

Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee Agenda

Wednesday 23 April 2025 at 7.00 pm

145 King Street (Ground Floor), Hammersmith, W6 9XY

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MEMBERSHIP

Administration	Opposition
Councillor Jacolyn Daly (Chair) Councillor Asif Siddique Councillor Sally Taylor Councillor Omid Miri	Councillor Adronie Alford

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This meeting is open to the public and press. The building has disabled access.

Residents with an interest in any of the items on the agenda are encouraged to attend and participate in the discussion. If you can't attend in person, you can join remotely. If you would like to attend, please contact: Debbie.Yau@lbhf.gov.uk

Date Issued: 11 April 2025

Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee

Agenda

23 April 2025

<u>Item</u>		<u>Pages</u>
1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE		
2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	<p>If a Councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest in a particular item, whether or not it is entered in the Authority's register of interests, or any other significant interest which they consider should be declared in the public interest, they should declare the existence and, unless it is a sensitive interest as defined in the Member Code of Conduct, the nature of the interest at the commencement of the consideration of that item or as soon as it becomes apparent.</p> <p>Where Members of the public are not allowed to be in attendance and speak, then the Councillor with a disclosable pecuniary interest should withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is under consideration. Councillors who have declared other significant interests should also withdraw from the meeting if they consider their continued participation in the matter would not be reasonable in the circumstances and may give rise to a perception of a conflict of interest.</p> <p>Councillors are not obliged to withdraw from the meeting where a dispensation to that effect has been obtained from the Standards Committee.</p>	
3. MINUTES	<p>To approve the minutes of the meeting on 27 January 2025 to be an accurate record.</p>	4 - 10
4. HOUSING SAFETY COMPLIANCE	<p>This report sets out our performance in key health and safety areas including gas, electric, water, lifts, asbestos and fire as well as Category 1 Hazards, structural walls, and playgrounds.</p> <p>The report also provides an overview of H&F response to date to the Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 report and sets out the Council's journey to improve communication and engagement with residents.</p>	11 - 22

5. HIDDEN HOMELESSNESS

23 - 26

This report provides an overview of hidden homelessness and data which gives insight into the level of hidden homelessness in the Hammersmith and Fulham borough.

6. DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

To note the dates of future meetings:

- 22 July 2025
- 5 Nov 2025
- 3 February 2026
- 20 April 2026

Agenda Item 3

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham

Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee Minutes



Monday 27 January 2025

PRESENT

Committee members: Councillors Jacolyn Daly (Chair), Asif Siddique and Adronie Alford

Other Councillors: Councillors Frances Umeh (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness) and Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform)

Guests:

Martin Thirlaway (Resident)

Officers:

Sukvinder Kalsi (Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services)

Daniel Rochford (Head of Finance – Housing)

Richard Shwe (Director of Housing)

Debbie Yau (Committee Coordinator)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Sally Taylor and Omid Miri.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2024 were agreed as an accurate record.

4. 2025/26 REVENUE BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Revenue Budget

Councillor Rowan Ree (Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform) gave an overview of the 2025/26 Revenue Budget, including the operating environment, additional central government funding and objectives of the financial strategy. He also briefed members on the budget headlines, the provisional settlement of the draft budget and departmental service allocations, the investment and savings proposals, council tax considerations and residual risks in 2025/26. He further highlighted the earmarked reserves forecast and medium-term financial forecast showing the estimated budget gap until 2028/29 as well as the MTFs for 2026/27+. Councillor Ree said the Revenue Budget would be presented to the Cabinet and Full Council in February 2025 after briefing the Policy and Accountability Committees and Policy Oversight Board.

Sukvinder Kalsi (Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services) highlighted the positive comments of the External Auditor that the Council had attained two green (no significant weaknesses in arrangements identified or improvement recommendation made) and an amber (no significant weaknesses identified, but improvement recommendations made) ratings in terms of financial sustainability, governance and value for money (i.e. improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness). This had provided independent assurance to Committee members, residents and other stakeholders about how well the Council had managed its finances.

NOTE: The presentation slides are attached in Appendix A

Noting Hammersmith & Fulham (H&F) had maintained third lowest Council Tax in the country and continued to provide comprehensive Council Tax support to eligible residents while delivering core services, the Chair was concerned how this was achieved when some local authorities were liaising with the central government about emergency funding.

Sharing the same views, Councillor Asif Siddique said residents who noted some councils were struggling from bankruptcy would like to know how the Council had brought about this balanced budget where the essential services were maintained with further investment of £12.3m for growth spending, efficiency saving of £5.1m and a healthy reserve of £73.5m.

Councillor Ree noted H&F might have some of the highest land prices in the country but it also had huge areas of deprivation. He remarked that the achievement was made possible through being ruthlessly financially efficient practised by every Cabinet Member and officer who continued to focus on bringing the outcomes for residents as efficient and effective as possible. Every department was doing its utmost to put all resources to most effective use. He stressed that it was not easy to get a balanced budget which took them a long time to go through the council's spending line by line to ensure each of them was used efficiently. On Council Tax, Councillor Ree explained that to make the regressive tax regime fairer, the Council had kept Council

Tax as low as possible and set the maximum discount at 100% so that the most vulnerable paid nothing at all.

