider taking every possible legal step to prevent this investigation from being prejudiced. As such we are made aware of and consulted on whether the release of material under the Freedom of Information Act, at this stage, may prejudice this ongoing investigation.

“The act allows for such consultation to take place, and there are relevant exemptions for non-release of material that may prejudice, at this stage, an ongoing criminal investigation.

“The release of material remains the decision of the organisation who holds it.”

Emma Dent Coad, the MP for Kensington, said it seemed “strange” that the council was refusing to release the information. “There are a lot of unanswered questions in this terrible case, and unsurprisingly some suspicion from local people as to why they are not being answered,” she said.

Maurice Frankel, of the Campaign for Freedom of Information, said: “It makes no sense to defer answering Fol requests until any prosecutions that may be brought are over.

“The public inquiry taking place [will] be looking into these matters anyway and dealing with much of the same information, and you cannot delay disclosure and the learning of lessons for years until any trial is over.”

A Kensington and Chelsea Council spokesman said: “We are an open and transparent organisation and we are responding to Freedom of Information requests relating to the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy as we would do on any other request of this nature.

“Any item or documentation requested from us, be it Grenfell Tower-related or any other council business, we will disclose in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act and independently of the police or any other external organisation.”

Briefing Note

Title: Emergency response capability for Wolverhampton

Prepared by: Neil Rogerson, Resilience Manager & Ros Jervis, Service Director Public Health & Wellbeing

Date: Thursday 22nd June 2017

Intended audience: Executive Team

Internal

Partner organisation

Public

Aim

To provide both assurance and reassurance in the wake of a series of tragic major incidents such as the Grenfell Tower Disaster and terrorist attacks in London and Manchester in relation to the City of Wolverhampton and the plans, capabilities and resources that are in place to respond should a similar disaster occur in our city. This note will also make reference to resilience at a regional level where it should be noted that mutual aid arrangements enable greater capacity to respond to major incidents at scale.

Emergency Planning and Response Capabilities

Major Incident Response Slides

The accompanying presentation illustrates how City of Wolverhampton Council coordinates our response to major incidents and how our work integrates with the local emergency services and partner agencies; both within the City of Wolverhampton and across the West Midlands Conurbation (please note that the presentation also contains a number of embedded plans for ease of access).

For information approximately 189 members of staff across council services have received some form of emergency planning training to enable them to take on various roles during an incident. An example of this would be the role of Rest Centre Manager or Forward Liaison Officer. We are in the process of recruiting additional volunteers for these roles and training took place last week and will be repeated again this week.

Major Incident Response Plan

The Major Incident Response Plan is a generic 'enabling' plan, which allows the council to dynamically adapt to a spectrum of risks and perform its emergency response duties, as set out by the Civil Contingencies Act (2004). The plan details how we receive calls, pass information during an activation and the roles and responsibilities required to coordinate our response.

The plan is designed to be scalable in nature. This means that the 24hr Contact Centre, Duty Manager, Resilience Team, Duty Director and Senior Communications Advisor can deal with most smaller incidents (such as a contained toxic spillage or a small, temporary or precautionary residential evacuation), by coordinating our response remotely. Larger or protracted incidents may require full activation of the plan, where directors and senior managers are brought into the Major Incident Control Room to coordinate the response from a central location.

During our response, the council will seek to mitigate the damage caused by pursuing the following strategic aims;

1. Save and protect human life
2. Contain the emergency – limiting its escalation or spread and mitigating its impacts
3. Maintain or restore critical activities.

The council can do much to achieve these strategic objectives, but one of the most important responses is to establish a place of safety where evacuees, who have been displaced from their homes, can take shelter and access vital services.

Rest Centre Activation Plan

Rest Centres are a fundamental part of the council's response to an emergency and, as such, their activation forms the bedrock of our weekly training sessions, known as Exercise Clockwork (see below for more details). During these exercises, the Duty Manager on call has a chance to practice working with the 24hr Contact Centre in a simulated emergency, each one requiring a rest centre as part of the response. As a result of the lessons learned from these exercises, the current rest centre plan is being revised, simplified and divided, so that the section needed to select and activate a rest centre is separated from the section needed to open and operate it.

Rest centre activation essentially involves the 24 Contact Centre using a Geographical Information System (GIS) to locate the site of an incident, before displaying nearby rest centres that have sufficient capacity to shelter the number of evacuees displaced. The 24hr Contact Centre then works with the Duty Manager to identify the venue key holder, a Rest Centre Manager and call out the British Red Cross (further details of British Red Cross service below). Once this has been achieved (using the council's incident management website), all three are directed to the selected rest centre and passenger transport is arranged as appropriate.

