



HOUSING & COMMUNITY

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Report for:	Housing & Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Title of report:	Building Safety Update
Date:	15 January 2025
Report on behalf of:	Councillor Simy Dhyani, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Part:	I
If Part II, reason:	N/A
Appendices:	None
Background papers:	Building Safety Policy
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	BSA – Building Safety Act PAP – Principle Accountable Person SLT – Senior Leadership Team HRB – High-Risk Building BSR – Building Safety Regulator FED – Flat Entry Door BRSMB – Building and Resident Safety Management Board FRA – Fire Risk Assessment

Report Author / Responsible Officer

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Corporate Priorities	A clean, safe and enjoyable environment Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery
Wards affected	All Borough wards
Purpose of the report:	To provide an update on our response to satisfy requirements introduced by the Building Safety Act 2022
Recommendation (s) to the decision maker (s):	None arising from this report
Period for post policy/project review:	Annual update or more regularly if required

1 Background

To comply with the statutory requirements introduced by the Building Safety Act (BSA) 2022, Dacorum Borough Council (DBC) has made changes to its organisational structure. These changes ensure clear accountability, alignment of resources, and robust governance for building safety compliance.

The Act formalised the roles of Principal Accountable Persons (PAPs) and Accountable Persons (APs), which carry specific legal liabilities for building safety. While DBC already had individuals in similar positions, the formalisation of these roles has strengthened accountability and clarified responsibilities across all levels of the organisation.

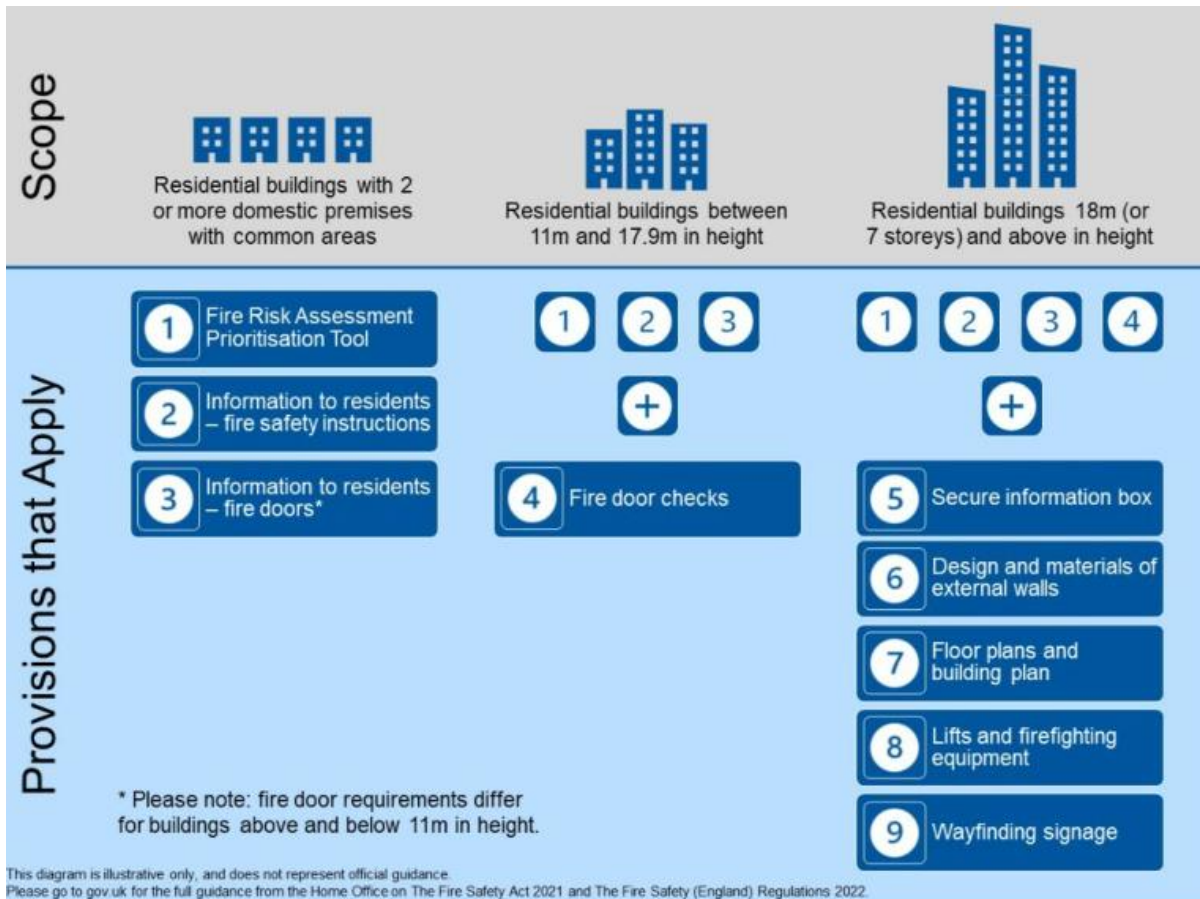
Key changes include:

- **Strategic Oversight:** The Council Leader has been designated as the PAP, with operational responsibilities delegated to the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) to ensure alignment with statutory requirements.
- **Operational Leadership:** The Head of Safe Homes leads compliance efforts, oversees policy implementation, and ensures effective reporting to senior management.
- **Day-to-Day Management:** The Safe Homes Team Manager, Safe Homes Surveyor and Compliance Officers are responsible for operational tasks, including inspections, data management, and maintaining the golden thread of information.

These changes have enhanced DBC's capacity to manage building safety effectively, ensuring legal responsibilities are met and operational processes are streamlined. Further details on roles and responsibilities are outlined in Section 7 – Roles & Responsibilities of the Building Safety Policy.

2 Building Safety Act Requirements

As a social housing landlord responsible for High-Risk Buildings (HRB's) the BSA introduced new requirements for DBC in 2022. The key parts of the legislation can be followed through the diagram below, produced by the National Fire Chiefs and Council:



The key changes to how DBC manage HRB's are as follows:

1. **Property Registration** - All buildings over 18m in height and containing at least two residential units must be registered with the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) before October 2023
2. **Building Safety Cases** - When called in, DBC must supply the BSR with a Building Safety Case Report within 28 days of notification to achieve a Building Assessment Certificate. The Building Safety Case must be supported by additional information, such as a resident engagement strategy and fire strategy
3. **Door Inspections** - For buildings over 11m DBC must carry out annual checks of flat entrance doors and quarterly checks of communal fire doors. These checks must be completed by a competent person
4. **Gateway 2** - When undertaking significant or material works at a HRB, DBC must notify the BSR and request approval through the Gateway 2 process. Gateway 2 is a stop/go point and building control approval must be obtained from the Building Safety Regulator before relevant building work starts

3 DBC's Response to the Building Safety Act

Property Registration

Ahead of the October 2023 submission deadline, DBC undertook a comprehensive review to identify blocks of flats that met the 18m threshold. This involved physical site visits to confirm building heights. The review identified five buildings exceeding 18m in height, all of which were registered with the BSR before the deadline. This proactive approach ensured full compliance with statutory requirements.

Building Safety Cases

DBC has prioritised the development of comprehensive Building Safety Cases for all HRBs. Key actions include:

- **Document Organisation:** Dedicated folders were created for each in-scope building to store safety case reports, resident engagement strategies, and mandatory occurrence reporting information.
- **Resident Engagement:** Engagement events were held in October and November 2023 to inform residents about building safety initiatives and gather their input. Bespoke engagement strategies were distributed to all residents in HRBs.
- **Enhancing Engagement:** Resident feedback has been instrumental in shaping safety practices. For example, residents raised concerns about fire door access policies, leading to a review and improved communication around inspection schedules.
- **Ongoing Involvement:** Plans are underway to further improve resident involvement through regular updates, feedback mechanisms, and targeted communication strategies tailored to different resident demographics. Although the statutory requirements have been met, we see opportunities to enhance building safety-specific resident engagement strategies.

To achieve this, we are currently working with TPAS, an industry leader in resident engagement, to develop building-specific resident engagement strategy toolkits. These toolkits aim to empower residents, encourage open dialogue, and ensure that safety measures are understood, supported, and actively embraced by the communities they are designed to protect. This approach goes beyond compliance, focusing on creating partnerships with residents to promote trust, transparency, and a shared commitment to building safety.

As part of this process, we will be hosting four discovery sessions in December 2024, gathering valuable insights to shape the toolkits which are planned to be finalised and ready for implementation by February 2025.

- **Consultant Support:** In 2024, DBC appointed the Oakleaf Group as a dedicated HRB fire safety consultant. Their role includes:
 - Conducting a gap analysis to identify compliance gaps.
 - Commissioning additional surveys and inspections, including new fire strategies, Type 4 Fire Risk Assessments, and PAS9980 external wall assessments.
 - Ensuring that building safety cases remain fit for purpose and align with evolving regulatory requirements.