Councillor Adronie Alford sought clarification as one of the key investment proposals for 2025/26 included £3.4m for community safety and social inclusion (page 16) but the figure was larger for a similar item in the presentation. Separately, she considered it a better way of scrutiny for having the papers in advance to prepare the questions. It was not effective for members to look at the screen and write notes while listening to the presentation.

Councillor Ree explained that the information was all in the report had she taken time to read it and clarified the difference in the figures was because the larger figure included £120,000 investment in measure to educate residents about fraud, the fastest growing crime in the UK.

Housing Solutions

In terms of ruthless financial efficiency, Councillor Ree said he hoped to put this into reality in tackling homelessness. He expressed concern that homelessness had been an ongoing and aggravated issue with the number of cases going up continuously in the last 15 years without any joined-up solutions by the former central government. It had become a huge challenge to local governments and cost London councils as a whole as much as £4m a day. He looked forward to the solutions put forward by the current central government which was conducting a consultation to deal with this prolonged problem and this Council would certainly provide its views.

Sukvinder Kalsi presented the Housing Solutions under the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, including the strategic service context (service and financial considerations), the number of homelessness approaches since 2019/20, a budget overview 2025/26 with gross budgeted expenditure/income of £45.4m/£17.7m, key budget changes from £13.4m in 2024/25 to £15.7m in 2025/26 and investment & efficiencies for 2025/26+. Sukvinder then outlined the key objectives of the action plan and strategy for homelessness and the key risks involved.

NOTE: The presentation slides are attached in Appendix B

Councillor Frances Umeh (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness) remarked that to tackle homelessness due to lack of available supply, the Council was committed to building more than 3000 new affordable and energy efficient homes over the next few years while looking for more affordable supply from the private rented sector (PRS). She noted the London councils' funding gap of nearly £100m in 2023/24 in terms of local housing allowance would enable local councils to provide more supply within the PRS.

Noting that the investment proposals included £1.2m for Homelessness, in addition to a further £3.5m from the Homelessness Prevention Grant and inflationary uplifts, the Chair was concerned whether there were other areas earmarked for this spending.

Councillor Umeh confirmed that the £1.2m was dedicated spending that would cover all the work of the Homelessness teams from finding homes within the PRS, paying for the rent to providing help and support to the homeless people. Richard Shwe (Director of Housing) added that the investment would mainly be used for work on homelessness prevention which was one of the stipulations in the new government grant. For example, the Homelessness team would seek to reduce families in bed and breakfast by providing extra support focusing on their needs so that they could have a normal family life.

The Chair expressed appreciation on the preventive initiatives which shall help stop the escalation of demand.

Given the number of homelessness approaches was predicted to rise as a result of the passage of the Renters' Rights Bill, Councillor Siddique considered the extra £1.2m might be used to tackle homelessness by running more daycare centre services as they were less costly.

Richard Shwe noted that daycare centres were under the remit of adult social care and the Council had been lobbying other London councils for temporary accommodation for homeless people from the borough. The additional support funding stream would mainly be used for preventive measures implemented in collaboration with the voluntary sector which had given detailed briefings about their work at the last Committee meeting.

Councillor Alford referred to a service gap as noted from a recent case. The residents who, having been receiving housing support service, felt rather lost after being declared homeless and passed from that team. They were not aware that the Council had moved them onto the next stage and received notification only a day before needing to move into the assigned temporary accommodation. They found the rent unaffordable and had no idea about the Council's assistance to be provided.

Councillor Umeh appreciated the feedback and agreed to take the reflections on board. She considered it was necessary for the team to ensure more effective communication with the homeless people and manage their expectations by informing them the process and their current position. The Housing team was committed to looking for a more permanent solution that ranged from creating a detailed housing plan with clear pathway, timeframe and options into permanent housing to ensuring the individuals' expectations could be effectively managed.

Councillor Alford asked how far out the out-of-borough temporary accommodation were. Councillor Umeh depicted the different challenging circumstances experienced by people facing homelessness. It was imperative to provide stable temporary accommodation locally for people being served last minute eviction notice by the landlord. For people becoming homeless due to domestic violence, they should be accommodated in safe housing away from the original neighbourhood. Richard Shwe added that the linkage of the temporary accommodation to the transport hubs would also be taken into consideration.

RESOLVED

1. That the Committee noted the budget proposals and agreed to make recommendations to Cabinet as appropriate.
2. That the Committee noted the proposed changes to fees and charges and agreed to make recommendations as appropriate.

5. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT BUDGET 2025/26

Daniel Rochford (Head of Finance – Housing) presented the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Budget 2025/26, including the strategic operating environment, the HRA budget strategy, HRA 10-Year Business Plan, proposed HRA budget and its key outcomes, key risks, HRA general reserve, Housing Capital Programme 2025/26 - 2028/29 and the key metrics (value of housing and external debt outstanding). He said that the HRA budget 2025/26 would be presented to the Cabinet on 10 February 2025.

