



# **A draft consultative report on H&F Council's Emergency Response to Major Incidents in June and September 2017**

**January 2018**

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## **1. Introduction**

### *Purpose of the report*

- 1.1 During 2017 London and the UK were affected by a range of major incidents including:
  - the terrorist attack on Westminster Bridge in March;
  - the Manchester Arena terrorist attack in May;
  - the terrorist attack at Borough Market/London Bridge in early June;
  - the Grenfell Tower Fire in mid June;
  - the terrorist attack near Finsbury Park Mosque in June;
  - the evacuation of residents from four tower blocks in Camden following fire safety testing in late June;
  - the terrorist attack on a tube train at Parsons Green in September.
- 1.2 Two of these incidents required Hammersmith and Fulham (H&F) council to implement its emergency planning procedures. They were the fire at Grenfell Tower in North Kensington in June and the explosion on a tube train at Parsons Green station in September.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to present findings of a review that has examined H&F's experiences in implementing its emergency planning procedures, to determine the effectiveness of our response and any areas for improvement in the future. The report is draft for consultation with the Audit, Pension and Standards Committee and five Policy and Accountability Committees (PACs). Following consideration of the discussion and feedback at these forums, the findings of the review and consultative process will be presented to Cabinet in March 2018.
- 1.4 This version of the report has been fully updated following the discussions at the Audit, Pension and Standards Committee and Finance and Delivery PAC in December 2017 and the Economic Regeneration, Housing and the Arts PAC on 16 January 2018, adopting comments and additional recommendations made at those forums as well as tightening expressions and meaning following feedback. The report may be further amended following consultation with the other PACs over the course of January 2018.

### *Summary of the major incidents*

- 1.5 The Grenfell Tower fire, which began in the early hours of Wednesday 14 June 2017, was one of the worst disasters in London and the UK in living

memory<sup>1</sup>. The impact of the disaster has reverberated far and wide. A public inquiry is currently under way and criminal proceedings may follow, so this review is not intended to influence or undermine the due legal process of that inquiry and those proceedings. With this in mind, the review purposefully does not comment on the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea's (RBKC) response or affairs.

- 1.6 The Grenfell Tower Inquiry will cover issues relating to the response in the aftermath of the fire and is set to review:
  - (a) What policies, procedures and plans were in place on the part of central and local government for dealing with a major emergency such as the Grenfell Tower fire?
  - (b) What was the response of the Tenant Management Organisation, central and local government by way of the provision of emergency relief in the days immediately following the fire?
  - (c) Was the response adequate and, if not, in what respects was it inadequate?
- 1.7 H&F borough has been significantly affected by the fire, with the council, councillors, council staff and local residents, community organisations and businesses all contributing to the efforts to provide relief to the many hundreds of people directly affected.
- 1.8 In addition, at 8:35am on Friday 15 September 2017, an improvised explosive device was detonated on a tube at Parsons Green tube station<sup>2</sup>. H&F Council was the authority with responsibility for the response to that incident. The Parsons Green incident can not be compared in scale to the Grenfell Tower fire, in terms of the human tragedy and the duration of the impact on so many displaced families. However, like Grenfell, it was an incident that required an emergency plan to be implemented and for people to be evacuated from the area as a police cordon was put in place. It also attracted huge international media interest.
- 1.9 As a local authority, H&F council is classed as a Category 1 responder under the terms of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004<sup>3</sup>. This means that the Council is subject to the full set of civil protection duties and is required to:
  - assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning;
  - put in place emergency plans;

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for a map of the Grenfell Tower local area

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 1 for map of the Parsons Green local area

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix 2

- put in place business continuity management arrangements;
- put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency;
- share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination;
- co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency;
- provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management.

1.10 The review process consisted of a series of interviews with H&F staff who played major roles in the Council's response to the Grenfell fire and its aftermath and to the Parsons Green terrorist incident, along with a 'hackathon'<sup>4</sup> style event to gather the views of businesses, local agencies and community organisations that also played a role in the relief efforts, especially that at Grenfell. This review is focussed on the lessons to be learned for H&F Council so it did not extend to interviews with RBKC staff nor to RBKC stakeholders. To do so might have compromised the process of the public inquiry.

1.11 This report is a follow up to the immediate H&F Emergency Planning Lessons Learned Report, which was presented to the Finance and Delivery PAC on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2017. At that meeting the Committee recommended that a second report be provided to a subsequent meeting addressing: communities, hotel work, reassurance, community resilience and housing in relation to emergency planning, and that officers provide further information on when local emergencies escalate to national emergencies.

1.12 The Grenfell Tower fire occurred across the H&F borough boundary in RBKC so the primary local authority with responsibility for delivering its civic protection duties was RBKC. Hence, that council's role, along with that of the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation is the central focus of the public inquiry. However, given the scale of the disaster and the proximity of H&F to North Kensington, the Leader of H&F Council asked the Chief Executive to offer immediate and compassionate support. This report examines the nature of that support, what worked well, what lessons have already been learned and what can be further improved for the future.

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<sup>4</sup> A hackathon is an event consisting of focussed sessions with key stakeholders to consider complex problems in the pursuit of solutions

1.13 The report is structured around a number of thematic sections relating to different aspects of the council's implementation of its emergency planning procedures following both major incidents.

## **2. Command and Control**

### ***First 24 hours***

2.1 The Grenfell Tower fire took hold in the early hours of Wednesday 14 June. The Chief Executive of H&F Council immediately established a Service Resilience Group (SRG) to plan and oversee the Council's response to the fire and its aftermath. The group was chaired by the Chief Executive and brought together senior officers at daily meetings for a period of two weeks.

2.2 In the first 24 hours, H&F was requested to send rest centre managers to three centres at Westway sports centre, Portobello and St Clements Church at about 11am on the Wednesday morning. The H&F emergency response team also provided assistance.

2.3 As the Parsons Green incident happened in H&F borough a Borough Emergency Command Centre (BECC) was established within ten minutes which led the H&F council emergency response.

2.4 The Grenfell Tower fire and the Parsons Green terrorist incident have raised interest, at all levels across the council, in H&F's emergency planning procedures and the command and control structure within it. There is now a much broader understanding of this structure as officers from across the authority have seen it in action. It is intended that this wider understanding will be maintained via broader communication networks and expanded training (see section 8).

