

RESTRICTED

Witness: Simon Jolly

Statement No: 2

Date Statement Made: 21 February 2020

THE GRENFELL TOWER PUBLIC INQUIRY

Witness: **SIMON JOLLY**

I, Simon Jolly, a male, date of birth [REDACTED] currently of [REDACTED] Barandon Walk, London, W11 1WH, will say as follows:

1. I make this statement as a Core Participant to assist the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry into the fire (GTI) in relation to the issues it is addressing as part of Phase 2. This statement will focus on fire safety measures before the fire and on my experience of the immediate aftermath.
2. I live at [REDACTED] Barandon Walk with my wife Zohra, my daughter [REDACTED] and my stepdaughter [REDACTED].
3. This is my second statement to the Inquiry. My first statement is dated 6 December 2018 {IWS00001216}. I have also made three statements to the Metropolitan Police Service ('MPS'), dated 4 August 2017, 13 April 2018 and 30 April 2018.
4. This evidence contained within this statement is within my own knowledge unless otherwise stated. Where any statement is based on matters of information or belief I will state the relevant source. I understand that this statement will form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and will be published on the Inquiry's website.

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

1

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

Fire safety systems

5. I know that Walkway residents were unhappy that the flat doors were not systematically checked and replaced as needed. People would say that their flat doors had not been changed since the 1990s, if not before. As far as I can remember, there was never a plan in place nor proposed by the authorities to review and replace doors for people's homes.
6. I took it upon myself to replace the doors inside our home between 2009 and 2011. We initially had the original internal doors which were poor quality. I think they were about 25 years' old. They began to rub against their frame and would not close properly. I was saying to the TMO that they needed rehanging but that it would probably be better to replace them altogether. I did not get any constructive response. So, when we did an upgrade of our whole flat, I replaced them myself as it was clear that the TMO did not intend to arrange for this. Since the fire, RBKC have replaced the main middle internal door, so that you can isolate one part of the flat from the other in the event of a fire.
7. Since the fire, the council has replaced our front door three times. Our front door was really heavy duty but was broken by police when Barandon Walk was evacuated. That was replaced with a temporary door. They then put in a real fire door, but the air vents under the door were too large, so from mid-November 2019, they are replacing all the doors and door frames. So my door now has a self-closing device and strip.
8. Before the fire, there was some signage about what to do in the event of a fire in the Walkways, but it was faded and often in inappropriate places where it could go unnoticed. I do not think the signs would have been readable to people with poor eyesight. They were only ever in English. The signs should have been more user-friendly and more prominently placed.
9. In terms of emergency lighting before the fire, I remember this being largely effective except for the stairwell between Grenfell and Barandon Walk. Residents would complain that the stairwell was dark and unsecured. People would congregate there and sometimes sleep there; some people used it as a place to dump rubbish. This posed a potential security issue and a fire hazard. I think this was an estate-wide problem.

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

2

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

10. The TMO would arrange for someone to come round to the flats every three years to replace the fire alarms. We would receive something through the door notifying us that someone would be coming round to check the alarms on a certain date and if we were not in at that time, the visit would be rearranged. These communications were always written in English; I know I never saw anything in another language. I expect lots of people might have missed these messages or just not got round to responding and I am not aware of any system the TMO had in place to manage that.

Fire safety checks and inspections

11. As far as I can say, Walkway homes had gas and electrics checks on a yearly basis, more or less. I think we would get a card through the door and then would need to call up to arrange a time.

Fire safety advice

12. In the 15 years or so I lived there, I do not remember there being any direct communications to residents from any of the relevant authorities about fire safety, for example, what to do in the event of a fire.
13. There were various small fires on the estate over the years. These were never acknowledged by the TMO or the council. After those fires, we never received any information about what had happened, how it was resolved and what could and would be done to prevent future fires. As a result, I do not have any knowledge of whether any fire safety measures were ever reviewed or improved in light of each incident. If anything was ever changed or ramped up as a result, it was never to a level which was noticeable to me or which involved any consultation with Walkway residents.
14. My wife and I receive most of our personal communications by email. This meant we perhaps have less incoming post than others. It is therefore relatively easy for us to keep track of what we do receive and to notice what is from the council (or previously the TMO), as all of their communications came by post. I am conscious that, given the amount of junk mail which people can get these days, for some people it would be much harder to keep up-to-date with post. If someone had difficulty reading English, or with reading generally, I am not aware of any other way in which this information was reliably made available to them.

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

3

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

15. The TMO would send email updates to residents about the works they were undertaking, but these were never particularly informative. RBKC would send housing updates too – these seemed to be sent at random.
16. No one in my family has or had any specific needs which could have affected their ability to self-evacuate. We do however have elderly neighbours who live upstairs. As far as I am aware, no special measures were in place for them.