NOTE: The presentation slides are attached in Appendix C

On the Chair's enquiry about the details of the efficiency savings of £5.3m, Daniel Rochford noted the contingency in the HRA budget had increased significantly to protect the HRA from various pressures experienced in recent years. With the current HRA balance becoming more stable, the level of contingency could now be reduced by £2m. In addition, a number of savings initiatives had been implemented by the Housing Service. A good example was that, on the conclusion of the Integrated Housing Management Systems Programme, it was no longer necessary to hold extra budgets and incur expenditure for the development and implementation of the project resulting in some savings as the service returned to business as usual.

Noting the robust target for reducing void rent loss to 1.6%, Councillor Asif Siddique sought elaboration in achieving this. Richard Shwe (Director of Housing) noted that the number of voids had dropped from some 600+ two years ago to around a hundred standard voids plus some major voids currently. He highlighted the joined-up thinking had helped shorten the duration of void recovery from several months or even a couple of years to about 20/30 days by streamlining the process with responsible officers' undertakings done digitally. For properties not meeting the required standards, former tenants would be held accountable and asked to improve. The Council also needed to incur some expenses in this regard.

The Chair asked why the repair spending was set to be reduced in HRA. Richard Shwe highlighted the good position in repairs the financial position of which had been improved. Moreover, the asset management plan over the next 10 years was also looking good.

In reply to Councillor Adronie Alford's concern about the level of compensation of disrepairs payable to residents and their ambulance chasers, Richard Shwe noted that a lot had been done to improve the policies

and procedures in respect of repairs. The Housing Service was now in a better position to assure what needed to happen for cases of disrepairs. It was giving advice proactively to the residents concerned against ambulance chasing by undertaking to recover the properties in good conditions. He agreed to provide the level of compensation of disrepairs in the HRA budget.

ACTION: Daniel Rochford

Councillor Frances Umeh (Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness) expressed deep concerns about ambulance chasing as the relevant firms might have misled the residents, delayed the work resulting in rising costs and brought adverse impacts on the families ultimately. Under the new policies and procedures, the Council was committed to maintaining homes to a decent standard and resolving with the residents any issues with their properties without having to pay a significant sum to the third parties. She said that the Housing Service would be addressing some of the claims over the course of the next financial year.

Question from the floor

Mr Martin Thirlaway asked –

‘The HRA Capital Programme shows several projects that include ‘market sale’ for some dwellings. This was intended to be leasehold. It now appears that commonhold will be enacted at some time before the projects are completed. Will the Council be prepared to make those projects commonhold?’

Richard Shwe replied on behalf of the Housing Service –

‘We understand that the Government will publish a draft bill later this year to reform the leasehold and commonhold regulations which may include abolishing the leasehold tenure for all new flats. We look forward to understanding and implementing any new regulations that will better serve our communities and many of our developments are on Council estates, include mixed tenure to meet different housing needs. We will explore new ownership models that help us deliver safe, secure and affordable homes for all our residents in H&F.’

Given some units in the White City Estate were imminently ready for market sale, Mr Thirlaway was concerned whether the new legislation banning new leasehold flats would also be ready. Richard Shwe said as a local government officer, he shared the same public knowledge about the legislation timetable. Nevertheless, he would review with legal officers the impacts of any new legislation on residents and provide the support they needed.

Councillor Umeh relayed members’ feedback on the HRA Budget 2025/26 expressed at the Sheltered Housing Forum and Housing Representatives Forum and their gratitude for the work of officers done to manage the very challenging circumstances under the HRA. The Housing Representatives had

asked to pass their appreciation particularly relating to the service charges and rent to this PAC and the Cabinet.

RESOLVED

That the Committee noted the presentation.

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted the date of next meeting on 23 April 2025 and the Committee's Forward Plan below:

- Compliance Update (April 2025)
- Hidden Homelessness (April 2025)
- Sheltered Housing (July 2025)
- Repairs Update (July 2025)
- Capital Programming and Regeneration (Nov 2025)

Meeting started: 7.00 pm

Meeting ended: 8.25 pm

Chair:

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Report to: Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee

Date: 23 April 2025

Subject: Housing Safety Compliance

Report author: Richard Buckley, Assistant Director, Residents and Buildings Safety

Responsible Director: Sukvinder Kalsi, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Service
Richard Shwe, Director of Housing

SUMMARY

Keeping residents safe in their homes is not only our legal duty but at the heart of what we do. This report sets out our performance in key health and safety areas including gas, electric, water, lifts, asbestos and fire but also Category 1 Hazards, structural walls, and playgrounds.

It provides an overview of our response to date to the Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 report, Building Safety Act, Fire Safety Act, Fire Safety Regulations and Social Housing Regulation Act. It also provides an update on major investment to enhance safety for all.

Importantly, it sets out our journey to improve communication and engagement with residents, providing transparency of building safety information and ongoing work to ensure disabled persons can evacuate their home and building in an emergency and raising awareness of new hazards (e.g. e-bike fires).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For the Committee to note and comment on the report.

