



## **Fire Risk Assessment Contracts, frequently asked questions.**

**February 2024**

Below is a set of frequently asked questions and answers to provide you with further information on the proposed contracts for:

Contract 1: Fireproofing and Compartmentation Programme

Contract 2: Communal Fire Door Programme

### **Why have I received this Section 20 notice?**

The London Borough of Lambeth is seeking to enter into two long-term contracts for the provision of communal fire doors, and fireproofing and compartmentation works.

You have received a S20 notice because you are a leaseholder, and you may incur future service charges in respect of the costs of services this contract will provide which Lambeth will seek to recover. As a result, you have the right to be consulted.

Please do take the time to watch a short (5 minute) film which explains what a Section 20 notice is and what this means for you: [bit.ly/S20Film](https://bit.ly/S20Film).

### **How long will the contract last?**

The contracts will be 3 years with the option to extend for a further 2 years.

### **Will these contracts affect me?**

These contracts will only affect you if your building has a fire risk assessment advising works are required in the years 2024/25 – 2028/29. If that is the case, we will write to you again sending you another Section 20 notice. The notice will give you a description of the works and explain why they are needed. The notice will also advise you of your estimated contribution.

In order to carry out these works, we firstly need a contractor, and that is why we are writing to you now, to let you know Lambeth is starting the process of entering into two new contracts.

### **Can I opt out of receiving these contracts?**

No. As your landlord, the council has a duty to manage fire risks within its estates, blocks, and individual properties under the fire safety reform order of 2005. This consultation does, however, give you the opportunity to share your Observations on the proposed contract award, and also suggest a nomination for one contract.

## **Why does Lambeth need these contracts?**

Lambeth are responsible for commissioning fire risk assessments to be carried out on all its buildings which have a shared communal area. Subsequently there is a legal obligation on the landlord (Lambeth) to address any deficiencies deriving from fire risk assessments in a timely manner.

## **Can I nominate a supplier?**

*Communal Fire Door Programme:* No. Under the consultation regulations and due to the value of the contract, you do not have the opportunity to propose the name of a person or company from whom we should try to obtain services.

*Fireproofing and Compartmentation Programme:* Yes.

## **Why is the council looking to undertake these works now?**

It is a long and established principle that the design and construction of high-rise buildings enables the occupants adjacent to the immediate fire area to be able to make their way to a place of safety, while other occupants can remain safely within their homes. However, this principle does require that a satisfactory level of compartmentation is installed and maintained.

Fire safety provision will have been incorporated into a building when it was designed and built, but with an older building, standards may have become more demanding. There may have been changes in a building's layout or the nature and number of occupants may warrant a re-examination of the fire safety systems.

## **Will the works cause any disruption to residents?**

Presently, the notice sent to you is to consult on the proposed contracts only, and not on any specific works to your building. If in the years 2024/25 – 2028/29, your building does have a fire risk assessment advising works are required then planned works will not cause any major disruption to residents and should be completed within 4-6 weeks.

Only after further consultation (as mentioned above), residents will be notified of the exact dates nearer to the commencement of any works. Works will be completed on a floor-by-floor basis, and we will ensure to provide access to the stairwell at all times.

## **What is the purpose of these works?**

Internal fire door sets are one of the most important features of a fire protection strategy and are fundamental to the building's compartmentation. They have an integral function to protect escape routes from the effects of fire so that occupants

can reach the means of escape and enable the Fire & Rescue Service to carry out their operational duties within compartmented areas.

### **What could be the possible consequences of not installing the fire door sets?**

As a compartmented area forms part of a firefighting area, damaged or inadequate compartmentation could hinder or affect the fire service response.

### **What is the current 'benchmark' standard for fire-resistant doors and partitions?**

A stairwell area is a protected shaft – the compartmentation required will be 60 to 120 minutes dependent on the partition type. It needs to perform to the recognised standard BS 476 pt 22 1987 or EN1634-1 in a fire test where they are typically exposed to live fire on one face at temperatures approaching 950°C while the temperature and the passage of smoke on the unexposed face is closely monitored for 60 minutes.

### **What is a communal fire door?**

A communal fire door is an internal door that needs to be kept closed in order to stop the spread of fire between different areas of a building. It is designed to create a firm seal when closed and is intended to resist the spread of fire and toxic gases. In multiple occupancy buildings, fire doors are required to be fitted on the entrance to each individual dwelling, often leading into a communal hallway.

### **What is fireproofing?**

Fireproofing is the use of fire-resistant materials in a building to prevent structural collapse and allow safe egress of occupants in case of fire. The fire-resistant ratings of various materials and constructions are established by laboratory tests and usually specified in terms of the hours a material or assembly can be expected to withstand exposure to fire.