2.5 Directors involved in the SRG for the Grenfell response confirmed that the H&F command and control structure was clear to them. However, those who were not part of the daily briefings (Children's Services and Adult Social Care) were less clear about the distinction between the H&F sovereign response and the response under the "tri-borough" shared services arrangements (i.e. RBKC, Westminster City Council and H&F). Some of the shared services officers interviewed as part of this review said the shared service arrangements with RBKC may have blurred the distinction between RBKC and H&F officer resources on the ground, where care workers and volunteers were operating. In turn, this created some confusion about how H&F resources were being allocated. The structure of any future SRG for an

incident of the scale and scope of Grenfell needs to include senior representation from all directorates. Additionally, it will be important that the work underway to disaggregate children's, adults and public health shared services arrangements considers H&F's sovereign capacity to respond to a major incident, including capacity to aid other boroughs in emergencies.

2.6 At Parson's Green, the council's command and control structure and management of a robust operation was commended by London's Local Authority Gold, the Metropolitan Police and London Fire Brigade (LFB).

### ***First few days***

2.7 On 17 June 2017, the Chief Executive appointed senior officers to set up two task groups in response to the Grenfell Tower fire – one to co-ordinate the provision of temporary accommodation and support for displaced Grenfell residents (the H&F Grenfell Outreach task force) and the other to address the concerns of H&F residents in tower blocks within the borough (the H&F Tenants' Reassurance task force).

2.8 The officers appointed to run these teams were clear as to their briefs and were given the necessary delegated authority to draw in other officers from across departments. One of the task group managers noted that it had been helpful that the role and authority of the task force has been set out in writing and circulated to all those who needed to know of it. He noted the value of the task force being a joined-up operation working across council services with named leads.

2.9 Some of those drawn in to manage the situation on the ground in the days following the Grenfell disaster (i.e. those dealing with donation management), were less aware of the command and control structures. This reflects the fact that a large number of volunteers had to be drafted in at short notice with limited previous training in emergency planning or knowledge of the borough's Emergency Management Plan. The extent to which officers working on the donations response needed to be briefed on the wider emergency response is, however, questionable. Indeed, as donations on the scale received were unprecedented, donation management presented new leadership and skills challenges (see section 7).

2.10 The experience suggests that the shared service arrangements had not foreseen the complexity of an incident such as the Grenfell disaster. Each borough in the "tri-borough" arrangement had its own sovereign BECC. For Grenfell, this caused confusion in the H&F command and control structure when H&F staff were allocated to support the emergency planning response

as part of the shared services arrangements rather than through the H&F BECC or H&F command and control structure.

### ***Week by week***

- 2.10 The H&F Emergency Planning team compiles and circulates, to selected senior officers and those on emergency response rotas, a weekly rota known as 'Weekly Orders'. This sets out which officers are responsible for different levels of command and control in the event of an emergency incident.
- 2.11 Following the experiences of 2017, challenges have been identified in how H&F council can effectively monitor operational activity and staff capacity and coordinate responses in shared service areas, which may be responding to dual reporting structures at the point of an emergency. The Moving On programme, to disaggregate key "tri-borough" shared services, will address this issue for the future, in some part.

### ***Actions taken***

- The circulation of the Weekly Orders has been expanded.
- The Chief Executive advised the Strategic Leadership Team to be on high alert and confirm capacity, resources and accuracy of communication channels in case of any further major incident over the summer months. This was agreed for July – September as L.B. Camden had evacuated four tower blocks due to safety concerns which, together with Grenfell residents and summer tourism, had reduced hotel availability locally.

### ***Recommendations for further action:***

- The circulation list for the Weekly Orders should be subject to a regular review, co-ordinated by the Chief Executive's office and Human Resources, to ensure that all officers who may need to respond to an emergency are included in its circulation.
- In the event of a disaster of the magnitude of the Grenfell fire there may be a need for a two-tier daily planning briefing – strategic and operational.
- That the expectations from membership of a Service Resilience Group be clearly set out and communicated to attendees and relevant Directors/Heads of Service.

- That the command and control and briefing arrangements should be built into emergency planning training and exercising.
- Accurate records of staff deployed should be kept from the start of a response.
- Continued shared services and any new partnerships or shared arrangements should be clear about 'first call' arrangements of H&F and H&F services to limit competing calls and under capacity at critical times of an emergency.

### **3. Communications**

#### *Internal/operational*

- 3.1 The Emergency Communications Plan is updated regularly, in liaison with the Emergency Planning team. During both the Grenfell fire and Parsons Green incidents, the Communications division's liaison with the Emergency Planning team was via the Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) and the Borough Emergency Command Centre (BECC). Officers interviewed as part of this review advised that these internal communications worked well.
- 3.2 Outside of this, responsible H&F Directors managed the operational communications on a day-to-day basis, following the daily briefings given by the Chief Executive at the SRG. Communications with other staff was via the web, intranet and from those on the ground.
- 3.3 Intelligence on the Grenfell fire evacuees placed in H&F hotels was initially received anecdotally when West Kensington Tenants' and Residents' Association alerted the Leader of the Council that evacuees had been placed in a Fulham hotel and seemed confused and unsupported. This led H&F to respond immediately with emergency welfare assistance and small cash subsistence offers and led to the establishment of the H&F Grenfell Outreach team on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June.
- 3.4 In the absence of other information, H&F officers approached hotel managers across the borough directly to obtain details on whether any evacuees had been placed in their hotels. The media were keen to hear evacuees' stories so there were trust issues to overcome in winning the confidence of hotel managers and support them to protect the privacy of evacuees and those who had been evacuated from the surrounding area .

- 3.5 The limited information on who had been placed in which H&F hotels might have been partly overcome had there been an agreed protocol of information exchange between H&F Council and local hoteliers. This suggestion emerged from both the interviews with officers and from discussions with a hotel manager at the community hackathon event. The Council should consider future arrangements and establish a shared protocol with hoteliers in the borough. It may be possible to agree a system of instant messaging of all hotels in the borough seeking offers of assistance in similar emergencies.
- 3.6 Communication with hotel staff during the Grenfell relief effort was mainly via leaflets, through face-to-face or telephone contact with the H&F Grenfell Outreach Task Force. A newsletter was produced for hotel residents telling them what support and services were available to them.