Wards Affected: (All)

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Corporate Plan and the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	Good-quality homes to our residents that are safe provides a platform from which to learn, work and thrive.
Creating a compassionate and inclusive council	We are passionate about providing safe homes and buildings and developing

	personal emergency evacuation plans and additional safety systems.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	We work hand-in-hand with the fire and building safety residents group which is chaired and made up of local residents.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	There is robust, competent contract management to ensure quality standards and value for money but always ensuring safety comes first.
Taking pride in H&F	Working to make our housing safe and a good standard that makes our residents proud to live in their homes.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	Working to deliver service utilising technology to maximise operational performance and minimise our carbon footprint.

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

N/A

SAFETY COMPLIANCE OVERVIEW

1. Since April 2024, Housing Services is a Regulatory Service. We are the landlord to circa 17,000 homes of which around 12,000 are tenanted. In addition, we provide homes utilising temporary accommodation (approx. 1,600) that is made up of a range of types and service arrangements.
2. Our Housing Compliance Programmes and high-performance standards is our approach in keeping residents and buildings safe; sets out our accountability and responsibility, and demonstrates how we manage risks, through monthly performance reporting that complies to the law as a regulatory service. This regulatory strategy and the associated policies and procedures are reviewed at least annually.
3. We are subject to routine external independent audit to test and validate our safe systems of work with the most recent overall assessments in July 2023 and February 2024 giving us satisfactory assurance (the scale of assurance is Substantial, Satisfactory, Limited or Nil). Independent audits during the financial year 24/25 for asbestos and water give satisfactory assurance with an electrical audit due in August 2025.
4. Our Mechanical and Electrical team is third party accredited under the quality management system ISO9001, which is independently inspected. We will be rolling this out further across other safety areas including fire and asbestos.
5. We report our performance information in resident newsletters, to the residents' Housing Forum, Cabinet, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness, internal Residents and Buildings Safety Board and the Policy and Accountability Committee and annually to the Social Housing Regulator.

6. We are investing significantly in our housing in new fire doors, sprinklers and backup evacuation alarm systems, upgraded thousands of electrical installations, upgraded over 40 lifts and installed 5 new wet risers.
7. We are responding to the recommendations from the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Grenfell reports that are being implemented in new legislation. We already had Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for those living in higher risk buildings and are widening this offer to all our residents who need one that was recommended in Phase 1.

Compliance Performance

8. The Primary Compliance commonly referred to the Big 6 areas includes gas, electric, water, asbestos, fire and lifts. In addition, as part of quality improvement plans, we are now reporting Carbon Monoxide (CO) detector installs.
9. We report annually to the Social Housing Regulator as part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and publish the details on our website. Table 1 sets out our performance for the financial year, 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

TABLE 1: Compliance Performance April 2024 to March 2025.

		Apr 24	May 24	Jun 24	July 24	Aug 24	Sept 24	Oct 24	Nov 24	Dec 24	Jan 25	Feb 25	Mar 25
Gas Safety Checks	Actual	99.87	99.93%	99.88%	99.86%	99.89%	99.95%	99.95%	99.95%	99.99%	99.99%	100%	100%
	Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Fire Safety Checks	Actual	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99.7%	99.7%	99.7%	99.9%	99.9%	100%
	Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Asbestos Safety Checks	Actual	100%	99.8%	100%	100%	99.9%	100%	100%	99.9%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Water Safety Checks	Actual	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Lift Safety Checks	Actual	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Electrical Safety Checks (5 year)	Actual	96.40%	97%	97.3%	97.6%	97.6%	97*%	97%	97%	97.3%	97.4%	97.4%	97.5%
	Target	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
CO Detectors in place	Actual	New	New	New	New	New	New	New	New	New	100%	100%	100%
	Target	New	New	New	New	New	New	New	New	New	100%	100%	100%

Gas Safety

10. Each year we inspect over 11,064 gas boilers to ensure they are safe, which includes testing the carbon monoxide detector located near the appliance. Gas Safety is currently at 100%. Our communal boilers are serviced and maintained routinely against recognised standards, and many are now monitored by

automated cloud-based systems.

Electrical Safety

11. Every five years we will test the fixed wiring and the fuse box in tenants' homes, and ensure the fire detection is working, in all habitable rooms and has more than 5 years life expectancy left on the detectors. In addition, we will check the communal wiring in the building every 5 years too.
12. Electrical Safety is not 100% as the previous standard was 10-year electrical certification. As part of our service improvement, we have moved our standard to 5 years in line with industry best practice and complying with the Social Housing Act 2023.

Legionella (Water)

13. We check for legionella in communal tanks based on risk assessment and put in place controls as applicable. This measure is 100%.

Lifts

14. We have 216 lifts that undertake circa 21 million movements per year. Each lift is independently inspected every six months. We have a dedicated inhouse team of lift engineers supporting our contractors who provide 24/7 cover. All our lifts are fitted with automated alerts providing real time monitoring of performance and faults.

Asbestos

15. We remain at 100% compliance for re-inspections to non-domestic areas. The Asbestos Management Plan and Asbestos Policy have been fully reviewed and changes made to reflect current arrangements.

