

Newham, Barking & Dagenham Liberal Democrats



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Open Letter to Mayor of Newham

15th June 2017

Dear Sir Robin Wales,

I am sure, that along with ourselves and the people of Newham, you send heartfelt condolences to the families and loved ones of those who died or are effected by the Grenfell Tower Block fire in Kensington on Monday night.

Newham, Barking & Dagenham Liberal Democrats along with many residents here in Newham are concerned that such a tragedy could happen here and that the Council has taken proper steps to protect the safety of its residents. To this end we need confidence via an open review of how Newham Council is managing its housing stock and that controls are in place to prevent such a devastating fire happening in Newham.

Concerns in Kensington have been raised about fire prevent and safety inspections. We want to know:

Which buildings in Newham are of the same construction type, in particular the same cladding that was fitted to the Grenfell Tower?

Which have out of date or long not-inspected fire prevention and alleviation equipment?

Which do not have sprinklers or proper fireproofing between apartments, and fire doors that work?

Which do not have alarms connected to the emergency services?

Which do not have fire-safe stairs?

Which have not had electrics fully tested and approved?

More generally are there any doubts about any other blocks and which blocks have residents raised concerns about?

Concerns in Kensington have been raised about the management of the housing and here in Newham we want to know:

Which blocks have been given, sold, lent or leased to private companies?

How were these companies chosen and what connections do or did they have with councillors and council officers?

With what financial arrangements were these blocks handed over?

Who is responsible for capital works, maintenance and problem solving and how are each type of works funded and regulated and by whom?

Concerns in Kensington have been raised about refurbishments and here in Newham we want to know:

What refurbishments and other significant works have been undertaken since 2009 in the blocks, and how were the contractors and subcontractors chosen, what financial arrangements were put in place and what connections do and did these contractors have with councillors and/or council officers?

Have audits of the finances involved in all blocks potentially at risk been published? Which ones do not have recent audits of finances?

These are the questions Newham should answer in order to provide confidence in both safety and the prudent use of public resources on behalf of the taxpaying public. Grenfell follows other tower block fires and in particular the Lakanal House fire in 2009 after which the coroner conclusion was a review of fire regulations. Has the council published its review?

Due to the serious life and death nature of the subject matter and the other fatal cases of fire and substandard work, we hope Newham Council will respond in an open and honest way to re-assure the people of Newham how safe are our homes.

Yours sincerely,

Newham, Barking and Dagenham Liberal Democrats