### ***External/ public communications***

- 3.7 After the Grenfell fire, the first external communication reassuring council residents in high rise blocks in the borough was sent on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June, the day after the fire. The H&F Tenants' Reassurance Task Force was formalised on Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June. Advice sessions were held at the Charecroft estate on the 16<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Advice sessions were also organised on the Edward Woods Estate from Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June. There were daily sessions at this estate which were well attended, with officers taking questions on fire safety issues. Information on safety and risk assessments, reassuring residents that H&F council tower blocks did not have the same cladding as at Grenfell and informing residents on processes underway to assess high-rise properties, were provided quickly via a wide range of communications channels.
- 3.8 A meeting took place with Tenants' and Residents' Association (TRA) Chairs, the London Fire Brigade and council representatives in the following week to the Grenfell fire. There were then public meetings with Edward Woods and Charecroft estate residents. The Leader of the Council attended the meetings, as did ward councillors and the Cabinet Member for Housing.
- 3.9 Some residents felt that there should have been visits to all of the TRAs. However, this would have stretched the small core group of officers, as they needed to be present at those meetings to answer the range of questions that residents were posing. The LFB offered to attend any TRA meetings on request. The Chief Executive had already held a meeting with the Borough Fire Commander early in her induction in June 2017 to ensure that good working relationships were formed with key partners. There was a Q&A document published on the H&F website which was regularly updated. It was

noted that, on reflection, the circulation of Q&As to other TRAs not visited would have been helpful.

- 3.10 The Grenfell disaster is probably the first incident of that scale to occur in the UK in an age where social media plays such an important role in communications and in shaping the public response. Social media proved invaluable in feeding on-the-ground reports from local people into the council's emergency response. The council's communications team maintained a round-the-clock social media operation throughout both incidents. There is a clear need for an effective social media strategy, given the increasing role it plays in emergency incidents and to get clear, coherent messaging out as widely as possible – through as many channels as possible. To assist, it is recommended that a pre-prepared, updated banner message is placed on the front page of the H&F council website in the event of another major incident.
- 3.11 External communication was also undertaken to promote the H&F Fire Safety Plus programme. This was launched following the Grenfell fire, and includes an extensive package of fire prevention measures and fire safety messages. A booklet on this package was sent to all high-rise residents of council properties first and then to all H&F council residents and made available on the council's website. (see section 5)
- 3.12 In relation to external communications at Parsons Green, it was suggested that more information was needed for those people unable to return to their homes because of the police cordon established. However, the bomb was not made safe until 5pm so it was difficult for the police to give early information as to when people might be able to return home.
- 3.13 Overall, this review has found that there was a joined-up approach to dealing with the media during both major incidents. H&F communications officers worked long hours to deal with media enquiries which were directly Grenfell-related, as well as general tower block fire safety enquiries. The main communications difficulty arising from the Grenfell fire was the Council's capacity to answer large volumes of wide-ranging and detailed questions from the media, government and the public about all aspects of fire safety in council properties. At a time when resources were stretched in dealing directly with the incident on the ground, capacity to meet information demand was also stretched. This is an area that all services should consider in their emergency planning.

### ***Recommendations for action***

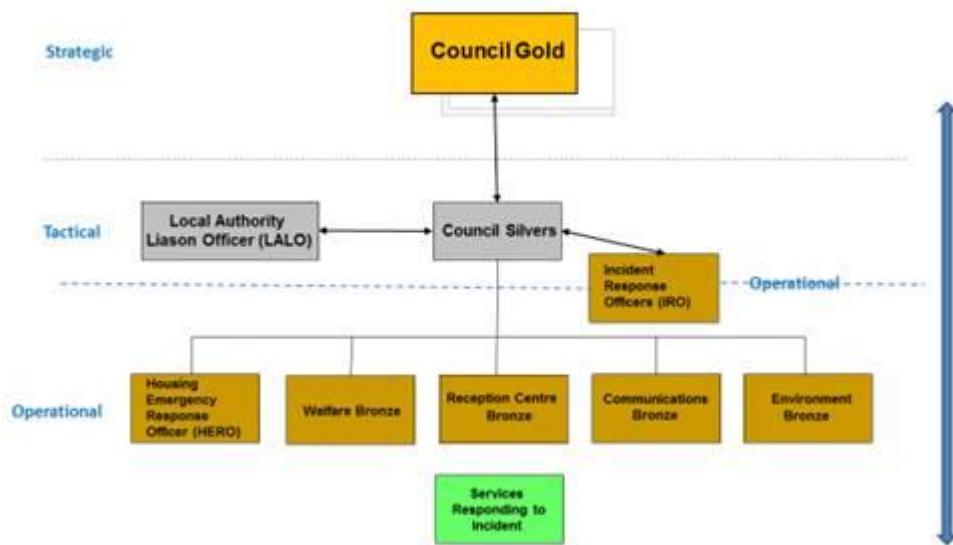
- All services should receive guidance on how to manage large-scale information demand in their emergency plans.

- A social media strategy, including the use of the Next Door platform, should be prepared for an emergency incident communications response.
- Alternative arrangements should be identified for communicating with residents to enable communications to continue if one or more of the mobile phone system, internet or the council website failed during an incident.
- Single Points of Contact (SPOC) should be identified to deal with different types of communication enquiries in an emergency (e.g. media enquiries, requests from the emergency services, central government etc). This should be built into procedures, training and exercising.
- Member briefings and training must make it clear who to contact in the event of an emergency so councillors can give information and feedback from the ground.
- All staff should be informed of the emergency contact number.
- A pre-prepared update banner message should be put on the front page of the H&F council website in the event of an incident.

#### **4. Emergency planning**

4.1 The emergency planning procedures in H&F are quite clear. This is set out in the figure below. In this structure, Gold is the strategic lead, the Chief Executive holds this role and was Gold at the time of both incidents; Silver is the tactical lead (a trained council officer); and Bronze are the operational leads (these are trained council officers, including a Welfare Bronze).