Fire

16. Fire risk assessments (FRA) in the communal areas of buildings is undertaken cyclically based on risk. The FRA looks at fire detection, means of escape, active and passive firefighting measures etc. Any actions from this assessment are categorised, allocated, programmed, and tracked. We have 100% of up-to-date FRAs in place.
17. There were 20 reported fires between April and January of this financial year. Sadly, there was one fatality this year following an accident in the property. All fires are investigated by our fire team to enable learning.
18. One fire this year (our second of this type) was from an e-bike being charged on a communal balcony. London Fire Brigade attended and extinguished the fire. Fires from Lithium-ion batteries (commonly used for e-bikes) are becoming increasingly frequent in the UK. There have been several fatalities (three in London in 2023). Battery failure can be triggered by overcharging, releasing a toxic and explosive gas. Batteries (which are made up of many cells) are difficult to extinguish and may reignite hours later. They need to be safely

removed, often left to burn, and disposed of.

19. We have been working with the London Fire Brigade and raising awareness through publicising both locally and nationally. We have installed signage in our lifts and on lift lobby screens prohibiting persons from taking e-bikes/e-scooters in our lifts.

Temporary Accommodation

20. H&F has a statutory duty to provide temporary accommodation to homeless households. H&F's Temporary Accommodation (TA) portfolio increased to 1,571 in January 2025 up approximately one third from April 2023.
21. The 450 private sector leased (PSL) accommodation properties are procured directly from private landlords and are managed by the in-house TA Team. As per terms of the PSL lease it is the responsibility of the landlord to maintain valid health and safety compliance certificates prior to the expiry of the current certificate. In an event that the private landlord does not act in a timely manner the TA service will commission the works and recharge the landlord.
22. The 550 private licenced accommodations (PLAs) have been procured from TA providers, such as managing agents and Housing Associations. As per terms of the licence agreement, health and safety compliance sits with the managing agents, however the Council has a duty of care in placing homeless households so collate and verify all health and safety certificates.
23. Health and Safety for hostels and Temporary On Licence properties are managed by the Council's contractors and certificates are uploaded on H&F's system.

Playgrounds

24. H&F has 62 play sites across housing land. These are a mixture of Playgrounds, Ball Courts, and Multi Use Games Areas. H&F are required to ensure the health and safety of playground users, so far as is reasonably practicable. As of January 2025, there was one closed site owing to vandalism. Quotes to remedy have been sourced to reopen the site as soon as possible.

Other Hazards

25. Under the Housing and Health Safety Rating System (HHSRS) there are 29 types of hazard defined from falls to damp and mould. Where a hazard is identified it is categorized as either a Category 1 (urgent and must be resolved straightaway) or Category 2 (dependent on scale it defines works are needed but not in the immediate future).
26. H&F commissioned a stock condition survey of its properties, which concluded in July 2024. Access to over 11,000 properties was gained. Where hazards were identified they were logged and if a Category 1 it was referred to the same day for resolution. Between June 2023 and July 2024 103 Category 1 hazards

were identified and remedied.

27. As part of the stock condition survey, we monitored the condition of structural and freestanding walls and balconies. We have commissioned further surveys by a structural engineer with 110 completed to date. No urgent risks have been identified.

Major Investment in Safety

28. H&F is investing circa £1.4 million per week in its current housing stock which includes health and safety measures. We have:

- a) Upgraded over 6,000 front entrance fire doors sets to date and are programming another 2,800.
- b) Rolled out a programme of installing sprinklers in our higher risk buildings with 5 tower blocks completed (600 homes) and a further 5 blocks in progress (380 homes).
- c) We have introduced evacuation alert systems to 9 blocks with another 5 planned. The alert system allows the London Fire Brigade to change the evacuation strategy from stay put to a phased evacuation in an emergency.
- d) We have installed 5 new wet risers (firefighting systems) in 5 tower blocks and renewed it in 3 other tower blocks.

Grenfell Inquiry Phase 2 report

29. The Grenfell Phase 2 report (published 4 September 2024) concluded that every one of the 72 tragic deaths were avoidable. Of the 72 who died, 18 were children and 15 disabled people and the majority were from ethnic minorities.
30. The Grenfell Phase 2 report, circa 1,700 pages makes significant recommendations. On 26 February 2025 the Government confirmed in a report that it accepted 49 of the 58 recommendations and sets out at a high level how they will be addressed. The remaining 9 relate to the Government itself, which it accepts in principle and sets out in the report how it will implement these.
31. Further detail on the Grenfell Phase 2 report and H&F's response to the recommendations can be found below.

Vulnerable Residents

- a. The phase 2 report concludes by looking back to Phase 1. In the Phase 1 report the chairman recommended that the owner and manager of every high-rise residential building be required by law to prepare personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs) for all residents whose ability to evacuate the building without assistance may be compromised (such as persons with reduced mobility or impaired cognition) and to include current information about them and their associated PEEPs in a premises information box.
- b. In the days running up to the release of the Phase 2 report the new Government committed to the introduction of this recommendation. The Government will implement secondary legislation later in 2025 setting out the requirements.

- c. In H&F, we have for several years provided a Safety-First service that has proactively reached out to residents in higher risk buildings (HRBs) to offer PEEPs and Person Centred Fire Risk Assessments. We have extended this offer to all residents but continue to prioritise those in HRBs and Sheltered homes.

