



Date 22 December 2023

Update following Barton House residents' meeting on 18 December

Dear residents

Thank you again to everyone who attended the residents' meeting on Monday. We are grateful to everyone who shared their experiences and asked questions during the meeting. Much of the information available to respond to these questions has been published on our website along with details of the arrangements in place to support you over Christmas. I recognise however that amongst the many questions and pieces of feedback received on Monday, there were some key points raised which I'd like to address today.

We continue to listen to you and want to hear the feedback you have. Contact details are available towards the end of this letter should you need to raise anything with us. Where we need to make any changes or put in place specific support, we will do so using your feedback to guide us. Likewise, where we need to make a change to support in place, we will always tell you first. We hope to have new information about the work needed on Barton House available for our next meeting with you in January. Between now and then, where we can provide further updates or responses to the questions posed on Monday, we will do so by way of our regular updates or by posting new information to our dedicated Barton House webpage www.bristol.gov.uk/barton-house.

Safety of Barton House

During Monday's meeting, the most common question I and colleagues were asked was whether Barton House is safe. This is an important question and one we sought to address at the meeting, but very worth revisiting in this letter too.

The emerging picture we have of Barton House is one of a high-rise block built as it was designed, with the necessary safety measures in place to protect the structure in case of a fire or similar event. Whilst this gives us confidence that the building's structure is well protected, the initial findings are showing us areas where we can take steps to improve safety throughout the block, and we won't hesitate to do this work if it means improving the protections in place for you.

This picture is informed by investigations carried out in the block over a four-week period which went further and deeper into the building than earlier surveys. We have two companies involved in this work, both experts in their fields, who are providing

the same initial views. This too gives us greater certainty that the building was built as it should've been and we can have confidence in its structural integrity.

We still need to see the contractors' final report to be fully assured of the situation at Barton House and the full list of works needed. Once we have this final report, we intend to share this with you and help you understand the picture we're beginning to see emerge from the building.

Housing

Some of you have already asked what your options are for not returning to Barton House. I understand your concerns and sympathise with the difficult position all residents of Barton House are currently in. I hope that as we can provide more information relating to the safety of Barton House and impending improvement works and share with you the reports we expect to be provided shortly, you will have the confidence to return to your home when it is safe to do so.

Should anyone still feel unable to return when it is safe to do so, I recommend you speak directly to your housing officer to discuss the circumstances.

What I cannot do right now is make any promises about the availability of alternative housing, particularly social housing in the Barton Hill area. The pressure on council housing across the city is as intense as it has ever been and although we are taking many steps to increase the amount of housing available for people who need it, the list of people requiring support is growing quicker than we can add new homes to our stock.

What we can do however is consider your priority banding and reassess your circumstances to ensure any application you make for different accommodation properly reflects your situation at the time.

Reviewing our response

As with every emergency response, we take great care in looking back at the decisions we've made and the actions we've taken to reflect on the approach to the situation. This current response is no exception and we are already going through a process to look back at the response so far to identify how we can continue to take decisions and deliver actions in a way that best meets your needs. This is a process that will continue throughout the current response and beyond, as we seek to learn from every move along the way.

Many of you have asked how you can comment on or input into future decision making relating to your current circumstances. Your feedback is welcome, and I would encourage you to use the contact details at the bottom of this message to share your thoughts. Likewise, I'd recommend you speak to your Housing Officer, a member of our Community Development team or your ward councillors to ensure your feedback is passed on.

Hotel accommodation

I am grateful for those of you who took the time to speak to me and others on Monday to give your feedback on your stay at the Holiday Inn. We remain thankful for the effort of staff at the hotel who we continue to work with to ensure the right

provision is in place to meet your needs. Some specific comments were received, and these are being considered individually by colleagues in our Housing and community Development teams along with staff at the hotel. Where we have your contact details, we will follow up with you should we need more information. Any new information regarding support and provision at the hotel will be [published to our website](#).

Communications: We will continue to provide you with updates by text and email. [Visit the council website for all essential information regarding the situation at Barton House and the support available](#). Please also direct any questions or concerns to us by emailing barton.house@bristol.gov.uk, calling 0800 694 0184 or by speaking to a member of staff.

Please see the accompanying resident letter also issued today that provides updates other issues that were raised in the meeting, including food at the Holiday Inn, activities over the Christmas period, and support for families.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Smith', written in a cursive style.

John Smith
Interim Executive Director, Growth and Regeneration