

	<p>Housing Scrutiny Committee 14 September 2017</p> <p>Report from Chief Executive's Department</p>
<p>Wards Affected: All</p>	
<p>Scope for task group on Fire Safety of low-rise domestic properties (up to nine storeys) in Brent</p>	

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed scope for task group on fire safety of low-rise (up to nine storeys) domestic properties in Brent and Terms of Reference for the task group members.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee are asked to agree the scope, terms of reference and time scale for the task group attached as Appendices A and B.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 There is a member consensus on gaining a better understanding of fire safety of low-rise (up to nine storeys) domestic properties, ensuring that the council has clear policy and is informed. Members of the Housing Scrutiny Committee have requested a time-limited task group to undertake a focused piece on the state of fire safety for domestic properties in Brent.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Not applicable.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 Not applicable.

6.0 Equality Implications

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 7.1 Not applicable.

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Appendix A: Scope for Scrutiny Task Group

Fire Safety of low-rise domestic properties (up to nine storeys) in Brent

Task Group Chair: Cllr Janice Long

Task Group Members: Cllrs John Duffy, Shafique Choudhary, Pat Harrison

Time frame: 18 Sep – 8 Dec 2017

1. Background

This section provides the broader policy and operational context on fire safety undertaken by national and local government bodies. It also provides evidence of fire incidences by property type over a period of three years, focusing on all domestic properties in Brent.

National Context

Following the fatal fire at Grenfell Tower in June 2017 there has been significant focus by local and central government on fire safety of domestic properties across the country. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) established the Building Safety Programme in July to identify buildings which are of concern through a thorough checking and testing process.

The Prime Minister announced a public inquiry¹ into the fire on 14th June 2017 at Grenfell Tower. The Inquiry is focused on the fire at Grenfell Tower, however, its recommendations will have wider ramifications for fire safety policies for domestic properties across the country, which will require a specific response from Brent Council at a later date. Based on the Terms of Reference issued for the Inquiry we can already identify 'the scope and adequacy of building regulations, fire regulations and other legislation, guidance and industry practice relating to the design, construction, equipping and management of high-rise residential buildings', as a possible area of reform.²

Brent Context

The annual programme of Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) was completed between March-May 2017 with recommendations on responsive repair items, compliance checks on installations and staff training issues.

Brent Council has updated the 2017-18 Housing works programme to include fire safety measures for tower blocks following the fatal Grenfell Tower fire in June. On 10th July 2017 the Council, further, agreed for £10 million to be spent on a package of enhanced fire safety measures for high rise blocks such as sprinklers, smoke detectors and fire alarms. The Council and Brent Housing Partnership (BHP)³ officers are currently developing a fully itemised and costed programme of fire safety work for Council consideration and approval by October 2017. The specification being developed will outline the enhanced fire detection equipment that could be installed, over and above the required standard.

Along with increased funding, Brent Council has undertaken a number of measures to inspect smoke detectors for Council properties; improved awareness of the mitigation measures in place for civil emergencies; improving awareness of the risk of fire in a tower block within the Borough Resilience Forum; responding to wider public interest; and hosting local meetings between Jul - Oct 2017.

¹ [Grenfell Tower Inquiry](#);

² Ibid.

³ BHP will transfer all Brent Council owned housing stock to the Council's Housing team from 1 Oct 2017. However, BHP will continue to manage 329 properties under its ownership in conjunction with Invest4Brent (I4B).

Evidence of fire incidences and Domestic properties in Brent

The evidence of fire incidences by property type in Table 1 highlights the majority of fire events occur in low rise (up to nine storeys) properties. This is a combination of houses, converted and purpose built maisonettes where 61-74 percent of fires occurred each year between 2014/15 - 2016/17 compared to 1-5 percent for Purpose Built Flats/Maisonettes with 10 or more storeys in the same period.

Brent experienced a dramatic shift in the tenure of households between 2001 and 2011 with a near doubling in the number of private rented households (which includes those living rent free) and a 12 percent decrease in owner-occupation. This makes up 44% of the borough's households, down from 56% in 2001; private rented makes up 32% of the households, up from 18% in 2001; the proportion of social rented households held steady at 24 percent.⁴

⁴ 'The 2011 Census: A Profile of Brent', Brent Council, 2013;

Table 1: Evidence of fire incidences by property type			2014/15		2015/16		2016/17	
Property Class	Property Type	Detailed Property Type	Fires	Fire	Fires	Fire	Fires	Fire
				Deaths		Deaths		Deaths
Dwelling	Converted Flats/Maisonettes	Converted Flat/Maisonette - Up to 2 storeys	43		40		26	1
		Converted Flat/Maisonettes - 3 or more storeys	6		11		16	
	Dwelling	House - single occupancy	85		85	1	77	
		Self-contained Sheltered Housing	9		7		11	
		Other Dwelling	1					
		Caravan/Mobile home (permanent dwelling)	1					
	House in Multiple Occupation	Licensed House in Multiple Occupation - Up to 2 storeys	2		3		3	
		House in Multiple Occupation - Up to 2 storeys (not known if licensed)	4		2		2	
		Licensed House in Multiple Occupation - 3 or more storeys	1		5		1	
		Unlicensed House in Multiple Occupation - Up to 2 storeys	3				4	
		House in Multiple Occupation - 3 or more storeys (not known if licensed)	2		3			
		Unlicensed House in Multiple Occupation - 3 or more storeys	1				1	
	Purpose Built Flats/Maisonettes	Purpose Built Flats/Maisonettes - Up to 3 storeys	44		55		49	
		Purpose Built Flats/Maisonettes - 4 to 9 storeys	19		18		32	
		Purpose Built Flats/Maisonettes - 10 or more storeys	6		3		12	
Other Residential	Other Residential	Other Residential Home	2		3		3	
		Hostel (e.g. for homeless people)	3				3	