Higher Risk Buildings

- d. The report recommends extending the definition of Higher Risk Building (HRB) as defined in the Building Safety Act 2022 to have regard for the occupiers rather than just the height of buildings. The Government will set out in summer 2025 how it will review this.
- e. Any building defined as a HRB is subject to the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022 including registration and certification with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) and provision of safety case reports and safety case files, mandatory reporting and a resident engagement strategy. Also, approvals for planning and building control would be directed through the BSR. The BSR is currently operating with a significant delay, any increase in its role will need to be factored into any plans.
- f. In advance of the review of the definition by Government we have started collating the relevant documents and analysis for sheltered homes, which we suspect are likely to be classified as HRBs, and if not, this information is still invaluable.

Social housing providers

- g. The report reminds landlords responsible for the management of social housing that they should take appropriate action accordingly to ensure they have effective systems in place. The Act makes safety a priority and imposes a duty on landlords to investigate and remedy within a specified time of being reported defects that may adversely affect health (Awaab's law).
- h. In H&F, we report monthly to the Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness and the internal Residents and Buildings Safety Board on the outcome of effective fire safety management and subject our processes to regular scrutiny. We submitted the first tenant satisfaction measurement data to the Social Housing Regulator and published it on our website in June 2024, which showed 99.9% to 100% compliance for fire, gas, electric, water and lift safety.

Legislation

- i. The Inquiry concluded though that the statutory guidance in Approved Document B on fire safety was unsatisfactory and most importantly that it does not provide the information needed to design buildings that are safe in a fire.

- j. The Inquiry recommends that the revision of the guidance is done at pace and that it contains a clear warning that compliance with the guidance will not necessarily result in compliance with the regulations.
- k. The Inquiry also recommends that the government draw together under a single regulator all the functions relating to the construction industry.
- l. In H&F, we keep track of the regulatory and associated guidance changes, (Approved Document B is targeted at new developments or new works) to ensure we apply the latest thinking to keep residents safe.

Clients

- m. The Inquiry's conclusion of the construction industry is that those who commission building work are not always fully aware of their responsibility for compliance with the provisions of the Building Regulations, particularly if an application for building control approval was made by a consultant on their behalf.
- n. The Inquiry welcomed the new requirement for a Building Regulations compliance statement, made or approved by the Client to be provided at the time of an application for building control approval (Gateway 2).
- o. H&F is the Client for many construction projects. The changes to the Building Regulations place duties on the Client for any notable alteration or refurbishment or new development. The emphasis is on the competence of the Client as well as the need to appoint a competent Principal Designer and Principal Contractor.
- p. In H&F we are ensuring that projects are competently managed and supervised through ensuring that competent officers are employed and that appointed consultants and contractors are competent through contractual arrangements.

Contractors

- q. The Inquiry recommends the introduction of a licensing scheme for principal contractors wishing to undertake the construction or refurbishment of higher-risk buildings and that it be supported by a personal undertaking from a director or senior manager that the building is as safe.
- r. In H&F, roles and responsibilities are set out for works to our higher risk buildings within contractual arrangements. The introduction of a licensing scheme and personal commitment from the contractor is welcomed. It is noted that this may, at least initially, reduce the market's competitiveness both for contractors and insurance companies that will potentially impact on costs and delivery timelines.

Principal Designer

- s. The Building Safety Act 2022 amended the Building Regulations to require the Client to appoint a Principal Designer for relevant works, prior to design and

construction. This differs from the Principal Designer, also required, under the Construction Design Management Regulations.

- t. This new role is a fundamental step in ensuring that the design is fit for purpose and that there is legal ownership and responsibility for ensuring it is safe.
- u. The Inquiry recommends going a step further to make it a statutory requirement that before getting approval to build or refurbish a high-risk building (Gateway 2), a senior manager from the main design team must sign a statement saying they've done everything reasonably possible to make sure the finished building will be safe.
- v. In H&F, we have thorough procurement and contractual processes ensuring that Principal Designers are appointed. The market is adapting and evolving to this new requirement, which requires ownership of the design and evidence of competence, for example in term of fire and structural engineering. There is an inevitable increase in resource and planning to be factored into projects as the market responds.

Fire Safety Strategy

- w. A fire safety strategy should describe a building's structure and the various fire protection systems it contains and set out how they work together to ensure the safety of the occupants and firefighters in the event of a fire.
- x. The Inquiry recommends a fire safety strategy should be produced as a condition of obtaining building control approval for the construction or refurbishment of any higher-risk building and for it to be reviewed and approved on completion. The Inquiry also requires that the strategy is produced by a registered Fire Engineer.
- y. The Inquiry recommends that the Fire strategy should also consider the needs of vulnerable people, including the additional time they may require to leave the building or reach a place of safety within it and any additional facilities necessary to ensure their safety.
- z. In H&F, all our higher risk buildings have a fire strategy and also this includes the work being done with PEEPs to protect those who need help to evacuate if needed.

Fire Engineers

- aa. The Inquiry states: 'Designing buildings that are safe in the event of a fire requires particular skill. It is a skill that can be acquired only by specialised education and experience worthy of formal recognition. Unfortunately, the term "fire engineer" does not at present denote any formal qualification and as a result it is possible for a person to practise as a fire engineer without any formal qualification.
- bb. Given the importance of fire engineering the Inquiry recommends that the profession of fire engineer be recognised and protected by law and that an

independent body be established to regulate the profession, define the standards required for membership, maintain a register of members, and regulate their conduct.

