

Resident feedback on item 4: Fire safety in tower blocks for Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee) - Thursday 27 July 2017

4. Fire safety in tower blocks (Pages 3 - 4)

The Council's Tenant Involvement Team has requested feedback from tower block residents to inform the Panel's item on fire safety in tower blocks and the Council's response to the Grenfell disaster.

Two residents of Windrush Tower have provided written feedback (included here) and two tenants of Evenlode Tower have agreed to attend the Panel meeting to provide verbal feedback.

This page is intentionally left blank

To: Housing Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

Date: 27 July 2017

Title: Resident feedback on fire safety in tower blocks

Anthony Callinan (Windrush Tower)

I feel unsettled living in the tower block now but was not happy prior to this. Due to the amount of drugs being smoked on stairwells and in flats with the smell lingering on landings and in lifts. Gangs of kids getting into tower and running around, making noises and smoking and urinating on stairwells and lifts. Since the incident with Grenfell it's got worse due to my 8 year old daughter not feeling safe and not wanting to stay at home, wanting to stay with a relative as gets scarred every time the fire brigade turns, hearing other people talking about it, being broadcasted on the news and getting talked about at school which unfair and frightening for young children who live in a tower block.

The council have tried their best to convince us but think they rely too much on the fact that we have sprinklers. As not satisfied that they will save lives. As I'm not satisfied that if there was a fire in my property that the sprinkler system would work as it is external from the ceiling in plastic casing and the water pipe is plastic as well which would burn quicker than metal piping. I also feel that the council are fobbing and passing the buck to blame other people, for example all the letters we have received and the question and answer paper all contradict themselves. There was no council representative present whilst this matter was occurring not even our own housing officer did not attend any meetings, was not even present at the flats when Fortem bosses and fire service attended and were around the flats to reassure residents. Feel it should have been the council's place as a landlord to reassure and talk to their tenants rather than Fortem and the fire service as they are instructed and can only work with what wish Oxford City Council want them to do. In my opinion the council have done the refurb to make it look decent from the outside but has ruined inside of tenants properties and leaving the tenant out of pocket as got to make their property liveable. And the council mislead us they told us this heating system would be cheaper for us which in fact costs three times more than the old storage heater as the electric companies did a cheaper tariff in flats. If the cladding had not failed we would of not got to express our views and opinions and faults that need to be addressed as we have already on numerous occasions brought this to Oxford City Council and Fortem attention about the fire alarms being too quiet when they were installed and fell on deaf ears. We would not have known about tenants involvement meetings or half of the council staff that we have come into contact with i.e. Kieron Keeble who has remained in contact with us chasing and answering our questions and keeping us informed. Staying true to his word.

Samantha Hutchinson (Windrush Tower)

After the tragic fire in Grenfell Tower as you can imagine it did make me nervous about living in my building. I would have liked/ preferred a housing officer to do a door to door to speak to is individually, whilst I appreciate the amount of time and addresses there are in both blocks I feel it would have reassured us all a lot more than what we got which was a few letters stating that our cladding was safe then 15 minutes after the Oxford Mail published the story online about the cladding failing tests we had a letter pushed through our letter box, which made me personally feel we only received the letter due to press release. A meeting was held but many of us residents could not attend due to work or child care commitments which I don't think helped.

We received a copy of the minutes and on the minutes it stated that the cladding would start to be removed within two weeks which has not been the case at all.

We have not received any other updates from the council in reference to the cladding and yet again the Oxford Mail has published yesterday (19/07/2017) that the cladding even though it's failed the tests may/will not be removed!

This has not only disgruntled myself but it's made me feel like I've been let down by not being updated. I appreciate the standards have been better than most refurbishments but there has been a lot of corners cut by the building contractors and I do not have faith in their work or reporting any faults as they're not followed through, while I understand this is not directly to do with your meeting but I feel it needs addressed also.

To put it bluntly I feel the letters are contradicting each other and I feel I have been given information to try and ease any worries instead of what I wanted the truth and facts. I hope this statement helps shed light on my situation and I apologise that I cannot attend but I'm a single parent with a toddler who will be getting ready for bed before your meeting finishes.