

Belsize Bulletin

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Chalcots Towers Update

Earlier this month, people across London were devastated by the horrific fire at Grenfell, which led to the tragic loss of so many lives. We know that urgent questions are now being asked all across the country, about the safety of tower blocks and cladding.

In Camden, we were shocked to hear that the contractor and supplier that put the cladding on the Chalcots tower blocks were the same ones who did the works at Grenfell. Hundreds of residents contacted us, because they wanted to know that their building was safe, that fire safety measures were in place, and that inspections were being done of all of Camden's fire safety equipment. Claire-Louise, Leila and Jonny called a public meeting last week, so that these questions could be answered.

None of us were really prepared last Thursday morning to hear that the outer layer of cladding on the Chalcots was flammable and had failed fire safety tests! It was shocking news and we were pleased that Camden decided to take action right away to replace these panels. We were also pleased that they committed to providing fire blankets and fire marshals for every block 24/7, until the works were completed.

It was even more of a shock, when we were told last Friday night that four of the towers - **Dorney, Bray, Burnham** and **Taplow** - had to be evacuated, due to further safety concerns highlighted by the London Fire Brigade (LFB) during their inspections on Friday. LFB told Camden that there was nothing else that could be done, as the measures that ensure that a tower block can be compartmentalized in the event of a fire were not in place. That meant that nearly 3000 residents had to be told to leave their homes right away and Camden had to find them alternative accommodation. **Blashford** has not been evacuated as it has a different design to the other four blocks and does not have all of the same issues.

Your Belsize councillors have worked through the day and night over the weekend and have spent long hours this week on the Chalcots estate, to support local residents and to help them to get the information they needed. We have continued to work at the emergency rest centre, reassuring residents and helping to book accommodation. Many of Camden's officers and staff from other London councils heard about the news on TV and came straight to the emergency rest centre to work as volunteers, because they wanted to help our residents.

The contractors are now working 24 hours a day to get the work complete, so families can move back into their homes. They are installing door closure mechanisms, replacing all doors with fireproof doors, and making sure that fire stopping is in place between floors.

Claire-Louise, Leila and Jonny will be asking questions at the Full Council meeting on Monday. They want to know how it is possible that flammable panels were attached to the building as part of the PFI works completed in 2009, why fire safety on the Chalcots Estate was not up to standard, and how we can be sure that our other buildings in Camden are safe. These are important questions and need to be answered, as the human and financial cost of this breach cannot be ignored.

It's been a challenging time in Belsize, but please feel reassured that your ward councillors are here for you. Please do get in touch if we can help, or if you'd like to help neighbours who have been evacuated.

Local issues, Local action, Local Conservatives



Fire engines on patrol



Cladding being added to the towers in 2008



Claire-Louise supporting evacuees at the emergency rest centre



Working through the night on Friday



Leila Roy helping residents to find hotels



Claire-Louise, Jonny & Leila will report back