- cc. In H&F, on higher risk buildings and other complex developments we ensure that industry recognised fire engineering companies with Chartered Fire Engineers are engaged. As with other areas, there is a scarcity of such practitioners, and this must be factored into timelines and cost forecasts for projects.

Fire risk assessors

- dd. The Inquiry recommends that the government establish a system of mandatory accreditation to certify the competence of fire risk assessors.
- ee. There is a scarcity of fire risk assessors and the range of skills required for differing building archetypes is complex. In H&F, we have an experienced team that solely specialise in residential stock. We only engage external fire risk assessors who operate under a recognised quality management system. Our expert team review each fire risk assessment as an additional check.

Fire Safety Competence

- ff. Competence at all levels is a key feature of the Inquiry's findings that was missing in the Grenfell refurbishment and more generally across the construction industry.
- gg. The Building Regulations have introduced requirements for competence of Principal Designers and Principal Contractors and guidance has been introduced but this is still evolving.
- hh. The Inquiry recognises that competence and understanding of fire safety must be at all levels and recommends that the government, working in collaboration with industry and professional bodies, encourage the development of courses in the principles of fire engineering for construction professionals and as part of their continuing professional development.
- ii. In H&F, we are supporting staff in their training and continuing professional development. We benefit from specialist teams with experience in the sector and recognise the need to continue to keep pace with new regulations and guidance.

Fire control switches in lifts

- jj. All modern lifts are fitted with fire control switches designed to be operated by drop keys to enable the fire and rescue services to take control of them in the event of a fire.
- kk. In H&F housing all our 216 lifts are fitted with drop keys that are compatible and agreed with the London Fire Brigade.

New Legislation

- 32. Significant changes have already been made since the Grenfell tragedy with the introduction of the Building Safety Act, Fire Safety Act, Fire Safety Regulations, Social Housing Regulation Act and the revision of core guidance documents.
- 33. A requirement of the new Building Safety Act is the registration of existing Higher Risk Buildings (HRBs) with the new Building Safety Regulator. In H&F we currently have 49 HRBs, which are all registered with the Regulator. We have been invited to certify 26 of those HRBs and we have submitted the legal documents within the 28-day requirement.
- 34. The Social Housing Regulation Act has health and safety and accountability at its core. It introduces the requirement for a designated health and safety lead, the requirement to submit and publish annual health and safety performance data (Tenant Satisfaction Measures) and Awaab's law (which places prescribed timeframes to address damp and mould).

Resident Engagement and Communication

- 35. The Grenfell tragedy significantly and disproportionately affected residents who were disabled and/or of ethnic minority background and/or children. We need to ensure that safety awareness reaches all and that everyone can evacuate safely if they need to.
- 36. We therefore have written to all residents (and will repeat annually) setting out their evacuation strategy for all properties and providing core advice on fire safety and how to contact us if they would need help evacuating in a fire. The letter provides details on translations and access via QR Codes.
- 37. Our safety-first team proactively works with residents to create a personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) in the event of a fire if they are unable to escape of their own accord. To date our primary focus is on higher risk buildings and sheltered but anyone can ask for a PEEP. This information is logged with the London Fire Brigade.
- 38. We work closely with the London Fire Brigade, Borough and station Commanders and have developed in collaboration an online training package called Make Every Contact Count. It is available to frontline officers and our contractors. Through this partnership we are demonstrating how we are working with the fire service, residents to monitor our compliance, review safety practices and improve resident engagement.

Conclusion

- 39. Overall, our performance is very good and we routinely subject ourselves and processes to independent scrutiny.
- 40. We do have a Good safety standard that shows accountability, responsibility and operational grip of competent officers and contractors, and we continue to invest

in training and development.

41. There is much new legislation, which we are adapting to and working to embed. The journey of safety compliance is continuous in its cycle, and we continue to strive to improve data validation and monitoring of systems and safe systems of work.

Report to: Housing and Homelessness Policy and Accountability Committee

Date: 23 April 2025

Subject: Hidden Homelessness

Report author: Richard Shwe, Director of Housing
Clare Dorning, Head of Homelessness Prevention and Assessment

Responsible Director: Sukvinder Kalsi, Executive Director Finance and Corporate Services

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an overview of hidden homelessness and data which gives insight into the level of hidden homelessness in the Hammersmith and Fulham borough.