Door Inspections

DBC inspects fire doors in 15 buildings: five over 18m and ten over 11m. To support this, the Propeller software system was introduced for real-time tracking and reporting, thus streamlining compliance. A Safe Homes Team member was trained as a surveyor to ensure inspections are conducted by a competent professional.

Currently, DBC has achieved a 94% success rate for flat entry door (FED) inspections and 100% for communal doors, reflecting the effectiveness of the system and processes in place. A dedicated operative has been instrumental in assisting with access, helping to overcome challenges such as resident resistance and logistical barriers. Improved communication, flexible scheduling, and route optimisation further support these efforts.

Gateway 2

We understand our responsibility to engage the BSR through Gateway 2 when undertaking work to our buildings over 18m. We currently work with specialist consultants who can satisfy the Building Safety Principal Designer role and will submit applications when required.

4 Building and Resident Safety Management Board

The Building and Resident Safety Management Board (BRSMB) was established in 2022 and has representation from across the council as well as external partners such as Herts Fire and Rescue Service. The board is chaired by the Assistant Director of Property and meets every two months, although the frequency can be increased when required.

The board has Terms of Reference and focuses on current pressures whilst undertaking horizon scanning to ensure future requirements are managed accordingly. Some key areas of activity are:

- Review key initiatives, such as the Building Safety Implementation Plan
- Evaluate ongoing compliance performance and address areas of concern
- Scrutinise and challenge performance to ensure DBC fulfils its statutory obligations
- Provide informed recommendations in the council's best interest

At every meeting a Composite Report is presented that captures key activity in the preceding period. This is a collaborative report that mainly focuses on our social housing stock and Private Rented Sector responsibilities and is designed to provide the board with reassurance that we are meeting our statutory duties.

5 Internal Governance

To ensure compliance with the statutory responsibilities introduced by the BSA, DBC has significantly strengthened its governance framework through the introduction of the BRSMB. This approach focuses on creating robust oversight mechanisms, enhancing transparency, and leveraging technology to support data-driven decision-making. This board subsequently reports into the Corporate Health and Safety board for enhanced oversight.

Senior Leadership Oversight

Complementing the BRSMB, the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) receives a monthly Assurance Report, offering additional scrutiny of compliance performance. This report, which has evolved from the former Compliance Report, now includes expanded areas such as:

- Damp and mould management.
- EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) performance.
- Stock condition surveys.
- Traditional statutory compliance areas, including fire safety, gas safety, and electrical testing.

The Assurance Report enables the SLT to:

- Make informed decisions to prioritise building safety.
- Monitor progress across multiple compliance areas with consolidated data.

Data-Driven Compliance Management

DBC has invested in advanced technology systems to enhance data accuracy, reduce manual intervention, and ensure real-time tracking of compliance activities. These systems provide transparent and concise reports that are accessible to all officers and senior managers. Key systems include:

Software Solution	Functionality
MRI Servicing	The servicing module tracks the performance of statutory compliance areas. This includes gas safety and electrical testing for domestic dwellings and blocks of flats. The migration of data for active fire equipment and lifting equipment has commenced and should be in place in 2025
Geometra	A system procured to accurately monitor and manage Fire Risk Assessments (FRA's). All Housing owned blocks of flats are risk assessed periodically, and this system allows us to manage the FRA programme as well as the resulting actions
Propeller	A specialist system that our door inspection regime is managed through. All doors in buildings over 11m have been tagged and are inspected in line with the BSA requirements. Propeller can evidence and demonstrate how this requirement is being met
Risk Flag	This system has been designed to produce real-time building safety cases. The uploading of all relevant data and documents is ongoing and supplemented by the work the Oakleaf Group (our dedicated fire safety consultant) are completing at our HRB's

These integrated systems ensure that all compliance reports are supported by real-time data and detailed documentation, offering transparency and efficiency.

Integrated Governance and Technology

By combining governance enhancements with compliance driven software, DBC has created a streamlined, transparent, and accountable approach to building safety management. The BRSMB, working alongside the SLT, ensures that compliance activities are carefully monitored and continuously improved. This framework positions DBC to effectively manage the increased legal and operational responsibilities introduced by the BSA, while providing reassurance to residents, stakeholders, and regulatory bodies.

