

Housing Service

Harlow Council
Civic Centre
The Water Gardens
Harlow
Essex CM20 1WG
www.harlow.gov.uk

Date: 20 June 2017

Dear residents,

Fire safety measures in tower blocks

Following the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower last week (14 June 2017) Harlow Council is contacting all residents in its tower blocks to reassure you about the fire safety measures it takes.

The Council was shocked and saddened by this awful tragedy and its thoughts are very much with those whose families have been affected. This tragic event is likely to concern tower block residents so I want to provide reassurance at this time on the measures the Council has in place for its 14 tower blocks across the town:

- Out of the 14 high-rise tower blocks only Brenthall Towers have had cladding fitted to them in the late 1990s. This stone-based cladding is made out of solid, non-combustible materials with the system and materials used complying with building regulations. This cladding is not the same design or type used on Grenfell Tower.
- Fire safety risk assessments are completed every two years in line with legislation. Outcomes from these assessments are prioritised and included in the Council's annual programme of works.
- All tower blocks have fire detection equipment installed within them and have appropriate fire signage on every floor.
- All flats are designed with at least 30 minutes' resistance from fire or smoke, which means if a fire breaks out elsewhere in the building you would be safe in your home for at least half an hour.
- Weekly and monthly management inspections of tower blocks are carried out with actions recorded and dealt with as a priority. This includes removing any flammable materials stored in communal stairwells and areas, such as dumped rubbish, as well as checking evacuation arrangements and the position of signage. There are no outstanding actions from any recent inspections.
- Each tower block has a fire safety action plan. These are published on the Council's website with guidance posted on noticeboards in communal areas. A copy of these plans is given to all new tenants and leaseholders.
- Two tower blocks (Netteswell and Pennymead) have fire alarms which are tested regularly. The installation of fire alarms in all tower blocks has not been identified as a requirement from fire risk assessments. Smoke detectors, however, are fitted within

every Council home and serviced annually. In some cases homes also have heat detectors as well as smoke detectors. Please test your smoke detectors regularly. If they are not working please telephone the Repairs Centre on **01279 446666** so a repair can be arranged.

- Communal doors and internal doors to flats are fire resistant and these are renewed as required following fire risk assessments.
- Emergency lighting and lighting conductors within tower blocks are part of the Council's regular inspection programme and are compliant and certificated.

Harlow Council feels reassured that, from a fire perspective, its tower blocks meet fire safety requirements, are maintained and are regularly inspected. Essex Fire & Rescue Service is continuing to assist the Council with its review of fire safety to ensure that Harlow residents remain safe. If necessary the Council will make adjustments to its fire safety arrangements. The Council will also be following the public inquiry and full investigation into the Grenfell Tower fire very carefully and it will respond to any recommendations to changes to the building and fire regulations.

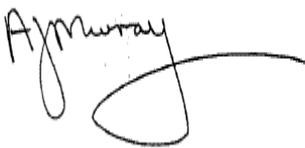
Attached to this letter is specific safety advice from Essex Fire & Rescue Service for people living in high rise accommodation. This can also be read online at:

www.essex-fire.gov.uk/news/Safety_advice_for_high-rise_residents

Essex Fire & Rescue Service is also reminding everyone that they carry out home fire safety visits to anyone living in Essex completely free of charge, where they will run through escape plans and fit smoke alarms, if required. To book a visit call 0300 303 0088 or book online at: **www.essex-fire.gov.uk/book**

I hope that you are able to take some reassurance from this letter, but fully understand that you may still have some concerns or queries. If so, please don't hesitate to contact the Council on **01279 446655**.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Murray', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Andrew Murray

Head of Housing

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Advice from Essex Fire & Rescue Service

It is important for your own safety to understand what to do in the event of a fire, whether it's in your flat or somewhere else in the building.

Most high-rise blocks of flats have a "stay put" policy in the event of a fire. You should have been provided with this information when you moved in, however you can also find out your building's policy direct with the management company/council which owns the building.

If there is a fire in your flat:

- Follow your escape plan: get everyone out, stay out, call 999.
- Close all doors behind you as you leave, to contain the fire.
- If safe to do so, activate the fire alarm if there is one.
- Walk down the nearest stairs or through the nearest fire exit. DO NOT use the lift.

If there is a fire, but not in your flat:

- Close your doors and windows.
- Stay put unless advised by the fire service.
- Call the fire service on 999 – NEVER assume that someone else has already done so – you could save someone's life.

If trapped in your flat by fire:

- Get everyone to the safest room within the flat, furthest from the smoke/heat entry point is best.
- Call the fire service on 999 – and tell us your flat and floor number.

If the fire service needs to fully evacuate the building they will knock door to door.

Protect your home

- Fit at least one smoke alarm in your flat.
- Test your smoke alarm once a month.
- Never take the batteries out.
- Always follow the manufacturer's advice.

Be prepared

- Keep all exits clear both communal corridors and in your home.
- Keep door and window keys near the exit.
- Prepare a grab bag that you can take if you need to be evacuated. Think about prescriptions, documents such as your driving licence and passport, spare keys, a mobile phone, charger and a torch.
- Get to know your neighbours. Are they young, elderly or vulnerable? They may need assistance in an emergency