

# Area Panel Briefing Paper

## Housing Health and Safety Update

17<sup>th</sup> October, 21<sup>st</sup> October, **22<sup>nd</sup> October**, 23<sup>rd</sup> October

### 1. Summary

- 1.1. This paper updates area panels on health and safety in key areas for council housing stock. It includes updates on fire doors, large panel system built blocks and other items identified by central government.
- 1.2. The council is committed to providing safe homes and has worked to keep residents well informed around safety and the work that the council is doing in this important area.

### 2. Background

- 2.1. As part of the council's Housing Asset Strategy there is a clear focus on 'Providing Safe Homes'.
- 2.2. Regular updates have been provided to Area Panels and Housing Committee updating on work in this area including sprinklers, fire doors and fire safety.
- 2.3. We are continuing to follow post Grenfell government guidance and this report updates on a number of areas that relate to health and safety and fire safety across housing. These include:
  - Large Panel System buildings
  - Fire doors
  - Panels and balconies
- 2.4. A multi-agency Housing Fire, Health and Safety Board, which includes East Sussex Fire and Rescue, several Council departments, and related agencies, has been in place for several years to ensure effective use of these resources, good governance and a 'joined-up' approach.
- 2.5. Officers will be reporting on these items to Housing Committee in November 2019.

### 3. Large Panel System Buildings

- 3.1. Earlier this year, we carried out structural surveys on our eight 'large panel structure' tower blocks. These surveys were conducted by specialist structural

engineers and found that there are no structural issues with any of the buildings. The report also stated that the buildings are generally in good structural condition. The report did highlight some non-urgent repairs and these will be scheduled into our programme of planned maintenance.

3.2. We've written to residents of the blocks about the survey results and published the reports on our website at <https://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/news/2019/large-panel-system-building-survey-results>. The eight blocks that were surveyed were:

- Dudeney Lodge
- Nettleton Lodge
- St James House
- Kingfisher Court
- Heron Court
- Swallow Court
- Falcon Court
- Kestrel Court

3.3. The reports identified some repairs to be carried out in 2019 which are being programmed in for completion before the end of this year as advised by our consultants. We are also reviewing other recommendations they have made and planning for further surveys to be undertaken in line with the report recommendations.

#### **4. Fire Doors**

4.1. The council has worked closely with both Central Government and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Services in managing the safety of fire doors across our housing stock.

4.2. Last year Central Government identified that a number of door suppliers failed to meet the expected performance standards required of fire doors. This included Masterdor fire doors. There are approximately 2,000 Masterdor doors in our housing stock across the city.

4.3. IG Doors, our current door supplier is not one of the suppliers whose doors failed. We are continuing to work with IG Doors to review certification for their doors.

4.4. The advice from government and National Fire Chiefs Council is that the additional risk is low. We have carried out additional fire risk assessments on our high-rise building and specifically looked at the impact of fire doors.

4.5. We are now looking at replacement programmes for doors including fire doors and are procuring new contracts for doors for operation from 2020.

## **5. Balconies and panels**

5.1. Central Government have issued advice notes to local authorities on both balconies and panels on external walls.

5.2. The advice note on balconies indicates that balconies should not be made of combustible materials. The council has confirmed that the construction of our blocks and refurbishments carried out have used non-combustible materials.

5.3. The advice note also identifies that residents should be informed about the risks of storing any combustible materials on balconies and make clear that smoking, the use of barbecues and storage of flammable property on balconies can increase that risk.

5.4. As a result of this advice the council will be updating our “Fire safety in flats” information leaflet and updating all residents through our “Homing In” magazine.

5.5. As part of a focus on ensuring our homes are safe we are also reviewing any wood panelling that is in place on external walkways. This is not part of this advice note but is in line with our objectives of ensuring the homes we provide are safe.

5.6. The advice note on “Spandrel panels (including window panels and infill panels)” relates to panels that are part of the external wall of buildings. This note advises building owners to check the materials used in the panels.

5.7. The council is reviewing information and carrying out tests to panels in our housing stock. This will identify the materials used in any panels. Should any panels need to be removed and replaced then this work will be carried out as part of our capital works programme.

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