		Student Hall of Residence	2				1	
		Hotel/motel	1				1	
		Nurses'/Doctors' accommodation	1		1			
		Youth hostel	1					
		Boarding House/B&B for homeless/asylum seekers			1			
		Boarding House/B&B other	1					
		Sheltered Housing : not self-contained	1					
	Residential Home	Retirement/Old Persons Home	2		4		3	
		Nursing/Care Home/Hospice	3		2	1	3	
		Children's Home						
Grand Total		244	0	243	2	248	1	

Source: GM Mark Davidson - Brent Borough Commander, London Fire Brigade (shared via email, 25 Jul 2017)

2. Rationale

The fire incidences for low rise properties (up to nine storeys), as the evidence suggests, appears to be significantly higher than tower blocks (more than 10 storeys). There is a compelling case to justify further investigation on fire safety measures for low-rise domestic properties.

A number of initiatives at the policy and operational levels are underway to understand the fire safety requirements of domestic properties across the country and Brent. At the operational level Brent Council and Brent RPs are undertaking extensive work to identify whether existing fire safety measures are fit-for-purpose. At the policy level the Grenfell Inquiry will provide a spotlight on policy level changes for fire safety focused on high-rise tower blocks.

In light of the extensive work by Brent Council on improving fire safety for HRA properties along with a comprehensive review of Registered Providers in four housing scrutiny meetings starting from November, this task group should examine fire safety measures for low-rise (up to nine storeys) in Brent.

3. Purpose

The task group will review types of fire incidences, cause of death, fire safety measures and fire safety awareness campaigns in Brent with a specific focus on low-rise properties (up to nine storeys).

4. Objective

- To make recommendations to review fire safety regulations for low-rise properties (up to nine storeys);
- To make recommendations on improving awareness of fire safety measures amongst all Brent residents with a focus on low-rise properties (up to nine storeys).

5. Scope of work

The task group will produce recommendations for cabinet which examines the following areas for low-rise properties (up to nine storeys) in Brent:

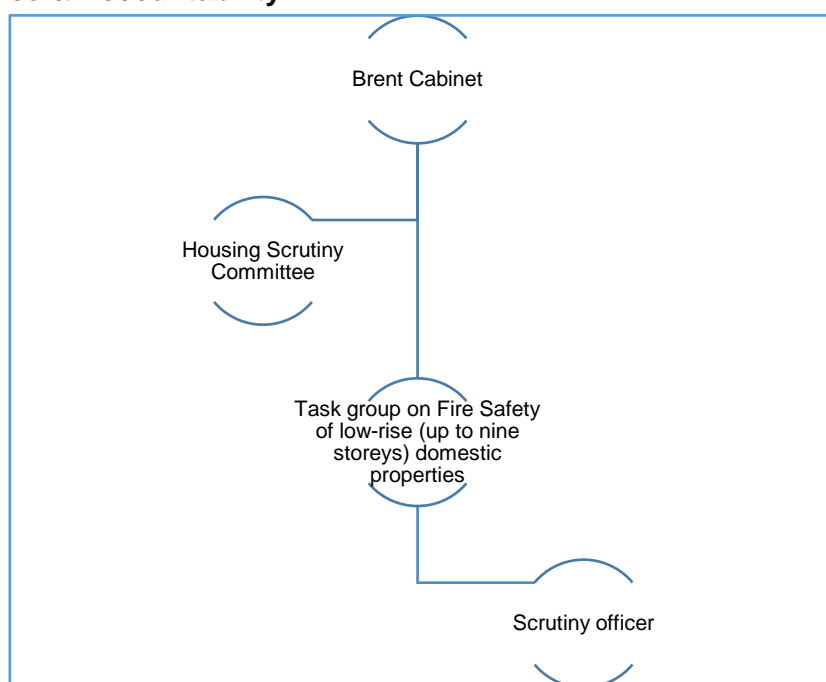
- i. Fire safety measures for Brent Council owned properties,⁵ social housing delivered by Registered Providers (RP); details of respective communications strategy;
- ii. Building regulations applicable for owner-occupied and PRS properties;
- iii. Cause of fire incidences and types of deaths;
- iv. Emergency vehicle access for social housing estates with a focus on parking enforcement;
- v. Brent Council and RP housing allocations policy based on residents ability to respond to fire and other emergency incidences;
- vi. Available facilities (e.g. bicycle shed) for residents to store large items (e.g. bicycles and buggy's) and clear items (e.g. white goods, furniture) in common areas.

⁵ Housing under the Housing Revenue Account (HRA);

Appendix B

Terms of reference

1. Purpose of group
 - a. Develop a broad understanding and evidence base of the Fire Safety of low-rise domestic properties (up to nine storeys) in Brent;
 - b. Engage with stakeholders responsible for devising and enforcing fire safety rules;
 - c. Submit recommendations to Brent Cabinet.
2. Objectives
 - a) Liaise with appropriate stakeholders to gather evidence;
 - b) Use reviewed evidence to inform findings and recommendations for improving fire safety for all Domestic properties in Brent.
3. Governance & Accountability



4. Task group membership
 - a. Chair: Cllr Janice Long
 - b. Member: Cllrs John Duffy, Shafique Choudhary, Pat Harrison
 - c. Scrutiny officer: Sanjan Haque
5. Quorum & Frequency Of Meetings

There should be at least two members present at each meeting. A minimum would be the Chair, and another member of the task group. The task group will hold up to four meetings with sub meetings held between the chair and the Scrutiny Officer as required.
6. Date Of Review

Start: 18 Sep 2017
End: 8 Dec 2017