

Dear Charecroft Estate resident,

29 June 2017

Fire safety at Charecroft – what we’re doing

I’m writing to let you know what we’re doing to improve fire safety at Charecroft Estate. It follows the tragic loss of life in the fire in Kensington earlier this month.

I know this terrible fire has worried everyone who lives in a high rise block, but I’m sure it brings up extra concerns for those of you affected by last year’s fire at Shepherds Court.

Independent fire assessments

I’d like to reassure you that we currently have independent experts reviewing all aspects of fire safety at all high-rise blocks across our borough. We’ve also set aside the money to do any works they identify are needed to keep you safe. When it comes to Charecroft estate, we’re taking extra care.

Window panels

After the fire at Shepherds Court in August last year, the fire brigade initially said the design of the building meant there had been ‘no rapid fire growth’. They were able to access water supplies at the top of the building and bring the fire under control quickly.

Later in February, they did raise concerns about the external panels below your lounge windows, saying they ‘may have contributed to the external fire spread’. They stopped short of advising us to remove these panels. Instead they asked us to do further safety tests on the panels.

In March this year, we commissioned one of the leading firms of specialist fire safety consultants to carry out these extra tests. We expect their report in August, when we’ll have a clearer idea of the risk they pose.

But initial indications are that they should be replaced, so we have now decided to remove and replace all the window panels in all four Charecroft blocks.

This work will take some months to complete. We don’t think we’ll need to put up scaffolding – the work to remove each panel and replace it with a new one can be done using ‘mast climbers’.

We are working closely with London Fire Brigade and with our consultants. And the expert view is that there is no need to move you from your home while this work is done.

We've put fire patrols on the estate around the clock

I understand that you may well find all this very alarming. I can offer you the reassurance that – unlike in other blocks in London – the experts don't think the risk from the window panels is high enough to advise you to leave your home.

However, to offer you some extra reassurance we will have fire marshals on the estate around the clock until the work is done. They will patrol the estate, check fire precaution systems and be ready to raise the alarm in the unlikely event that it is needed.

Future works

As you may already know, we already have plans in place to replace all the windows on all blocks at Charecroft.

We are also working on a programme to install sprinklers in all our high-rise blocks. We are writing individual specifications that will work best for each block. If you have views, we'd be happy to hear from you. There are details of a meeting below.

Residents' meeting

We understand that you may have detailed questions and concerns that you'd like to raise. So we've organised a drop-in session at the community hall on

Thursday 6 July at 7pm

We hope to have the fire brigade commander there, and there will be council fire officers and senior managers to talk to.

Finally

The fire at Shepherds Court last year was a horrendous and unnecessary trauma, caused by a faulty tumble dryer. It had a devastating effect on the lives of everyone affected. But the fact that no one was seriously hurt was partly due to the design of the building in containing the spread of the fire.

I hope this offers you some comfort that your building is very different from Grenfell Tower. But we can't be complacent. And I hope I've been able to give you some answers and reassurance that we're doing the right things to keep you safe.

Best wishes,



**Cllr Lisa Homan
Cabinet Member for Housing**