# H&F Emergency Response Structure



- 4.2 If an emergency requires an evacuation, a Welfare Bronze is appointed (historically from Adult Social Care) to identify any premises within the cordon that include vulnerable persons or people with particular needs. An LFB trained LALO will also be deployed to a rendezvous point. The LALO attends all Silver meetings and reports back to the Duty Silver on what is required. The LALO then passes the information to the police, fire service and any other authorities providing emergency services.
- 4.3 This review has found that the emergency planning responses from H&F to the Grenfell Tower fire and Parsons Green incident implemented organisational plans and provided appropriate assistance to those affected. Whilst H&F has the necessary capacity to respond to a large scale emergency within the borough, it is likely to require additional resources (e.g. via mutual aid) to relieve an emergency support team over time.
- 4.4 Training is being expanded to increase the capacity of the authority to cope with an incident of the scale of the Grenfell fire in H&F. As identified elsewhere in this report, there needs to be a wider general understanding of key aspects of H&F's emergency management plan, through wider communications with staff, councillors and partners, as well as a specific need for a wider pool of trained officers for key emergency response roles. The pool of trained officers needs to be offered periodic refresher training.
- 4.5 Key insights from H&F officers supporting the Grenfell rest centre highlight the need for H&F to put in place pre-agreements with chemists, opticians, dentists

etc for essential items (e.g. medications, glasses, dentures) for those displaced without their everyday items. Agreements could also be made with local foodbanks to offer other essential provisions such as food and toiletries.

### ***Mutual aid***

- 4.6 Under London's local authority Gold arrangements, any borough can request mutual aid when facing an emergency incident and there is a clear and agreed process to go through. A request has to go to the London Resilience Group (LRG) and be signed off by London Local Authority Gold (LLAG).
- 4.7 In the event of an incident requiring multi-agency regional strategic coordination, the steps below describe the process for activating the LLAG arrangements:
  1. The Metropolitan Police or London Resilience Team (LRT) activate Golds from all agencies as required.
  2. London Local Authority Gold is activated by the Metropolitan Police or LRT using contact details provided by London Fire Brigade Emergency Planning (LFB-EP).
  3. LLAG activates a London Local Authority Coordination Centre (LLACC).
  4. LLAG and Support Team (if there is a Strategic Coordination Centre (SCC)) travel to the designated meeting location.
  5. LLAG and Support Team (if SCC) arrive at designated meeting location and are met by the Duty LLACC Manager or LFB-EP SCC Liaison Officer (if SCC).
  6. LLAG establishes communications with the LLACC.
- 4.8 Once mutual aid had been called in for the Grenfell fire, the timing of rotas had to be managed as the London Resilience team rotas did not align those already set up for H&F staff. The response from the LRG was to allocate qualified social workers from every London local authority to work with the evacuees for an initial two-week period.
- 4.9 A lesson from Grenfell concerns the role of neighbouring boroughs affected by a large scale incident, where the emergency response is being led by another borough. Further work is required on how to involve neighbouring boroughs in these circumstances as part of London-wide responses. H&F Council has raised this issue with the Local Government Association (LGA), in order that the role of 'bystander' boroughs is better utilised. The Local Authority Panel (LAP), which acts on behalf of London's local government, is developing service level agreements to provide the commitment to mutual aid at a sub-regional level and provide London with consistent and effective resilience into the future.

### ***Actions taken***

- New H&F rest centre equipment has been purchased and is stored at Bagley's Lane depot in Fulham. There are enough beds and bedding for 145 people with provisions for a further 80 stored nearby.
- Tow bars have been added to new vehicles to ensure that they can transport trailers with bedding quickly to wherever they need to be – there had previously been only one vehicle with a tow bar. Emergency planning equipment is also stored in the Courtyard Room storage cupboard in Hammersmith Town Hall.
- A review of H&F's emergency planning procedures, following the Parsons Green incident, has been commissioned from an independent consultant.
- Additional lanyards and high visibility jackets have been purchased and are now to be worn by all emergency responders at an incident.

### ***Recommendations for further action***

- A review should be undertaken of the best means of registering and storing records of people displaced to a rest centre in an emergency incident.
- Consideration should be given to negotiating agreements with chemists, opticians, dentists and other local stores and suppliers to secure the emergency provision of essentials for any displaced residents in the event of a major incident.
- The list of potential premises in H&F for emergency use as rest centres should be updated, along with contact details for keyholders and means of access.
- Work should be undertaken to identify premises in H&F borough that might be used to provide emergency accommodation.
- Emergency Planning should review the corporate emergency planning response arrangements, structure and responsibilities in the event of an emergency.
- Additional emergency response and planning training should be provided for all senior staff and councillors.
- Media training should be provided for councillors.
- Information on emergency planning should be included as part of staff induction training.
- High visibility jackets and personalised name badges should be supplied to all members of the strategic leadership team.
- An annual Emergency Planning Report should be presented to Cabinet (in addition to any other papers required during the year) covering:
  1. Emergency planning progress across the Council
  2. Overview of emergency staffing levels
  3. Overview of training and exercising programmes and up-take.
- Further work should be undertaken on involving neighbouring boroughs affected by a large scale incident including their role as part of London-wide responses, in order that the role of 'bystander' boroughs is better utilised.

- It is noted that an independent peer challenge of London's regional resilience procedures has been commissioned by London Councils on behalf of London Local Government.

## **5. Housing**

### ***Temporary accommodation for evacuees***

- 5.1 In August 2017, there were a total of 57 families, consisting of 108 people (including 18 children), displaced because of the Grenfell Tower fire, located in seven H&F hotels. By 8<sup>th</sup> January 2018, this had reduced to 29 families, made up of 43 people.
- 5.2 The families and individuals displaced required cash, food, clothes, health and care services, mobile phones and chargers, internet access and other supplies in the immediate days following the tragedy. Laundry also had to be organised.
- 5.3 One hotelier who took part in the H&F hackathon had a large number of the evacuees from Grenfell and the surrounding blocks staying at his hotel. His staff were not adequately trained to deal with the traumatised guests that were placed in the hotel. Once H&F had discovered that there were evacuees at the hotel, there were daily visits from the H&F Outreach team of support workers. This included Children's Services placing key workers with every family located in an H&F hotel within 48 hours of notification of their arrival. In the case of an emergency in Hammersmith & Fulham, the council's Housing Service places families in temporary accommodation and informs Children's Services immediately and a social worker is allocated and visits on the same day.
- 5.4 Hotel accommodation is the most obvious pool of temporary accommodation in H&F so a central database of such accommodation should be maintained by the Council. There may be other unexplored options to consider, however, such as Airbnb and using residents' spare rooms.
- 5.5 Some of the officers assisting with finding temporary homes for Grenfell fire evacuees in H&F hotels noted the lack of a clear policy at that stage from RBKC as to what impact the acceptance of an offer of temporary accommodation in H&F might have on the rights of the tenant to be rehoused permanently in RBKC. Some evacuees refused all offers of temporary accommodation from H&F due to fears that it would mean the loss of their entitlement to be rehoused in RBKC. There needs to be cross-borough