Wolverhampton's Rest Centres

The Resilience Team has identified 5 primary and 21 secondary sites. The primary centres vary in size and can shelter up to 620 people during the day and 256 people at night. They are all council-owned and have rest centre equipment boxes pre-located on site, reducing the time taken to establish the centre when needed. If needed at the same time they could provide shelter for 2360 people during the day and 1180 people at night.

The secondary rest centres are smaller venues that can shelter an average 93 people in the daytime and 47 at night. As there are so many of them, they do not have pre-located equipment boxes but three more rest centre boxes are stored in the Major Incident Control Room so the Rest Centre Manager can pick one up on their way to a secondary centre, enabling additional, or more appropriately-sized, shelters to be established.

Please note that capacity can be increased through the use of our mutual aid agreement with neighbouring authorities which would be coordinated through the Regional Local Resilience Forum's (see below for more details) response group called the Strategic Coordination Group if required.

Rest Centre Manager's Handbook

The Rest Centre Manager's Handbook contains the detail of how to set up a centre and the specific responsibilities of each of the roles needed to establish and operate the shelter. Although most of the roles are performed by the British Red Cross, it is important that a suitably trained council colleague is on site to ensure the necessary duties are being performed. The manager is also the key conduit to feed any issues, or requests for support, back to the council's Duty Manager or the managers and directors operating the Major Incident Control Room.

A live rest centre exercise, where we ask Rest Centre Managers to physically set up one of our rest centres, takes place in Wolverhampton on an annual basis.

British Red Cross Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

The British Red Cross have a bank of volunteers on call who have been trained to perform the initial public facing roles in a rest centre. These roles include registering the evacuees, offering food, clothing, beds and befriending. The use of a charity to perform these roles reduces the training and equipment burden on the council and, depending on the scale of the incident, allows us time to arrange for specialist housing, benefits and bereavement support colleagues to attend the centre.

Like most other councils, Wolverhampton doesn't pay a retainer for this service, but has agreed to reimburse the volunteers' travel and food expenses, as well purchasing replacement care packages that are used by our evacuees. The British Red Cross operates in regional groupings that support each other by backfilling during serious or protracted incidents. Should an enormous disaster occur they can call upon assistance from the International Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Exercise Clockwork

Ex Clockwork runs every Monday from 4-5pm and is a weekly command post exercise that is designed to identify improvements or gaps in our response plans, procedures and tools. As a minimum, it involves the Resilience Team, the Duty Manager and a Call Handler from the 24hr Contact Centre. Duty Directors and Call Centre Managers occasionally attend and the sessions are also open for On Call Senior Communications Advisors.

Following a recruitment drive for additional Forward Liaison Officers and Rest Centre Managers, we plan to involve each new volunteer in Exercise Clockwork once every six months.

Testing plans against a different hazard each month, the exercise has, so far, examined our ability to respond to large fires, building collapse, toxic spillage and flood. A risk specific aide memoir has been written for each risk and added to the council's bespoke incident management system www.apprise-im.com.

Emergency Communications Plan

Effective communication is an essential element of the Council's response to a major incident or disruptive event. Irrespective of the cause of an emergency, the Council will need to warn and inform our residents, businesses, staff and other stakeholders of the hazards or service disruption that may occur. As the incident unfolds, the Council must also inform stakeholders about our response and advise them of the steps they can take to help to keep themselves safe and avoid harm.

The Emergency Communications Plan was written by both the Resilience Team and the Communications Team, but is owned by the council's Communication Team and aims to maintain public and staff confidence by establishing an effective capability to communicate with our staff, the public and other stakeholders in the event of a significant disruptive event or major incident that requires a response from the Council.

In support of the plan's clear description of the roles designated to brief the press during a major incident, external Press Spokesperson training is arranged by the Resilience Team annually, with all Duty Directors and Cabinet Members being invited to attend.

These are in addition to the plans and capabilities developed through the CONTEST Board regarding the PROTECT and PREPARE elements of the COuNter-TErrorism STRategy that have been highlighted in the previous paper. A comprehensive list of the Council's current portfolio of plans and capabilities can be found below in appendix 1.

Resilience across the West Midlands

Wolverhampton falls within the West Midlands Conurbation's Local Resilience Forum (LRF). This multi-agency planning group consists of the emergency services, local authorities, various NHS agencies, the military, transport agencies and companies, utilities providers and the voluntary sector.

The LRF meets quarterly at a senior manager level, with the Director of Public Health for Wolverhampton representing Public Health as Co-Chair of the Local Health Resilience Partnership (LHRP) and the Director of Public Health for Dudley MBC representing ABCA. Quarterly middle manager meetings also occur, under the guise of the General Working Group, these are attended by the Resilience Manager for the City of Wolverhampton Council. Four additional working groups also occur to look collectively at risk, training and exercising, technical communications (satellite phones etc.) and fuel disruption.

