

CROMWELL TOWER HOUSE GROUP (CTHG)
MINUTES for additional Committee meeting 28 June 2017
19:00 in the Podium Room

This is an additional Committee meeting convened to follow on from our CTHG Committee Meeting the previous day, to focus specifically on Fire Safety issues in Cromwell Tower.

Committee Members: John Tomlinson (Chairman) Jane Northcote (Secretary) Laurance Jones (Treasurer) Lesley Bradshaw Alan Budgen Frances Calman (<i>absent</i>) Christopher Gorman-Evans (<i>absent</i>) Julian Hale (<i>absent</i>)	Barbican Estate Officers (BEO): Luke Barton <i>Luke.Barton@cityoflondon.gov.uk</i> Helen Davinson
---	---

1. John Tomlinson summarized a communication from the City of London.

- The Department of Community and Children’s Services is taking the lead on the City of London’s actions to keep residents safe from fire.
- Independent Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) have previously been done every three years. They will now be done annually. The last Independent FRA for Cromwell Tower was done in November 2016. Another Independent FRA will be completed by August 2017.
- The policy for Barbican Towers continues to be to “stay put” unless the fire is within your property or you are affected by smoke.
- If there is a need to evacuate, this decision will be taken by the Fire Brigade.
- Exit routes must be kept clear. City of London officers will intensify efforts to inspect exit routes, remove items blocking fire exits and keep the lift lobbies and communal areas clear.
- There will be a programme to replace all flat front doors across the Barbican Estate. The new front doors will be fire resistant for 60 minutes. There is currently no timescale for this programme. It is anticipated that this will be paid for by long leaseholders via the service charge.
- There will be a programme of “Drop In” meetings organised by the Department of Community and Children’s Services to communicate with residents on fire safety issues and to answer questions, exchange ideas and understand concerns.
- There is a “Firebox” held by the porters and used by the Fire Brigade. This contains the names and flat numbers of people who might need special help in the event of fire, for example due to hearing impairment, blindness, or disability.

2. Helen Davinson and Luke Barton reported on a meeting in the Barbican Estate Office, adding to the above.

- There will be further communications to all residents. Please give your email address to Luke Barton to receive news from the Estate Office by email.
- Storage of items in the Mezzanine of Cromwell Tower is a fire risk. This usage will end. The BEO will take the following actions:
 - The Mezzanine will be cleared of all items
 - The lift settings will be changed so that it does not stop on the Mezzanine
 - The pamphlets distributed by the BEO will be updated to remove the Mezzanine as a location to place items for larger/bulky items.
 - Residents will be informed about alternative places to put items for larger/bulky items, namely Beech St Garchey Bay or Breton bin store
 - The cleaner's stores will be kept elsewhere. Residents will be able to obtain spare rubbish bags from the porters.

3. As a result of these communications, here is advice and instructions from the City for residents of Cromwell Tower:

- ***Install fire alarms in your flat.*** The London Fire Brigade will do free home safety visits to advise you about fire safety and install free fire alarms. You can book these visits via their website <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk> or phone 0800 028 44 28
- ***Know the exit routes from your flat to the fire stairs.*** Go and try them out. Identify them. Make sure you can open the Fire Doors. If you are not sure, ask the House Officer, Luke Barton (email address above)
- ***Make sure your exit routes are clear.*** If your exit route is blocked, contact Luke Barton to get it cleared.
- ***When you put out rubbish for daily collection, put it inside your rubbish locker and close the door.*** This is because rubbish left in lift lobbies is a fire hazard. If your rubbish does not fit inside the rubbish locker, then take it down to the disposal area which is adjacent to Cromwell front door. Do not leave any rubbish in the lift lobby at any time. If you cannot open your rubbish locker contact Luke Barton.
- ***Take larger/bulky items of rubbish and recycling to the Garchey Bay in the Beech Street tunnel,*** or call the City of London Collection Service for collection of bulky items. Do not leave anything in the Mezzanine or your lift lobby.
- ***Inform the London Fire Brigade and Luke Barton if you consider anyone in your flat to be disabled*** and in need of extra assistance in the event of fire. In this case it is particularly important that you ask the London Fire Brigade to carry out a home visit.

4. Questions

Since there is no fire alarm, and no loudspeaker system, how will the Fire Brigade inform us that we should evacuate?

Answer(BEO): That's a very good question that we will put to the Emergency Services. Using the Threat alarm is one possibility, but that requires changes to the current procedures. We are currently taking advice.

Are there identified Muster Points where people should assemble after evacuation?

Answer(BEO): If there is a need for evacuation, the Fire Service will direct people where to assemble. The current policy is one of "stay put", so there is no need for muster points.

Will sprinklers be installed, at least in the common areas?

Answer(Court of Common Council): A feasibility study is being undertaken.

Lift C: this is labelled "Fire Fighting Lift" for use by the Fire Brigade. However, at the moment the door sticks and it is making a strange creaking sound. It is surely essential to get it fixed?

Answer(BEO): Yes, we are on the case. We have instructed the lift contractor and asked for a clear plan of work to fix this lift.

Is there the possibility of being evacuated by helicopter from the roof?

Answer (BEO and John Tomlinson): No. The London Fire Brigade do not have any helicopters. They do not plan to rescue anyone from the roof. The evacuation plan is to go down not up.

When do I get my fire-proof front door? The locker door next to the front door is not fireproof either. Will that be fireproofed?

Answer(BEO): This is a huge programme of work to be initiated across the entire City Housing Stock. This programme will address the entire door area including the lockers. We do not yet have a timescale.

In order to test my exit routes I need to open my fire-door, the one with the semi-circular top, which leads out from my "dining" area. This has glass that I break in an emergency. It also has a keyhole. Where do I get the key?

Answer (BEO): We have had several keys cut which are currently at the Estate Office and will need to be signed out to use/try. If Residents are unable to open the door with the key then they need to contact the Property Services Team on 0207 029 3909 or Barbicanrepairs@cityoflondon.gov.uk and arrange for the lock/door to be repaired. If residents want a copy of the key to retain for themselves, then they get this in the normal way by arranging it via the Reception at the Estate office.

The Plumbers Duct Access (PDA) spaces connect one floor with another. These are the spaces behind the bathrooms, which contain, for example, hot water cylinders and toilet cisterns. Are they a potential fire risk? We've seen flat renovations where big holes have been made through the concrete and into the PDA ducts so that the bathrooms can be redesigned. So if there were a fire in that flat, fire would travel to other floors via the PDA duct.

Answer (BEO):

- *In principle, the PDA spaces should not be a Fire hazard because they contain only metal and asbestos and are totally surrounded by concrete, with access only by concrete doors which are locked shut. In practice, however, they may contain wood or flammable rubbish, renovations of flats may leave holes from flats into the PDA, and the doors to the PDA are sometimes left open. Flat renovations have to be signed off and so in principle the integrity of the concrete shielding is maintained, but this needs to be checked again.*
- *The BEO will contact Building Control to come and inspect the PDA spaces.*

Is there any mechanism to remove smoke from the fire stairs?

Answer (BEO): In theory, there is nothing to burn on the fire stairs. The BEO will look to see if any specific mechanism has been installed elsewhere on the estate and seek further technical advice.

Will we receive training in how to use the Fire Extinguishers?

Answer (BEO): No. In fact, the Fire Risk Assessments, and advice we have received from the Fire Brigade, indicate that the fire extinguishers should be removed. This is to ensure they are not used by untrained individuals in a dangerous manner. The best thing to do in the event of fire in your flat is to get out of the area, close the doors, and call the Fire Brigade.