

Answers to Written Questions submitted to the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Committee – 26th November, 2020

Q.1	On page 23 of the cladding report the council say they took action to Hanover 'after the Lakanal house tragedy' that took place in 2009. However It was revealed in 2019 that internal cladding (trespa) panels were used on Hanover tower block's stair well all the way up the building . Sadly these were installed after the Lakanal house fire and were unsafe and Hanover has only 1 stair well. Does this council accept that the material they used on Hanover's stair well in 2011/12 was chemically identical to a material that was the main cause of the 'Lakanal house tragedy' in 2009 in London that killed 6 people?
A.1	The Council specified that a fire retardant product should be fitted on the staircase that was not the same as the material installed at Lakanal. The contractor did not fit what the council had specified, it fitted an alternative product that did not have fire retardant properties we had asked for. The council investigated this issue when it was raised with us and has held the contractor responsible and SCC been compensated for this. The material has been replaced.
Q.2	On page 23 of the cladding report it is claimed 'the fire breaks 'give one hour protection from smoke and fire this confidence is illustrated by photographs of Hanover as the cladding was being removed (in 2017) showing that the fire breaks were in place'. In reference to this, the supporting Building Regulation review by Joseph Kavanagh into the external cladding, refer on page 9 to the BR135 test that measures the full cladding system. He says Hanover failed this test. Correct. In my research the cladding system would spread up a 3-floor wall in time of '314' seconds. By then the test was terminated 'as flame severely metres beyond the top of the rig'. The government website shows this. Does the council still believe that these original fire breaks gave 1 hour protection to the residents of Hanover?
A.2	The fire breaks observed when the defective cladding was removed were installed as expected. The government tests look at the whole cladding system and the council does not dispute the outcome of the cladding system test.
Q.3	On page 9 of the cladding report it says that 'the investigation was led by Jill Hurst head of housing investment and repairs', therefore this question is not discriminatory. Back in 2017 they claimed 'this investigation is being carried out by officers who were not involve in the original project' With analysis the supporting documentation on the council website clearly reveals that Jill Hurst had far more involvement in the original Hanover project than they claimed previously. In leading this investigation, does this person genuinely believe they have remained impartial?

A.3	<p>Jill Hurst was undertaking a different role during the time that the refurbishment of the block was carried out. Jill was a service manager responsible for Housing's Asset Management Strategy for Council Housing stock and not direct delivery of projects. This included financial reporting of the whole of the Council Housing Investment Programme, investment planning, performance reporting etc. Jill was not directly involved in the execution of the works to the Hanover Block, this was managed by a dedicated Housing Project Manager (for the internal works mainly). The cladding works were directly managed by the Council's Capital Delivery Service (then known as Sheffield Design and Project Management) given its specialist nature and they worked closely with the contractors and the Council's Housing Team. We were therefore satisfied that Jill was independent to the how the works were delivered at that time and the best choice for leading on the investigation.</p>