agreements between London councils in the event of a disaster of this nature, whereby acceptance of an offer of temporary accommodation by a neighbouring borough should not affect a tenant's rights to social housing in their own borough. H&F Council should agree such a policy for any social housing tenants of H&F Council that might be displaced by a similar incident in this borough.

5.6 Information from both major incidents confirms the need for staff who are coordinating or arranging emergency support at the front line to have immediate access to financial resources to pay suppliers and access goods and services. Moving forward, arrangements for corporate credit cards and their distribution within services should be considered within emergency plans. Efforts have been made to set up business accounts with H&F hotels to avoid the need to issue more corporate credit cards.

***Action taken***

- An additional corporate credit card has been issued to a third Housing Director to spot-purchase emergency accommodation and other essentials in the event families and individuals are displaced by an incident in H&F.

***Recommendations for further action***

- H&F Council should agree a lettings policy that assures that any social housing tenant who is displaced by an incident of this scale will retain their rights to permanent rehousing in the borough, irrespective of any acceptance of an offer of temporary accommodation from another borough.
- Cross-borough agreements should be laid down to ensure that tenants' rights to permanent accommodation in their borough of origin are not adversely affected by the allocation of temporary accommodation in another borough where this is due to an emergency incident causing displacement from the home borough.
- A data-sharing protocol should be drawn up to ensure that information on the needs of displaced residents from one borough can be shared with a neighbouring borough that is temporarily accommodating those families and individuals.
- Further attempts should be made to secure business accounts with other hotels located in the borough.

- Arrangements for corporate credit cards and their distribution within services should be considered within emergency plans.

### ***Assurance for H&F residents***

5.7 The new Chief Executive at H&F had initiated a review of the borough's fire safety regime upon appointment in March 2017, and was in the process of implementing more stringent fire safety checks prior to the Grenfell Tower fire.

5.8 Following the Grenfell fire, it was important to reassure H&F tenants and residents about their safety in tower blocks located within the borough. Understandably, Grenfell triggered discussions with tenants and residents on fire safety, especially at the Edward Woods Estate and at the Charecroft Estate. However, communication with residents in the days that followed Grenfell quickly provided reassurance that there were no H&F tower blocks with the same cladding as at Grenfell.

5.9 Urgent fire safety checks were carried out at Edward Woods, Charecroft and other tower blocks, with Fire Safety Advisers drafted in to visit all tower blocks. The Council also established the H&F Fire Safety Plus programme (see Appendix 4) to install sprinklers in all blocks where it would improve safety, replace fire doors and offer free safety checks and free replacement of faulty appliances. A Full Council meeting agreed to allocate £20m to this 'Fire Safety Plus' programme.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Action taken***

- Fire safety checks have been completed on all 71 H&F high-rise tower blocks (a tower block is a communal residential building with more than 6 storeys) and all blocks of five or less storeys
- Fire Safety Plus handbooks have been issued to H&F council residents, setting out the H&F offer of free safety checks for all homes and free replacement appliances and plug adaptors.
- Concierge staff have been increased at the Edward Woods Estate and are now located in all three tower blocks of the estate.
- Specifications for works to install sprinklers in all high-rise blocks, where this would improve safety, are being drawn up.

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 4

- A residents' advisory group on fire safety is being set up to work with the Council on improvement plans.
- A Property Compliance Task Force, chaired by the Chief Executive, has been set up to ensure that H&F Council is meeting its full responsibilities as a landlord.
- The housing repairs emergency response service has been reviewed and enhanced and a new emergency response policy put in place.

***Recommendations for further action***

- The Council should set out in advance the range of outreach support and services that could be available to families and individuals placed in temporary accommodation in and outside of the borough as a result of a major incident
- Clear lists and contact details for all residents placed in temporary accommodation following an evacuation should be available and updated as necessary to key staff.

## **6. Welfare**

6.1 Emergency welfare and support for those affected by major incidents is a critical element of any emergency response. Support arrangements need to ensure that social care, health care and other support services continue to be provided for those with previously identified needs, and also respond to the additional impact of the incident, or possible evacuation. Welfare arrangements should also be sympathetic to the cultural needs of local residents, and recognise the diverse nature of the local population.

6.2 For example, some residents evacuated following the Grenfell fire and placed in H&F Hotels were observing Ramadan, and their experience was that this could not easily be accommodated by the hotel catering service. Some residents were accommodated in hotels offering a bed and breakfast service with no other access to catering or food preparation. The H&F Outreach Taskforce arranged food delivery services and meal vouchers, with supportive assistance from a number of local restaurants and caterers. A pre-arranged protocol with local hoteliers to commission a specific catering response during emergencies or to sign up local restaurants willing to assist with providing meals to those affected may be helpful in future incidents. A food and meal voucher system might be agreed in advance with supermarkets and restaurants in the borough.

- 6.3 Some of those affected in both incidents had pre-existing health or social care needs, which required additional services to be available in both emergency centres and emergency accommodation (e.g. access to medication, social care support).
- 6.4 The impact of incidents such as the Grenfell fire and the Parsons Green incident may result in ongoing needs which are likely to continue beyond the immediate event, or may only be identified after a period of time. This may include trauma and post traumatic stress. Moving forward, specific training for staff to provide appropriate responses and ongoing access to psychological support for traumatised residents should be considered within emergency plans.
- 6.5 Support for children and young people with additional needs, such as those with learning disabilities, or families receiving social care support also needs to be addressed in emergency plans. As part of the emergency response to the Grenfell fire, children in the affected area who were already receiving social care support were immediately identified by Children's services.
- 6.6 At Parsons Green, the NHS was not able to respond to requests to obtain medication for people in the rest centre. Independently, a local pharmacist assisted the Rest Centre officers in liaising between residents and a local GP practice to provide medication for those that required it.
- 6.7 H&F provides an employee assistance programme throughout the year. The offer is enhanced for employees affected by a major incident to include telephone counselling and specific face-to-face support. In the immediate aftermath of Grenfell, the Council further enhanced the offer with on-site counselling sessions in the six weeks following the incident. In addition, regular communications about longer-term support available has been established, recognising some effects may be delayed. During the Parsons Green incident a similar response was provided although, given the relatively lower numbers of employees affected, the role of the line managers in establishing contact and support requirements was most beneficial.