### **What is compartmentation works?**

Compartmentation is a type of passive fire protection. It works by dividing your building into fire-resistant compartments, which delay the spread of smoke, flames, and toxic fumes long enough for occupants to evacuate, and emergency services to respond.

### **How will I be charged for these contracts?**

This is a borough wide consultation on the contract only, and you will not be charged for this consultation process, or for entering into a contract.

If your property, building and/or estate does not benefit from any of the works mentioned within the duration of the contracts **then you will not be charged.**

If your building has a fire risk assessment advising works are required in the years 2024/25 – 2028/29 then we will write to you again sending you another Section 20 notice. The notice will advise you of the specific works required and why – along with

an estimated cost as per the schedule of rates. When the consultation process has been completed fully, and any Observation answered with due regard, then works will commence. If you are eligible to be charged, you will be sent an invoice.

**Are there any grants available to assist residents with these fire risk assessment costs?**

Further information on support on the Cost of Living, Money and Debt can be found on the council's [website](#).

**My estate is managed by a Tenant/Resident Management Organisation (TMO/RMO). Do these contracts apply to me?**

This notice is a borough-wide consultation sent to all homeowners from whom Lambeth may seek to recover costs of these contracts.

You may receive some or all these services directly by your TMO or RMO, this depends on the Management Agreement in place between the council and your TMO/RMO.

If all the services within these contracts are currently delivered by your TMO/RMO there is no intention of imposing these services over the current arrangement. Once any proposed new contract(s) go live, you will continue to receive your services via your TMO/RMO as you do now.

In the future event the TMO/RMO wishes to outsource a service, or already does outsource the workstream to Lambeth, then these contracts will be in place for this eventuality.

**How will the council ensure costs are kept to a minimum and best value for money is achieved?**

The council will adopt straightforward pricing arrangements that are auditable and offer transparency to service charge payers. The council has built a contract scrutiny and cost management team to assess payment applications and apply a governance structure across all contracts.

**How will you ensure the contracts are robustly managed?**

The council recognises the need for strong contract management and has expanded a contract scrutiny and cost management team to assess payment applications and apply a governance structure across all contracts. The council is confident this team and governance structure, together with embedding a performance management framework and financially linked KPIs, will allow it robustly to manage the intended long-term contracts.

**How does the procurement of new service contracts affect the services I currently receive?**

There will be no impact to the services you are currently receiving.

## **How can I find out if there is a risk assessment for my building?**

Contact the Fire Safety Team. Email: [HMfiresafety@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:HMfiresafety@lambeth.gov.uk)

## **Why can't Lambeth carry out these works in-house?**

It will take time, expertise, and skill to build up a complete in-house team that can cater for the fire risk assessment works of 30,000+ properties within Lambeth's housing stock. The intended contracts will allow Lambeth to self-deliver a wider range of works whilst ensuring we have contractors available for any works do not fall within our in-house team's current capacity.

## **What are the next steps?**

The next step is to consult with you about our intention to procure the two contracts. Once the Observation period is closed and all observations have been responded to with due regard, Lambeth will proceed with the tender exercise.

When the tender exercise is complete and a proposed winning 'bidder' for each contract is selected, you will receive a further Section 20 notice detailing why Lambeth would like to enter into a contract with this 'bidder'. You will also be able to view online a schedule of rates for each contract from its relevant winning 'bidder.'

## **There is an error with the address this notice has been sent to, who do I contact?**

To inform Lambeth of any error with the address this notice has been sent to please contact Homeownership Service as soon as possible.

- Phone: 020 7926 1116
- Email: [HMHomeownership@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:HMHomeownership@lambeth.gov.uk)
- Address: London Borough of Lambeth, Homeownership & Rents, PO Box 80771, London, SW2 9QQ

## **I would like to discuss my service charge account, who do I contact?**

- Phone: 020 7926 1116
- Email: [HMHomeownership@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:HMHomeownership@lambeth.gov.uk)
- Address: London Borough of Lambeth, Homeownership & Rents, PO Box 80771, London, SW2 9QQ

## **I would like to discuss this set of frequently asked questions or the S20 notice, who do I contact?**

Please contact the S20 Consultation Team (Major Works) on:

- Phone: 020 7926 6521
- Email: [S20Consultation@lambeth.gov.uk](mailto:S20Consultation@lambeth.gov.uk)

- Address: London Borough of Lambeth, S20 Consultation (Major Works), PO Box 80771, London, SW2 9QQ