6 Financial

Investments and Future Planning

The introduction of the BSA has required DBC to make significant investments in staffing, systems, and processes to ensure compliance. These include:

- **Staffing:** Creation of new roles, including the Safe Homes Manager, Safe Homes Support Officer, and Safe Homes Surveyor, to manage compliance activities and inspections effectively.
- **Technology:** Adoption of the following systems:
 - Propeller: For tracking and reporting fire door inspections.
 - Risk Flag: For real-time Building Safety Cases.
 - MRI Asset Management: For tracking compliance data across gas, electrical, and fire safety.
- **Surveys and Assessments:** Commissioning Type 4 Fire Risk Assessments, PAS9980 External Wall Assessments, and updated fire strategies.

The focus on the golden thread of data has been critical, ensuring all building safety information is accurate and accessible. Moving forward, evolving requirements may necessitate:

- Expanding compliance processes to include all buildings over 11m.
- Scaling up staffing, systems, and surveys to accommodate additional properties.
- Enhancing resident engagement strategies through toolkits currently under development with TPAS.

We have laid the foundation for these changes but anticipated considerable resources will be needed if the height threshold for a HRB, currently set at 18m, is reduced.

7 Next Steps

As part of our ongoing commitment to building safety, our key initiatives and areas of focus for the coming year include the Planned Works Programme for HRBs, development of a Communications Planner alongside enhanced CX Feedback utilisation, the 'Who's Behind the Door 2.0' initiative, completion of Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessments (PCFRAs), improvements to Safety Management Systems, and the recruitment of an additional Safe Homes Surveyor.

Initiative	Timeline	Priority
Recruitment of Safe Homes Surveyor	Q1 2025	High
Completion of PCFRA	Q2 2025	High
Implementation of Safety Management Systems	Q3 2025	Medium
Pelham Court Fire Safety Upgrades	Q2 2025	High
Fennycroft Road & Kylna Court Door replacement	Q2 2025	High

Planned Works Programme for High-Risk Buildings (HRBs)

- **Gade Tower:** All required fire safety and compliance work have been completed.
- **Fennycroft Road:** Substantial refurbishment has been undertaken, including fire doors and compartmentation upgrades throughout. Additional work to address minor issues is planned for the coming year.
- **Pelham Court:** Substantial fire safety upgrade works are scheduled for the new financial year for both blocks. These include:
 - Fire stopping and compartmentation upgrades.
 - Installation of enhanced ventilation within the stairwells.
 - Fire Doors throughout both blocks, both Flat Entry Doors and Communal doors.
- **Kylna Court:** A new building, but not without issues. Decking upgrade works were completed in the summer of 2024. In 2025, all internal flat entry doors will need replacement to meet fire safety requirements.

Communications Planner and CX Feedback

- Comprehensive Communications Planner:
 - DBC is collaborating with Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and Aaron Services to create a communications planner capturing all seasonal events and providing timely updates on fire safety and compliance matters.
 - Communications will reflect a multi-agency approach, ensuring clarity and consistency.
- CX Feedback System:

- Recently implemented, this system allows DBC to target communications to specific groups, locations, or blocks.
- It measures engagement levels, enabling tailored and dynamic communication strategies.
- The system is key to improving resident engagement and ensuring that communications are impactful and relevant to each community's unique needs.

Who's Behind the Door 2.0

- This initiative aims to gather accurate data on who is living in DBC's blocks, addressing gaps in resident information.
- A legal requirement exists to conduct PCFRAs for residents with additional needs. However, the lack of comprehensive resident data currently hinders this process.
- Initial steps have been taken in collaboration with the SQA Team, but a cross-departmental approach will be required moving forward to:
 - Ensure resident data is accurate and up to date.
 - Support compliance with PCFRA requirements.
 - Inform strategic decisions and compliance efforts based on a true understanding of DBC's resident population.

Safety Management Systems

- The BSR emphasised the importance of including Safety Management Systems in building safety cases.
- Currently, while individual procedures exist, there is no centralised or dedicated system in place.
- A cross-departmental effort is required to:
 - Consolidate all existing procedures into a single coherent system.
 - Conduct a gap analysis to identify and address deficiencies.
 - Ensure statutory requirements for safety management and mandatory occurrence procedures are met.

Recruitment of a Safe Homes Surveyor

To support the growing demands of building safety compliance, DBC plans to recruit an additional Safe Homes Surveyor. This role will:

- Enhance inspection capacity.
- Support ongoing compliance efforts.
- Ensure that all statutory requirements are met efficiently and effectively.

These initiatives are critical to ensuring DBC continues to meet and exceed its statutory obligations while fostering trust and transparency with residents. By addressing these key areas, we aim to enhance building safety, improve resident engagement, and deliver a comprehensive and sustainable compliance strategy.