#### ***Actions taken***

- An enhanced counselling service has been put in place for H&F staff.

#### ***Recommendations for further action***

- A process should be established to negotiate agreements with supermarkets and restaurants to provide food and meals to the victims and evacuees of

future incidents, perhaps by way of a voucher scheme administered by the Council or local charities.

- The offer of counselling to all staff involved in the Grenfell fire relief effort should be followed up over the coming weeks and months.
- Service commissioners with responsibility for mental health services should consider how access to counselling services for non-council staff who volunteer to be emergency responders could be made available, particularly where the Council funds counselling services in the community.
- Service commissioners with responsibility for mental health services should work with NHS partners to develop local plans to provide specialist support for trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Work should be undertaken with local NHS services to develop future plans to ensure that access to medication can be quickly provided to those affected by emergencies, such as those in rest centres or emergency accommodation.
- The Council should investigate whether 24-hour pharmacies can provide support in an incident where people require prescriptions in a rest centre.

## **7. Donations Management**

7.1 On the evening following the Grenfell fire, Clem Attlee and Rocque Maton TRA and residents brought donations to Hammersmith Town Hall, then further donations began arriving spontaneously from 7pm and continued arriving over the following days. On the day after the fire, there was a call for volunteers to assist with the co-ordination of the influx of donations, which brought 450 offers of help from council staff and the wider community. Donations were also being delivered to, and collected at, various other community sites across the borough, which were then diverted to the Town Hall.

7.2 Some of the donations included perishable goods, which were stored whilst an assessment was made of the needs of evacuees of the fire. The majority of the perishable goods was provided to the local foodbank for distribution. Non-perishable donations were stored by H&F. Some of the donations were directly distributed to evacuee families in local hotels, including toiletries. Once the Red Cross became involved as part of the government task force, they coordinated donations for Grenfell from all areas. Consequently, the remaining donations stored by H&F were provided to the Red Cross for storage and distribution.

7.3 At the time of the Grenfell fire, H&F did not have a plan for the management of donations and volunteers as part of its emergency response plan and had to move quickly to put ad hoc arrangements in place. Key officers were taken off their day jobs and asked to develop a donations receiving centre. This quickly became full with thousands of donated items sorted, stacked, boxed and labelled by over 100 volunteers (both staff and residents). Officers leading on donations management for Grenfell had no experience of this work nor the scale of the operation and much can be learned from their direct experience and considerable fortitude over the initial 3 days at the height of donations.

7.4 Officers coordinating the donations stated that they would have benefitted from more internal communications and quicker updates. It might have been helpful to have had a visible screen constantly updating everyone and displaying important information across the locations where donations were being handled.

7.5 Moving forward, H&F emergency plans should be developed to anticipate large scale donations and work with community partners to coordinate activity to effectively manage this. A donations protocol should be developed to communicate guidance on donations management including how to separate new and used items, the importance of signage advising that donations can not be returned and the importance of logging items so that once boxed they could be more easily located.

7.5 The donation management plan needs to identify suitable storage sites (both temporary and longer term) to receive and process donations in different parts of the borough and local businesses identified that can provide storage boxes. Volunteers brought in to manage the donations need to be appropriately briefed and supported to undertake the task.

***Recommendation for action***

- A donation management protocol should be drawn up and agreed by the council in discussion with community partners to help manage all aspects of donation management. The plan should form part of the Council's emergency management plan procedures. It should include a communications plan to ensure that, in the event of a future major incident, donors are well informed about the type of donations needed and where donations should be taken. The protocol should guide organisers on how to stack, store and allocate donations and engage volunteers and clarify to donors what will happen to their gift once received.

- Specific council staff should be nominated to be ‘Donations Managers’ in the event of any future incidents and briefed accordingly.

## **8. Training**

- 8.1 H&F emergency responders report that the training they receive is excellent. To ensure there are sufficient numbers of staff trained to cope in the immediate period following an incident of the scale and duration of the Grenfell Tower disaster, additional training has been provided or is planned for roles within H&F’s Emergency Response Structure (see 4.1). As of 5<sup>th</sup> January 2018, there are 105 H&F officers trained in emergency response roles. This number has increased since Grenfell, with additional officers trained as Council Silver, Welfare Bronze and Housing Emergency Response Officers. Further training is planned in January 2018, to form a new team of nine officers as BECC responders. Training will continue to be provided and updated across the emergency planning roles.
- 8.2 Staff across some shared services responding to the major incidents had inconsistent understanding of H&F specific emergency plans and procedures. There needs to be better awareness of H&F’s emergency management plan across all service areas that may need to respond to an emergency incident and training offered if required. Crisis management training should be delivered to all directors and all councillors on a prioritised basis.
- 8.3 It is also proposed that training is needed for responders from the community as well as council staff. The community response to the relief effort for both major incidents was widely praised but most of those volunteers had little or no training.

### ***Action taken***

- Training provided to increase number of council officers in key roles in the emergency response structure.
- Strategic Leadership Team emergency planning training and briefing session held in December 2017.

### ***Action to be taken***

- Further emergency responders training to be provided to more staff.

- Wider staff awareness training or guidance to be provided on H&Fs emergency management plan and procedures.
- There will be at least eight trained officers to cover each of the key roles of Duty Silver (currently 8 trained officers), Welfare Bronze (currently 7 trained officers) and Rest Centre Manager (currently 7 trained officers).

***Recommendations for further action***

- Training on emergency response to be provided to community responders, TRAs and residents.
- Crisis management training should be provided for directors, cabinet members, shadow cabinet members and ward councillors, on a prioritised basis.
- Media training should be provided for councillors.

