

23 November 2009

Emerging findings from the Camberwell Fire

Summary

The Government's Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, Sir Ken Knight, will address the Committee on his emerging findings from the fatal fire at Lakanal House, Camberwell on 3 July 2009.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the presentation and identify any action they would like the LGA to take.

Action

As determined by members.

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Emerging findings from the Camberwell Fire

Background

1. The fire on 3 July 2009 at Lakanal House, Camberwell in the London Borough of Southwark was a tragic event. The fire resulted in the loss of six lives, 15 residents and a firefighter were injured and London Fire Brigade were required to assist a further 40 residents to safety. Along with loss of life and injuries, over 90 families had to leave their homes.
2. On 6 July, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, John Denham MP, requested that the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, Sir Ken Knight, undertake an immediate review of circumstances surrounding the fire to provide an independent overview of the investigations relating to the fire and to report back on emerging findings urgently within four weeks. The terms of reference for the review did not extend to the operational performance of London Fire Brigade nor look at wider issues, such as contingency planning.
3. The review worked in close liaison with the respective investigations to identify some early areas for consideration. However, the full investigation, leading to a Coroner's Inquest may take many months to complete and is likely to identify further issues. It is also important that the review should not prejudice the formal investigation process and we can not comment on any individual aspect of the police investigation. The police are being assisted in their enquiries by the Health and Safety Executive who can provide expertise in relation to health and safety matters, and the London Fire Brigade and London and Fire Emergency Planning Authority in relation to the cause and spread of the fire.
4. The report (attached at Appendix 1) was published in August and identified emerging issues in the following areas:
 - Investigations
 - Advice to occupants
 - Internal and external fire spread
 - Passive fire protection
 - Active fire protection
 - Operational guidance
 - Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005
 - Decent Homes programme.
5. The London Borough of Southwark has issued regular bulletins on its website. The October bulletin identified that:
 - the police investigation is ongoing and a coroner has been appointed to oversee the inquests in to the six fatalities

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- the police have confirmed that the initial results of their investigation have shown that the cause of the fire was an electrical fault in a portable TV set in a room on the ninth floor
 - all eligible Lakanal tenants have accepted an offer to move from emergency accommodation in to a new home
 - seventy one (out of 89) bulk removals of Lakanal residents' possessions have been completed
 - a book of condolences, donation collection and a memorial event have been organised
 - the council is making fire risk assessments on similar blocks available to the public
 - the council has published the full enforcement notice, and the council's response, to the notice that relates to Perronet House.
6. The LGA is keen to make sure that councils and fire authorities are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities for fire safety in people's homes. Councils have a dual responsibility in relation to fire safety in residential accommodation, both as providers of accommodation and enforcers of fire safety legislation in the private rented sector. Fire authorities also enforce fire safety legislation in residential accommodation and have a duty to promote fire safety in their area. We will be publishing an information leaflet for members before Christmas so that they can be confident their authority is doing all it can to comply with the law, enforce the law and safeguard people in their own homes. We will also be talking to councils about what further assistance, if any, they may require from the LGA Group.

Financial Implications

7. None identified

Implications for Wales

8. We will bring any lessons to be learned to the attention of the WLGA.

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