

Building Safety Panel Meeting 11 March 2026

Homemead Communal Hall, Russell Street, Gravesend, DA12 1HQ.

Attendees

Bal Chattha - Building Safety & Investments Manager (Chair), Nicole Arthur (Head of Housing Assets), Jordan Vilday (Building Safety Coordinator), Tim Cross (Fire Safety Surveyor), Vicky May (Assistant Director of Housing), Gurdeep Ghattaora (Planned and Major Works Manager), Ruby White (Business Administration Apprentice)

Roy Lovett, Graham Claricoats, Joanne Stringer, Grace Rouse, William Henderson, Solomon E. Ahorituwere, Kirsty Baker, Tania Stokes, Phil Pollard, Tony Mace.

The meeting was the first Building Safety Resident Panel, created in response to the Building Safety Act 2022 and learning from the Grenfell Inquiry, with a strong emphasis on resident engagement. Officers introduced themselves and explained their roles in housing, building safety, compliance, and resident liaison.

Purpose of the Panel

- To allow residents to scrutinise, challenge, and advise on building safety matters.
- To ensure communications are clear, accessible, and shaped by residents.
- To feed into the legally required Safety Case for each high-rise building.

Key Discussion Areas

1. Newsletter Feedback

Residents reviewed the new building safety newsletter:

- Strong preference for one newsletter per block, not a generic version.
- Should avoid looking like standard “council post” to prevent it being binned.
- Should include:
 - Photos of their block
 - Clear visuals
 - Less corporate branding
 - Simple, jargon-free language
- Residents value printed copies, but want optional digital versions (website, app, WhatsApp, translated versions).

2. Communication & Engagement

- Importance of offering translations and accessible formats.
- Residents encouraged to use WhatsApp channels and GoVocal for updates.
- Officers acknowledged the need to rebuild trust and improve how messages are delivered.

3. Waste, Bin Chutes & Rubbish Problems

This became the largest discussion topic:

- Bin chutes in several blocks are too small for black sacks, causing blockages and leading to:
 - Rubbish being left in corridors
 - Items thrown over balconies
 - Fire risks
 - Accumulation of waste inside flats for vulnerable residents
- Suggestions included:
 - Issue smaller bin bags
 - Clear signage showing what can/can't go down chutes
 - Support or assisted waste collection for residents unable to carry bags
 - Involving caretakers more directly
 - Behaviour-change campaigns about safety
- Officers agreed this will be a key agenda item next meeting.

4. Rubbish Thrown from Windows

- Raised as a serious safety hazard (objects falling near entrances).
- Officers acknowledged previous campaigns and agreed further action is needed.

5. Lithium Batteries, Scooters & Fire Risk

- Residents raised concerns about e-scooters, e-bikes and mobility vehicles stored or charged indoors.
- Officers will provide videos and clear guidance at the next meeting.
- Noted that lithium battery fires behave like explosions and produce toxic gases.

6. Caretakers & On-Site Support

- Mixed experiences across blocks.
- Some feel workloads are uneven.
- Residents want clearer ways to contact caretakers, possibly through WhatsApp or direct messaging.

7. Building Fire Safety Measures

Residents discussed:

- Fire doors (why some flats have them and others don't)
- Sprinkler systems

- Structural surveys, drilling, and compartmentation surveys
- Why certain upgrades are necessary
Officers explained:
- New regulations only apply to new buildings, but the council voluntarily exceeds requirements in several areas.
- Explaining *why* things are done is crucial.
- Will explain where budgets are spent and level of spend regarding Building Safety at next meet meeting

8. CCTV & Security

- Concerns raised about:
 - Non-working entrance doors
 - Gaps in CCTV coverage
 - Anti-social behaviour
- Officers committed to:
 - Bringing CCTV proposals to the panel before installation
 - Reviewing door security issues
 - Discussing footage retention (currently 28 days)

9. Future Agenda Items

Residents requested discussions on:

- Scooters/lithium batteries
- Waste management & assisted collections
- CCTV locations
- Budgets
- Door security
- Balcony fire safety
- Security/pigeon deterrents
- Block-specific issues

10. Meeting Frequency & Locations

- Residents want more frequent meetings at first, possibly bi-monthly, then moving to quarterly.
- Meeting venues will rotate to improve accessibility.

Actions Agreed:

- Newsletter to be created personalised to each higher risk block
- Newsletter to contain block specific photos, clear visuals and less corporate branding.
- Transparency surrounding building safety budgets and spends.
- Signage for bin chute rooms to be created and agreed with the panel
- Create a communal group (WhatsApp) for panel members to receive updates and notices
- Mandy James (Caretaker manager) to attend next meeting
- Waste management team member to attend next meeting
- Agree course of action for waste collection for blocks of flats with residents
- Explore waste options (smaller bin bags)