**9. Work with Communities, Local Agencies and Businesses**

9.1 The public response to the Grenfell fire was tremendous in demonstrating the widespread compassion that people feel for victims of a disaster of such magnitude. This compassion and drive to help resulted in a large number of volunteers, faith groups and local community organisations, residents and businesses all getting involved.

9.2 The strength of the community response in H&F to both major incidents provides an opportunity to consider how the volunteering offer can be better coordinated and harnessed and the array of skills that are available across the borough identified. There needs to be work done to build community resilience as part of an emergency response. This was considered as part of the 'Stronger Together: Building Community Resilience' hackathon event in September 2017. Future ideas for consideration include developing an emergency responder/volunteering database, identifying community go-betweens and undertaking more outreach and community development work.

9.3 Where there are to be significant numbers of displaced individuals located in a specific area, then a plan of action is required to inform and reassure the local community in which those individuals are going to be placed. This was required in the area around the location of a temporary school that had to be established on Wormwood Scrubs to relocate the pupils of Aldridge School, which had to be closed because of the Grenfell fire. It was rightly felt that it

was important to keep the Aldridge School pupils together. Some local residents expressed concern at the potential impact on the community of a large number of school pupils being relocated to their area.

#### ***Action taken***

- A hackathon event, 'Stronger Together: Building Community Resilience', has been held with representatives of local businesses, local agencies and community groups. (A hackathon is an event with focussed sessions that brings stakeholders together to discuss complex problems and come up with possible solutions.)

#### ***Recommendations for action***

- The proposals that came forward from the hackathon should be progressed – building up contact lists with details of possible roles and offers of available support from local organisations and businesses.
- Training should be provided for community outreach responders.
- A database of volunteers should be considered.
- Where displaced individuals are to be relocated in new communities, advance information and reassurance should be given to those within the host community.
- Service level agreements with funded organisations should be amended to allocate duties and responsibilities for assisting in an emergency situation.

## **10. Regional and National Implications**

- 11.1 There are lessons to be learned from the Grenfell Tower fire and the response to it for national Government, the LGA and regional government, as well as for local authorities. New guidelines are likely to be required, and are anticipated following the conclusions of the Public Inquiry and other reviews. This report has urged for new thinking and learning on 'bystander management' – namely the role and responsibilities of neighbouring authorities where an incident is close to an administrative boundary.
- 11.2 It is disappointing that central government has not made additional funding available to carry out the essential refurbishments and safety measures that have been identified as being needed. H&F has developed its own Fire

Safety Plus programme, utilising only council resources, in response to our review of fire safety across the borough.

- 11.3 DCLG has written to all councils with a request to actively ensure owners of private residential tower blocks are taking measures to ensure their residents are safe. The request of councils is to identify any private residential tower blocks that have ACM or similar cladding and to ensure adequate mitigation is in place. The Environmental Health/Corporate Health & Safety team is leading this work for H&F which is ongoing at the time of writing.
- 11.4 H&F Council was asked to submit a response to the consultation on the terms of reference of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and proposed that the following questions need to be answered:

*Training and resources*

- Were enough officers trained in emergency response roles and tactics to be able to respond to an incident of this type and scale?

*Decision making*

- What was the decision-making process and who made those decisions and were the Gold arrangements adequate?

*Wider implications*

- Are the current arrangements adequate to respond to an incident of this scale?
- Should LLAG and LLACC have stepped up response, in any event, without being asked?
- There are no mutual aid agreements between London and the surrounding counties or other parts of the UK, other than those arranged locally. Does this need looking at, in light of the Grenfell tragedy?

*Pastoral and other support provided*

- Can the current mutual aid arrangements be re-visited for longer term recovery incidents?
- What improvements could be made on data/information sharing between agencies relating to affected families and individuals?

*Donations management*

- What additional training, resources and planning is needed to manage donations in major incidents?
- How can emergency response agencies work together with the voluntary and community sector and businesses to manage donations effectively?

*Building fire safety management*

- Are the current regulations and guidance for fire safety management in social housing and other types of residential property fit for purpose? Would

- safety be enhanced by adopting an Approved Code of Practice for fire safety management for landlords?
- How effective are sprinklers compared with other measures as part of fire safety management? Should sprinklers be mandated for all properties over a certain number of storeys? Should a common prescribed standard be set to minimise ongoing maintenance liabilities?
- How can the practical challenges of managing the fire safety of high-rise buildings with a mixture of leasehold and tenanted properties be overcome?
- Is a national regulatory body needed for fire risk assessment, similar to that in place for the gas safety industry?

### ***Recommendations for action***

- An ask that new guidance is produced by national government, the LGA and London Councils on key areas of learning from the Grenfell fire.
- It is noted that an independent peer challenge of London's regional resilience procedures has been commissioned by London Councils, on behalf of London local government.

