

PO Box 2175, Warwick District Council, Riverside House
Milverton Hill, Royal Leamington Spa, CV32 5QE

direct line: 01926 456129

email: hsgem@warwickdc.gov.uk
web: www.warwickdc.gov.uk

The Resident,

29th June 2017

Dear Resident,

Fire Safety in High Rise Blocks

After the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London we wrote to all residents of our high rise buildings on the 14 June 2017, to reassure you regarding our fire safety arrangements.

A lot has happened since that time both nationally and locally and I wanted to update you on the latest actions we have taken.

Fire Safety Inspections

Our staff have visited all high rise blocks, on several occasions since 14 June to thoroughly inspect the communal areas, the fire alarm systems, the stairwell and flat doors. We have also undertaken a joint inspection of your block with officers from Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service, to review the current fire safety arrangements so we can review and update our Fire Risk Assessments. As a result of these inspections we have identified some immediate remedial works and placed the necessary repair orders, which have now either been completed or are due to be done so urgently. This includes some repairs ordered to flat doors where we will arrange with individuals affected access to complete the repair.

We are continuing to work closely with the Fire Service to ensure all our high rise blocks are safe and will continue to remain safe in the future. The fire service will be writing to us this week with the results of this joint approach, providing us with a list of agreed repair works as well as any recommendations on additional safety measures.

Cladding

5 of our 7 high rise blocks have external cladding – Radcliffe Gardens, Christine Ledger Square, Ashton Court, Southorn Court and Westbrook House. I can confirm that none of the cladding on these blocks is the Aluminium Composite Material cladding that was fitted at Grenfell Tower and is now the subject of the national testing programme.

If you live in Eden Court or Stamford Gardens there is no cladding in place. In the other blocks we have taken some samples of cladding and insulation material and will be arranging for them to be tested to confirm that the manufacturer's assurances are still valid and that they conform to all current safety requirements. I must stress, however, that this is for reassurance purposes as there is nothing to indicate the cladding is in any way problematic or unsafe, being of a different material and fitted to a different design to Grenfell Tower. I will contact you again when we have the test results, we hope to have these as soon as possible but this is dependent on the capacity of the test centre we will be using.

Further Work

We are now looking at further measures to improve safety. Please do not be alarmed by this – our intention is to provide you with even greater reassurance. We are not in a similar position to the London Borough of Camden where the London Fire brigade has advised the council that the safety of residents could not be assured. Based on our discussions with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service there is certainly no need nor intention here to evacuate residents from our blocks.

We will be undertaking further surveys of fire precaution measures and this will mean we will need to visit your home to inspect it thoroughly. We hope to complete this visit within the next 4 weeks to allow us to check the operation of the smoke detection equipment in your home, complete a layout plan of the flat that we can provide to the Fire Service, check the front door and windows and check if there is any safety work required.

I am also aware that the Fire Service is also planning to visit all premises to carry out site familiarisation and offer reassurance to residents, we welcome this joint working approach and the additional advice you will receive.

We are looking to have a programme of front door replacements to upgrade the fire resistance value of doors; recording what we have currently in place will help us identify what changes we can make.

Fire prevention measures

In the meantime, as stated in my previous letter, we already have in place a number of measures to ensure you continue to have a safe environment to live in. We carry out the following:

- Weekly fire alarm tests and health and safety checks
- Daily checks of landings and stairwells for obstructions and fire hazards
- Emergency repairs in communal areas to fire doors, glass panels, door closers, blocked chutes etc.
- Monthly tests of the emergency lighting in communal areas.
- Quarterly maintenance and servicing of communal fire alarm systems
- Twice yearly servicing and maintenance of the dry risers installed in buildings that are used by the Fire Service if they need to fight a fire.

In addition we will continue to:

- Ensure fire safety notices are displayed in all communal areas
- Ensure all flats have smoke detectors
- Work closely with Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Provide you with advice and reassurance whenever you need it and keep you informed of what actions are being taken as new information emerges in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire.

I have enclosed an information notice regarding fire safety which I encourage you to read, display in your home and ensure everyone living there knows what to do in the event of a fire. The Fire Service will also be pleased to give you further advice or clarification when they visit you.

What you can do

Can I stress the importance of you and your neighbours ensuring that the communal areas of your block are kept free of any fire risks or obstructions. Please do not leave any items in communal areas such as mats, bikes, plants or rubbish, these are considered a fire hazard and any such items will be removed.

It is also important that you report any repairs that are required to communal areas. We check these regularly but if you notice something please don't assume it has already been reported. Please ring us on 01926 456129.

Future developments

We are closely monitoring the developments following the Grenfell Tower fire, the public enquiry that has been established, the police investigation and the advice from central Government. We will respond to any findings and recommendations that result from these enquiries.

In the meantime, we are already investigating other potential actions. As well as upgrading front doors, we will be considering fitting fire sprinklers or other fire suppression equipment to areas such as bin stores and bin chutes and reviewing the need to upgrade the fire alarm systems in communal areas. As these reviews progress I will keep you updated.

I hope this gives you reassurance in the light of the distressing events at Grenfell Tower and the continuing news items of fire safety. We are doing everything we can to deal with any concerns and to ensure that we have the best possible safety arrangements in place. I can also assure you that as soon as there is any further news I will write to you again.

Please do not hesitate to contact us on 01926 456129 or via hsgem@warwickdc.gov.uk if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Brooke
Sustaining Tenancies Manager
Housing Services