

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State
Department for Levelling-Up, Housing &
Communities
2 Marsham Street
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Councillor Barry Rawlings
Leader of the Council
London Borough of Barnet
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Date: 5 March 2024
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Dear Secretary of State

Fire safety: support for people in timber framed and timber/UPVC clad homes

Following a fire last summer in a council owned property which spread rapidly across the terrace due to the way the properties had been constructed, Barnet Council commissioned an independent investigation to assess if there were any similar properties in the borough with the same potential fire safety issues.

The investigation has identified 153 council owned homes, 7 leasehold homes and 426 freehold properties which were sold by the council under the Right to Buy Scheme and are believed to be of similar construction to the homes affected by the fire.

The timber-clad and UPVC-clad homes were constructed during the 1930s to 1960s, and will have met building regulations at the time, but along with the timber frame of these buildings and fire stop issues, they no longer meet more stringent post-Grenfell building standards.

Together, these now constitute a Category 1 hazard as defined by the Housing Act 2004, which the council is legally required to take action on. A report on this is going to Cabinet on 12 March but is now in the public domain. [Agenda for Cabinet on Tuesday 12th March, 2024, 7.00 pm \(modern.gov.co.uk\)](#)

It is expected that the works to address the fire safety issues will cost up to £23,000 per property. The council will fully fund the works to the council owned homes and has set aside a budget of £3.6million in the HRA for this.

To help support the freeholders and leaseholders, Barnet Council has also allocated a budget of £13m to fund the upfront costs and will be putting in place a loan and repayment plan to help those homeowners who commission us to undertake the work, to manage the cost. We are offering to undertake the works for these homeowners as part of our council homes programme to help make things easier and ensure the works are completed to the required standard. However, they can, of course, choose their own contractor.

Although we are aware of this issue in high-medium rise blocks, as far as we know, this will be the first cladding replacement programme to low rise properties in the UK.

The council hand-delivered letters yesterday to all affected residents and is providing fire safety advice and other support through the duration of the process including advising all affected

residents without a smoke detector to install one, which Barnet Council will provide at no cost. More information is available on our web pages, including detailed FAQs aimed at affected residents: [Fire safety for timber-framed homes | Barnet Council](#)

Barnet Council has also been liaising with the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities, the London Fire Brigade, the Regulator of Social Housing, the GLA and the wider local government and housing sector to raise awareness of the issue.

Needless to say, aside from the news that these properties have fire safety issues which must be resolved, large and unexpected bills for the remediation works will be a worry for the freeholders and leaseholders – many of whom may not be able to afford the repayment costs.

The council is doing all it can to help but is limited in what financial assistance it can provide.

We are keen to work with both national and regional government to see what further support might be available to help the homeowners caught-up in this and would welcome a meeting with you to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Barry Rawlings
Leader of the Council



Councillor Ross Houston
Deputy Leader of the Council, and Cabinet Member for Homes & Regeneration



Councillor Dan Thomas
Leader of the Opposition, and the Barnet Conservative Group



Councillor Richard Cornelius
Shadow Cabinet Member for Homes & Regeneration