

Topic

Commemoration

Incident / Exercise

Camberwell Fire (Lakanal), 3 July 2009

Background and Context

At around 4pm on the 3 July 2009, a fire broke out in Lakanal, a 14 storey residential building on the Sceaux gardens estate in Camberwell, in the London Borough of Southwark. It took six hours to get the fire under control by which time, tragically, there had been six fatalities.

The fire was attended by 18 fire engines including a special unit and around 100 fire fighters. Early findings from the police investigation suggest the cause of the fire was an electrical fault in a portable TV set in a bedroom on the ninth floor.

More than 20 people including one fireman were admitted to hospital for smoke inhalation and minor injuries. Around 150 people were evacuated or rescued from the flats. More than 250 residents comprising 100+ households were left homeless on that evening.

As of January 2010, all residents have either been re-housed or have made their own arrangements for new accommodation. Lakanal has remained under the control of the police to varying extents since the fire. The pursuant and on going coroner's investigation has required that the site be preserved in its present post-fire state until further notice. To date, access to the site remains strictly controlled (September 2010).

How the Topic was Handled

On Saturday 3 July 2010, the St Giles Church in Camberwell hosted a memorial event attended by the families of the people who died, local residents and community members, emergency services, the Mayor of Southwark, Southwark council employees and Harriet Harman MP among others.

The two hour memorial service was lead by the Reverend Nick George of St Giles church but with contributions from other faith leaders such as Father Mechelone of St James, a Catholic church in Peckham. Prayers were said, hymns sung and candles were lit for the deceased.

There was a large media presence, both national and local. BBC London radio did a live broadcast into their breakfast show. BBC London TV recorded interviews before the service, filmed some of the service (as agreed before hand), and broadcast the package at midday and 6pm. ITV London also recorded interviews before and after the service. The local press, Southwark News and South London Press were there also.

A number of attendees said that the service was 'moving' and 'appropriate to the occasion.'

Contacts for Further Information

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