

Lead Officer: Stephen Tate, Director of district centres and regeneration
Mark Meehan, Director of housing needs

Wards: All

Agenda Item:

Subject: - The Hackitt Review: Croydon's response

1. Recommendations

1.1 The Panel is asked to note the contents of this report.

2. Background

2.1 Following the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy, the then Home Secretary commissioned Dame Judith Hackitt to undertake an independent review of Building Regulations and in particular their impact on Fire Safety. Dame Judith published her final report on 17 May 2018.

2.2 The full report can be found at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-review-of-building-regulations-and-fire-safety-final-report>

2.2 This report outlines the key findings and proposals in the report and sets out Croydon Council's response to these.

3. The Hackitt Report key findings

3.1 The main finding from the report is that "*the current system of building regulations and fire safety is not fit for purpose and that a culture change is required to support the delivery of buildings that are safe, both now and in the future.*"

3.2 Specifically:

- the roles and responsibilities of those procuring, designing, constructing and maintaining buildings are unclear;
- the package of regulations and guidance can be ambiguous and inconsistent;
- the processes that drive compliance with building safety requirements are weak and complex with poor record keeping and change control in too many cases;
- competence across the system is patchy;
- the product testing, labelling and marketing regime is opaque and insufficient; and

- the voices of residents often go unheard, even when safety issues are identified.

4. The Hackitt Review key recommendations

4.1 The Hackitt Review Report sets a number of recommendations grouped under ten key headings. These are:

- Establishing a new regulatory framework
- Improving the focus on building safety during the design, construction and refurbishment phases
- Improving the focus on building safety during the occupation phase
- Giving residents a voice in the system
- Setting out demanding expectations of improved levels of competence
- Creating a more effective balance between government ownership of building standards and industry ownership of technical guidance
- Creating a more robust and transparent construction products regime
- Creating a joined up record of information about each higher-risk residential buildings (HRRB) that covers from
- Tackling poor procurement practices
- Ensuring continuous improvement and best-practice learning through membership of an international body

4.3 The report does not recommend the banning of combustible materials in cladding on tower blocks. However, the housing secretary, James Brokenshire announced government consultation on banning combustible materials in cladding on tower blocks in June 2018.

4.4 A number of the specific recommendations in the report will take some time to implement and require the government to develop “a joined-up implementation” plan, and in some cases for primary legislation to be passed. These include:

- A new regulatory framework focusing in the first instance on higher-risk residential buildings (HRRBs)
- A new Joint Competent Authority (JCA) involving councils, fire brigades and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to oversee the design, delivery and maintenance of safe buildings, including retrofitting of sprinklers
- The introduction of a reactive testing regime run by the JCA when concerns are raised about a product’s fire safety
- Stronger enforcement powers, with council building control departments to now be called Local Authority Building Standards (LABSs) and to have a role of “building safety manager”
- Ending the ability for private building owners to choose an approved building control inspection without any direct local authority oversight.
- Having an overarching body to provide oversight of competence requirements.
- Moving to a package of regulations and guidance that is simpler to navigate but that genuinely reflects the level of complexity of the building work

- Ensuring continuous improvement and best-practice learning through membership of an international body
- 4.4 The report also states that in the meantime industry must start ‘living’ the cultural shift that is required – the most important element of achieving that will be leadership from within industry.

5. Croydon Council’s response to the report

- 5.1 The safety of residents living in homes where we are the landlord or the freeholder is a priority for the council. The council acted swiftly in the wake of the Grenfell tragedy to review fire safety measures across all council homes and was the first local authority to announce its sprinkler retrofit programme for taller blocks. Within the report there are some recommendations which the council has already acted on or can act on immediately. These are set out below. In some cases, such as fire risk assessments, we have already gone further than the recommendations of the report.

Fire Safety Board

- 5.2 The Joint Competent Authority recommended in the report will need to be established and this may take some time. However, the council, working with the London Fire Brigade, established a Fire Safety Board immediately after the Grenfell tragedy. The Fire Safety Board focuses on improving local fire safety standards through joint working. This includes identifying cladded blocks within the private sector and taking appropriate action on these and discussions on emerging fire safety information and reports and sharing good practice with the London Fire Brigade.

Clear and identifiable dutyholder

- 5.3 The report recommends that there is a “clear and identifiable dutyholder with responsibility for building safety of the whole building.”
- 5.4 Croydon Council is establishing a specific compliance function within the repairs and maintenance service. The role of this new Compliance team will be to promote, develop and establish within the District Centres and Regeneration Division a positive safety culture and one that embraces good practice and is compliant with all relevant Health and safety legislation. This will cover the areas of; Fire Safety, asbestos, water safety and management, gas safety, electrical works including adaptations and alarms, lifts, and children’s playgrounds.

Resident rights, responsibilities and involvement

- 5.5 The report also recommends “Clearer rights and obligations for residents to maintain the fire safety of individual dwellings, working in partnership with the dutyholder. This will include a combination of transparency of information and

an expectation that residents support the dutyholder to manage the risk across the whole building”

- 5.6 In addition, to committing to introduce safety measures such as sprinklers, Croydon Council took immediate steps after the Grenfell tragedy to provide easily understood information to residents about their responsibilities in relation to fire safety. For example, we produced a new visual fire safety chart which is displayed in communal areas and included in new tenancy packs. We continue to work with residents around specific issues, such as ensuring that stairwells and communal areas are kept clear of any personal items and addressing the concerns raised by residents, such as the need for additional mobility scooter parking.
- 5.7 Finally, the report recommends “giving residents a voice in the system (set out in Chapter 4) through:
- Providing reassurance and recourse for residents of all tenures by providing greater transparency of information on building safety;
 - better involvement in decision-making through the support of residents associations and tenant panels
- 5.8 We will be establishing a new residents’ safety group and will work with this group to identify and address resident concerns. We want to ensure that we have representation from a range of homes, including those in our taller blocks. We will also work with this group to consider the best way of sharing information with residents about the safety of their homes. Roadshows have already started across the borough to encourage residents to contribute to this group. We will ensure that residents can also contribute virtually to encourage those that may not want or be able to attend meetings to contribute and participate in the group’s activities.
- 5.9 In addition, we will continue to involve residents throughout the design and delivery of fire safety projects. We have involved residents closely in planning and implementing the sprinkler programme, in order to ensure that residents’ concerns were taken into consideration from the outset of this work.

Fire risk assessments

- 5.10 Before the Grenfell Tower fire happened the vast majority of fire risk assessments (FRAs) were only ‘category or type one’, meaning they only looked at common parts, not including cladding, and did not look inside walls. Dame Judith does not recommend any change to the category one practice. However, Croydon Council is currently retendering its FRA contract and will be carrying out Type 4 assessments on high rise and/or high risk blocks, and a range of assessments from Type 1 to Type 3 on medium and low risk blocks. Where improvement works are carried out to a building we will also commission Type 4 fire risk assessments on an ‘ad hoc’ basis. See attached Appendix for explanation of FRA assessment types.