## Appendix 1

### Map of Grenfell Tower Local Area

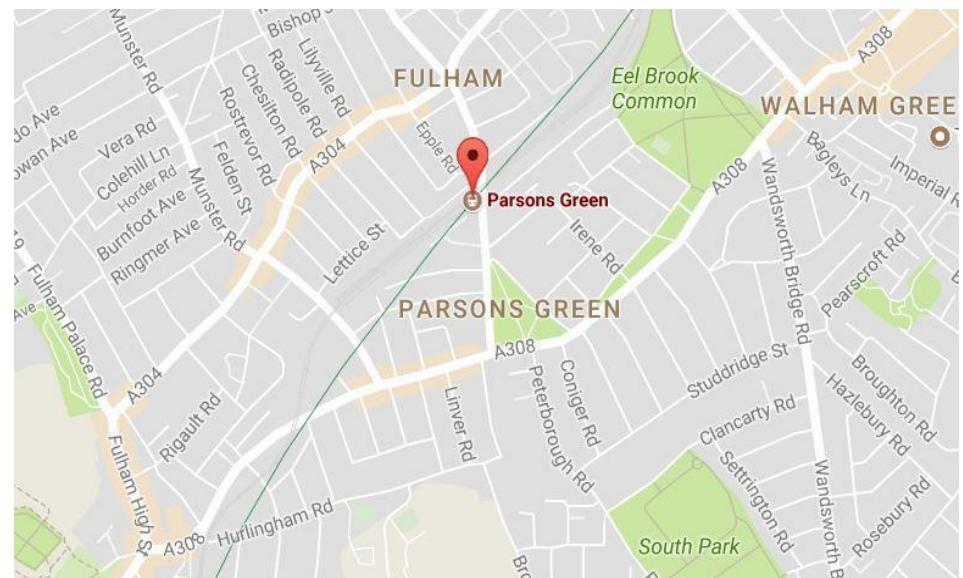
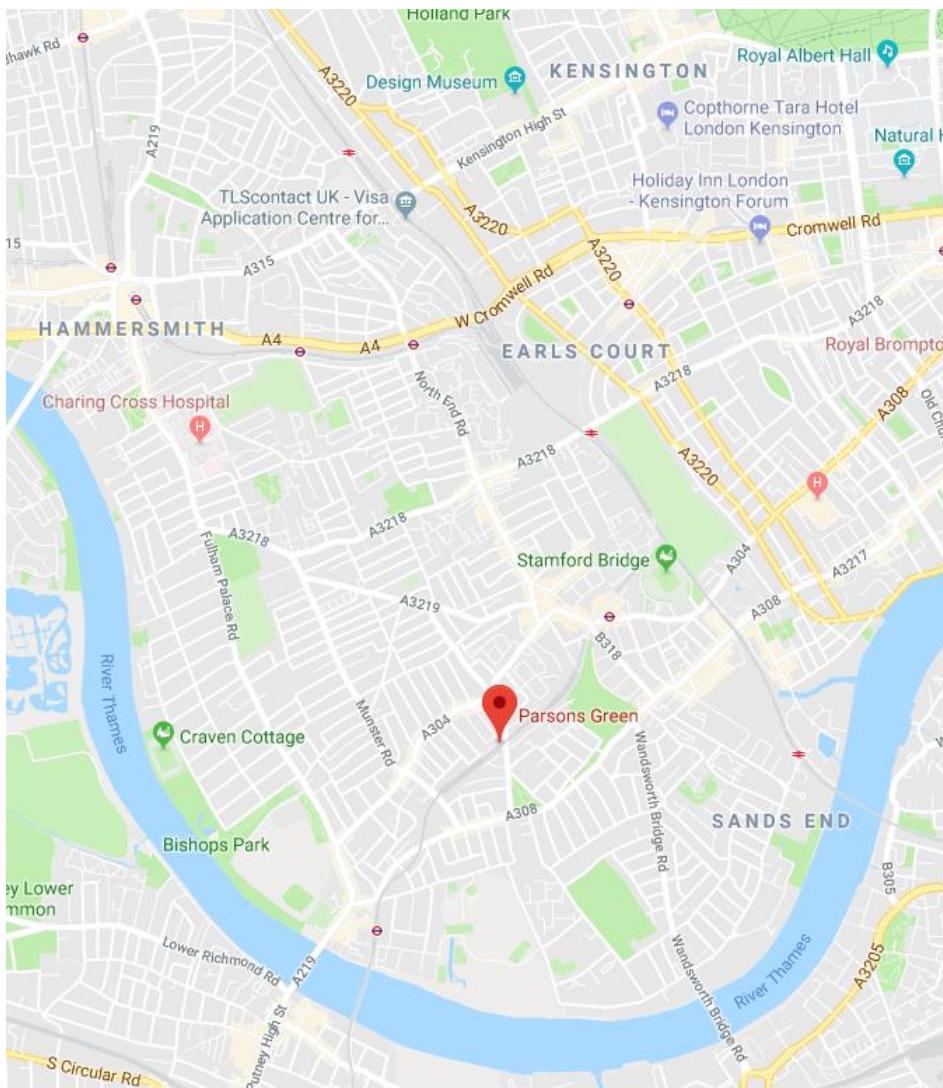
#### Shepherds Bush and North Kensington



#### Location of Grenfell Tower



## Map of Parsons Green local area



## Appendix 2

### EMERGENCY PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

Our emergency planning should aim, where possible, to prevent emergencies occurring, and when they do occur good planning should reduce, control or mitigate the effects of the emergency. It is a systematic and ongoing process which should evolve as lessons are learnt and circumstances change.

Organisations should aim to maintain plans which cover 3 different areas:

- **Plans for preventing an emergency**

In some circumstances there will be a short period before an emergency occurs when it might be avoided by prompt or decisive action

- **Plans for reducing, controlling, or mitigating the effects of an emergency**

The main bulk of planning should consider how to minimise the effects of an emergency, starting with the impact of the event and looking at remedial actions that can be taken to reduce effects. The evacuation of people may be a direct intervention which can mitigate the effects of some emergencies. Recovery plans should also be developed to reduce the effects of the emergency and ensure long term recovery.

- **Plans for taking other action in connection with an emergency**

Emergency planning should also look beyond the immediate response and long-term recovery issues and look also at secondary impacts. For example, the wave of reaction to an emergency can be quite overwhelming in terms of media attention and public response. Plans may need to consider how to handle this increased interest.

Emergency plans should include procedures when to activate the plan in response to an emergency. This should include identifying an appropriately trained person who will take the decision, in consultation with others, on when an emergency has occurred.

#### **Exercising plans and training staff**

Organisations should test the effectiveness of their emergency plans by carrying out exercises, and should ensure that those involved in the planning for or response to an emergency receive appropriate training.

Organisations should also ensure their plans give due consideration to the welfare of their own personnel.

## **Voluntary sector**

Where appropriate, organisations should consider whether voluntary organisations may have capabilities which could assist in responding to an emergency.

The voluntary sector can provide a wide range of skills and services in responding to an emergency. These can include: practical support (such as first aid, transportation, or provisions for responders); psycho-social support such as counselling and helplines; equipment; and information services.

## **Appendix 3**

### **Service Resilience Group:**

Chief Executive

Lead Director of Regeneration, Planning and Housing Services

Lead Director Environmental Services (Director for Environmental Health)

Director of Housing Options

Director of Delivery and Value

Director of Adult Social Care

Director of Childrens Services

Director for Property Services

Director for Finance and Resources

Head of Emergency Services

Strategic Head of Communications

Head of Environmental Health (Residential)

Strategic Head of Development, Regeneration and Economic Growth