2. Overview

- 2.1 Hidden homelessness refers to individuals who are homeless but not visible in official statistics, such as those sofa-surfing, living with friends or relatives, often in overcrowded conditions, or staying in in-secure accommodation. As there is no universal definition of hidden homelessness there is not an exact data set. However, research which we have received from the Greater London Authority estimates that there are as many as 12,500 hidden homeless people in London each night.
- 2.2 Alongside the types of homelessness captured by statutory and rough sleeping statistics, there exist other forms of homelessness that are less well evidenced and understood. These are captured by the term "hidden" homelessness and cover people who may be experiencing homelessness, but their situation is not "visible", either on the streets or in official statistics. Individuals experiencing "hidden" homelessness tend to find themselves in housing situations that are not as well captured in official statistics, such as sofa surfing, squatting and rough sleeping out of sight.
- 2.3 Research into "hidden" homelessness suggest that women are more likely than men to experience this type of homelessness specifically. Women are known to exhaust informal and social means of housing, including staying with friends and family, before approaching local authorities so remain hidden for longer.
- 2.4 Another group more likely to experience "hidden" homelessness specifically is young people aged 16 to 25 years. Many young people often rely on informal support networks for somewhere to stay. UK-wide research in 2014 on young people aged 16 to 25 years revealed that 20% had sofa surfed during the last year, with 16% having done so for more than a week and 4% over three months.

3 Recommendations

3.1 For the committee to review, feedback and comment on the report of Hidden Homelessness.

Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Corporate Plan and the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	A priority for the homelessness service is to work with households to help them maximise their income and independence.
Creating a compassionate and inclusive council	Homelessness can happen to anyone. Officers work with households to assess their housing needs and identify the housing options which may be available to them based on their individual circumstances.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	Personal Housing Plans are created with homeless applicants setting out the reasonable steps that the Council will take and the steps the applicants can take to prevent or relieve their homelessness.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	The Council aims to prevent homelessness wherever possible to avoid the need to place into expensive temporary accommodation.
Taking pride in H&F	The Council aims to achieve the best outcomes for homeless applicants and to perform well in meeting the Council's homelessness duties.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	N/A

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None

4. The Hammersmith and Fulham picture

- 4.1 Homelessness data held locally relates to households presenting as homeless and rough sleepers. While it is difficult to get a clear picture of the level of hidden homeless in the borough from this data, analysis of single homelessness and rough sleeping gives some detail of the housing circumstances of single people presenting to the Council for assistance.

5. Mainstream homelessness approaches

- 5.1 During 2024/25, 505 single people approached the Council as homeless which was 52% of all homeless approaches. The main reasons for homelessness for single people:

Homelessness approaches by reason - Single Households	No. approaches
Relationship with partner ended (non-violent breakdown)	33
Friends no longer willing or able to accommodate	133
Family no longer willing or able to accommodate	339
Total	505

- 5.2 The most frequent reason for homelessness for single people was because they have been excluded by family or friends. The households that were living with friends are most likely to have been sofa surfing and this accounts for 26% of homelessness approaches from single people last year. This is in line with national hidden homelessness research.

- 5.3 The age profile and gender of single homeless applicants:

Age Group	Female	Male	Not recorded/prefer not to say	Total
16-24 yrs	48	41	35	124 (24.5%)
25-35 yrs	44	81	47	172 (34%)
35+ yrs	48	100	60	208 (41%)
Total	140	222	142	504

- 5.4 More single men present as homeless in H&F than single women which is in line with national research, and the population most likely to present as homeless is single males over 35 years. A quarter of single homeless approaches were young people under 25 years.

- 5.5 Data from our rough sleeping population indicates the most frequent reasons for rough sleeping are relationship breakdown and leaving the National Asylum Support Service NASS (asylum) after being granted leave to remain. The age profile of rough sleepers locally is older than the traditional hidden homeless population with over 65% of rough sleepers being 36 years old.

6. The housing options available for single people

- 6.1 The main housing option for single homeless people is private rented accommodation. Single people under 35 years old are eligible for shared room rate Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and are therefore likely to only be able to afford a room in shared accommodation.
- 6.2 In terms of the support available to find accommodation for single people within the hidden homeless population, where a person approaches as homeless the Council will accept a Prevention or Relief Duty and provide advice and information to enable the person to find private rented accommodation. As part of homelessness legislation the Council is unable provide temporary accommodation unless the person is assessed as vulnerable and in priority need.
- 6.3 Financial assistance to help fund the upfront costs of private rented accommodation is very limited for single homeless people due to the competing pressures from priority need homelessness for whom the Council has a statutory duty to house. Limited personal budget funding is available from specific government grant programmes for populations such as rough sleepers and ex-offenders but the Council has not had the resources in the past to provide financial assistance for non-priority single homeless people.
- 6.4 In December 2024, the Council received £65,775 one-off government grant funding from Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government to assist single homeless people at risk of rough sleeping into accommodation. This funding is available to spend this year, and it is proposed to use the funding to provide financial assistance for single people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and not able to access existing funding sources, including the hidden homeless.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Over 50% of households approaching the Council as homeless are single people and it is likely that this population includes people who would traditionally be considered the hidden homeless.
- 7.2 While the Council would like to be able to assist all those who approach us for housing assistance, the housing offer for the majority of single homeless people is advice and information about accessing private rented accommodation, unless they meet the threshold of priority need in terms of the homeless legislation.
- 7.3 The financial resources available to assist the single non-priority homeless population into settled accommodation is limited, but the Government's one-off grant funding allocation of £65,775 for spend during 2025/26 to help single people at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping into privately rented accommodation, including the hidden homeless, provides the opportunity to offer direct financial support to assist with the upfront costs of securing a private rented tenancy this year.