A number of multi-agency exercises have occurred over the last three years all of which have been well attended by the council. One exercise, based on a counter terrorism scenario, involved the full activation of the LRF's response group called the Strategic Coordination Group.

Over the past six months, the Strategic Coordination Group has been activated to respond to actual major incidents on three occasions (Storm Doris and the London and Manchester terrorist attacks). Usually involving a teleconference, the City of Wolverhampton has dialled into each and reported updates back to SEB.

In Wolverhampton, the Local Resilience Forum is replicated at a Local Authority level by the Wolverhampton Resilience Group, the quarterly meetings are chaired and minuted by the Resilience Team and are attended by representatives from the emergency services, NHS, Wolverhampton University, the Molineux, the Mander Centre, Jaguar Land Rover and a number of other local agencies and businesses.

The Local Health Resilience Partnership (LHRP) co-ordinates emergency preparedness, resilience and response across health organisations such as NHS trusts, the West Midlands Ambulance Service, CCGs and public health for the Black Country, Birmingham and Solihull. Co-

chaired by a lead Director of Public Health and Director of Operations for NHS England. This partnership has a direct relationship with the LRF.

Wolverhampton has a local equivalent, The Health Protection Forum (HPF) that pulls organisations and teams with a focus on planning and responding to incidents requiring a critical health response or a significant public health issue such as managing mass casualties or pandemic flu. The HPF is chaired by your DPH.

Future plans and capabilities in the pipeline

Recovery Plan

Recovery is a co-ordinated process of supporting affected communities in the reconstruction of the physical infrastructure and restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical well-being. After emergencies, the recovery phase will often target the restoration of an affected area to its previous condition, i.e. normalisation. However, there may be a strategic opportunity to go beyond 'recovery' and achieve longer-term regeneration and economic development.

Humanitarian Assistance Centre Plan

The purpose of a Humanitarian Assistance Centre (HAC) is to act as a focal point for information and assistance to bereaved families and friends of those missing, injured or killed. It is also a place to deliver medium to longer term services to survivors, and to all those directly affected by, and involved in, the emergency.

Streamlining personal information collection and transfer

The identification and registration of the displaced, missing and deceased is a challenge for all agencies responding to a major incident. Rapidly establishing a system to record and track those in Survivor Reception Centres, Rest Centres and Friends and Family Reception Centres, allows organisations to gain a clearer understanding of who has been involved in the incident and where they are currently located.

However, most systems rely on written paper records so the team would like to propose that a digital solution is developed to reduce paperwork and increase information flow to responders, while ensuring data protection remains secure. Current thinking includes the use of barcoded wristbands and computerised registration, allowing the relevant centres to reduce the requirement for duplicated registration and expedite services to the people who need them. Additionally, it will provide an information flow to the emergency services that would ease a difficult area of communication that provides many conflicting statistics about those affected.

Identifying Vulnerable People

The council controls a number of datasets with information about local residents that indicates that they may be particularly vulnerable in the event of an emergency. This information can be extremely useful to the emergency services, allowing them to prioritise and adapt their response accordingly. For example, a hearing impaired resident would benefit from a tailored response if their building was inside a cordon area and they were unable to hear the general communication to evacuate.

Through the use of middleware, the council can interrogate our datasets and draw information from multiple sources to bring back the names, addresses and phone numbers of people within a

certain postcode or on a particular street. When combined with a Geographical Information System, the process would allow the council to draw a cordon on an electronic map and immediately create a table of names and addresses that can be emailed to the fire service command vehicle at the scene.

Working with IT and GIS colleagues, your current Resilience Manager developed an identical system in the London Borough of Brent in 2011 which was used to good effect in a number of trial exercises and actual incidents.

Prioritisation, timescales and the resources required to deliver the proposals highlighted above will be discussed as part of the on-going agenda for the Council's Resilience Board.

Appendix 1

The current list of plans and capabilities prepared by the Council's Resilience Team is:

- Major Incident Response Plan,
- Major Incident Control Room,
- Control Room Manager's Handbook,
- Forward Liaison Officer's Handbook,
- Rest Centre Manager's Handbook,
- Major Incident CCTV Handbook,
- Emergency Communications Plan,
- Google Earth for Resilience,
- Apprise Incident Management Website,
- Contact Call Out (mass messaging),
- Business Continuity Policy,
- Business Continuity Strategic Plan,
- Service Resilience (bespoke business continuity planning tool),
- Civic Centre Lockdown Plan,
- Wolverhampton Multi Agency Major Incident Procedure Manual,
- Local Emergency Mortuary Arrangements (Mass Fatalities).

Each new plan and response resource developed requires multiple individuals to be trained in various roles, exercises to validate it and ongoing maintenance to ensure that the plan is in keeping with other new plans/capabilities.