

**EXTRACT FROM CABINET DECISION SHEET FOR CABINET  
MEETING HELD ON 12 MARCH 2012 - PUBLISHED ON 20  
MARCH 2012**

**Fire Safety in Flat Blocks (C-067-2011-12)**

**(1)** That the removal of personal belongings and any other items stored in common parts of flats be enforced, with the exception of the following concessions as put forward by the Workplace Fire Safety Officer of the Essex Fire and Rescue Service:

- (a) Pictures hung on the wall, provided that they did not contain glass in the frame;
- (b) Mats placed outside front doors, provided that these were rubber backed (non-slip) and had a chamfered edge all around;
- (c) Curtains at windows, provided that they were flame retardant; and
- (d) Non-flammable items which were aesthetically pleasing (e.g. plant pots), provided that they were stored in recesses away from any means of escape routes, and not on window sills.

**(2)** That carpets in common parts of flat blocks not be allowed and that, after a four-month period of the date of this decision, the removal of carpets where residents had previously loose laid or fitted them and had not removed them voluntarily be enforced by the Council, unless the following conditions were met within the four-month period as advised by the Chief Fire Officer of the Essex County Fire & Rescue Service in his letter to the Council dated 2 February 2012:

- (a) confirmation that all individual flats affected would be fitted with mains operated smoke detectors by the occupiers or the Council within one year of this decision;
- (b) all doors leading onto common areas, including individual flat doors, provide a minimum of 30 minutes fire resistance in accordance with BS 476 and be fitted with a suitable self-closing device by the tenant or leaseholder concerned at their cost;
- (c) no personal belongings or other combustible items be stored by tenants, leaseholders or visitors within the common areas at any time;
- (d) a high standard of general housekeeping be maintained by all tenants and leaseholders at all times;
- (e) an effective main entrance door and security entry system be provided and maintained;
- (f) the carpets:
  - (i) conform to BS 5287;
  - (ii) be professionally fitted in the first instance, with evidence provided to the Council of such professional fitting; and

(iii) be maintained in a good condition at all times; and

(g) an effective building inspection and management system be maintained by the Council.

**(3)** That carpets only be allowed to remain in accordance with (2) above, if all tenants and leaseholders in a block had confirmed to the Council in writing within the four-month period referred to above their agreement to:

(a) wanting the existing carpets to remain;

(b) not holding the Council responsible or liable in the future for any accidents, fires or incidents occurring as a result of the carpets remaining;

(c) ensuring that the conditions in (2) above would be maintained by them at all times; and

(d) in the case of leaseholders, entering into a Deed of Variation with the Council, at the leaseholder's cost, to vary their lease to commit and bind subsequent leaseholders of their properties the conditions referred to in (2) above when the lease is assigned in the future.

**(4)** That further consideration be given to undertaking an enhancement programme of installing mains-powered smoke detectors in all Council-owned properties, as part of the Housing Scrutiny Panel's deliberation of the proposed list of housing improvements and service enhancements, funded from the additional resources made available under HRA Self-Financing.

**(5)** That smoke alarms not be installed in common parts of flat blocks in line with the recommendations within the Local Government Group Guidance document "Fire safety in purpose built flat blocks".

**(6)** That a joint working approach to fire safety risk assessments in flat blocks with Harlow District Council be further explored by the Director of Housing and reported back to a future meeting of the Cabinet.