

COUNCIL MEETING – 3 FEBRUARY 2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – End our cladding scandal

Council notes:

1. The Government's inadequate response to the Grenfell tragedy has failed to address the legitimate health & safety concerns of occupiers in blocks of flats causing genuine stress and risking residents' mental health. Many owners, in buildings of all heights, have been left in limbo, unable to remortgage/mortgage, buy or sell (without an EWS1 form) and understandably concerned about the cost of remedial work.
2. Despite the Government's focus on blocks of flats above 18m, the Richmond House fire in Sutton demonstrates the need for residential developments below this height to be covered by legislation relating to fire safety risks.
3. The Government has largely adopted a 'hands-off' approach, insisting that making properties safe is the responsibility of building owners and failing to hold developers to account.

Council commends Merton officers for undertaking an audit of all residential blocks in Merton above 18m.

Council requests that Cabinet:

1. Signs up to the End our Cladding Scandal Campaign, which makes the following 10 demands:

- The government must lead an urgent national effort to remove all dangerous cladding from buildings by June 2022.
- The Building Safety Fund must cover all buildings, regardless of height, and a range of internal and external fire safety defects, not just cladding.
- The government should provide the money up front and then seek to recover it from any responsible parties or via a temporary levy on development.
- Social housing providers must have full and equal access to the fund.
- The government must compel building owners or managers to be honest with residents about fire safety defects.
- The government should cover the cost of interim safety measures.
- The government should act as an insurer of last resort and underwrite insurance where premiums have soared.
- A fairer, faster process is needed to replace the EWS form and funding is necessary to ensure all buildings requiring a form are surveyed within 12 months.

- Mental health support must be offered to affected residents.
 - Protecting residents from historic and future costs must be a key commitment of new building safety legislation.
2. Request officers to include low rise blocks of flats under 18m in their audit.
 3. Publish the audit to establish the scale of cladding issues in Merton, and report back to Cabinet and full Council.
 4. Create an online 'hub' for residents, tenants and long leaseholders in both the private and social housing sectors to access relevant support to deal with issues including financial problems and mental health concerns, as well other useful relevant information (eg support concerning rogue landlords, ASB etc

Councillor Paul Kohler Councillor Hina Bokhari Councillor Anthony Fairclough