Fire safety complaints

17. During the refurbishment completion period and in the six months before the fire, I was really concerned about fire hazards and access points. Rubbish would regularly be dumped in communal areas and left to pile up. This was in part because the rubbish collections were badly timed – people would tend to generate most of their rubbish at weekends and it would then not be collected until days later. In the past, the large bins were set alight during the night. Some people would not follow parking restrictions and so cars would be parked where they should not be. The TMO did not take any enforcement action to address these issues.
18. Before the redevelopment of the area, if you parked illegally on Grenfell Road you would be clamped within five minutes, because the TMO office was on that side. After the redevelopment, the office was moved to the other side of the Tower where it is today, just off Lancaster Road. As a result, people began to park illegally but no enforcement action was taken so it became a problem for the local residents. This was made worse by large bins being put there as well, and people began dumping large unwanted items like fridges. This caused access problems and was a health hazard as the dumping of rubbish attracted vermin. I have historical photographs of this problem which I have sent to the Metropolitan Police's Grenfell Tower investigation team.
19. On the night of the fire, I observed how the firefighters' efforts were hampered by cars being left where they should not have been. I witnessed firefighters moving cars in order to get the access they needed, and I did what I could to help them work around the cars which were left there.

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

20. The building of Kensington Academy also restricted access. I feel that RBKC and the TMO ignored us and never took us seriously when we complained or pointed out the problems with their ideas. For example, when we asked for a police presence in order to deter drug dealers, violence and vandalism to garage doors, we got it, but only for 48 hours. Once it was withdrawn, the problems returned.
21. We also asked for the CCTV on the Estate to be upgraded and expanded which was also ignored. We asked for this for four years. Whenever someone reported an incident on the estate, it was apparently not possible to play back the CCTV footage to check or report the allegations made. It was certainly never used in relation to any reports I made and there was also no log kept of incidents which were reported.
22. The TMO in particular were very slow in making repairs and we had window shutters within the finger blocks that were broken for eight and a half months, and a burst gas pipe which had been fixed with bandages. I have pictures of this method of repair and have sent it to the police's Grenfell Tower investigation team.
23. As I walked my dog on the estate, I would see problems with the management and maintenance of the estate all the time and would discuss it with my neighbours. I would regularly raise these problems with the TMO housing officers in passing, but I did not make any written complaints.
24. I know that not all of these complaints are directly relevant to fire safety, but I mention them here because they illustrate a general lack of care for the estate and for the concerns of its residents from those in positions of authority.
25. Some of the staff in the TMO office on the estate live on the estate themselves, so it was in their interests to make sure that certain fundamental things got done. A couple of the people in the office have worked there for years. I know them as Paul and Steve. I have always had the impression that the TMO office staff are keen to help residents but are restricted in what they can do in practice by people further up the chain of command. In my view, the guys that worked on the estate took pride in what they did but I am not sure they had much power to act on complaints which people raised with them. It seemed they would often pass on our concerns but these would then get knocked back.

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

5

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

26. Because of the fire, residents now have a better idea about what fire safety measures are required. Changes have been made, but at a very slow rate. There is still frustration among lots of residents at the apparent lack of urgency on the parts of the TMO and the council to get things done.

Aftermath

27. As Walkway residents, my family were very lucky in that we were able to escape from our home in good time and we did not go to hospital on the night of the fire. We were not allowed to return to our home, but we were able to stay with friends in the days which followed. At that time, I was unemployed. My professional background was in Operations, managing large teams on high profile projects, often for big corporations. I am used to working remotely and under significant pressure. My roles have meant that, when faced with a problem, my focus is necessarily on what I can do to get the job done. As a result, in the immediate aftermath, I was in a position to play an active role in supporting people who had more immediate needs than I did.

28. The Rugby Portobello Club was intended to support Tower residents specifically and so I cannot comment personally what they offered. Other centres tried to support other residents from the estate. St Clements had an open door policy and was a huge source of help to the community more widely. Both centres helped people to get access to emergency housing and to health and well-being services, playing a massive part in the community's recovery.

29. I could not comment on the extent to which St Clements and Rugby Portobello were coordinating together, but they had strong links to the community and so I would expect that there was a degree of communication between the two, even if indirectly.

The Westway

30. The Westway Sports Centre was being used as a refuge. I went with my friend Zee so that we could do a bit of an informal audit of how it was being run. It seemed really chaotic as there had been a huge influx of donations on the Friday and Saturday, but there was no apparent structure to process and store it. We were concerned that there were not even basic things like signs or notices, so that people could know where to go for what. It was a free-for-all for anyone who turned up, whilst survivors were being discharged from hospital with nothing. It was clearly

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

6

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

problematic that people were required to show up to make themselves and their needs known in order to receive support, as this automatically meant that those who were most injured, traumatised or isolated were left at a disadvantage when they should have been the priority.

31. We asked who was in charge and were introduced to Keith, who was from Ealing Council. He explained that Ealing Council had only just been brought in to take control over it but that they were working to put systems in place. When we visited again the next day, there was a better sense of order. An emergency plan was also implemented with the Red Cross to provide some security at the Centre and to make sure that donations went to those that most needed them. By the Sunday afternoon, the Centre was completely different – systems were in place and there was a real sense of the community and various services working together.

Central government response

32. On Friday 16 June 2017, I was on the grass outside St Clements talking to various people about how they had been affected and what they needed. One of my neighbours noticed and asked whether I wanted to go to a meeting later that day to discuss the community's needs with some high profile people. I did not think much of it, so went along with my friend Nicholas Burton and found myself in St Clements, behind closed doors, for what I expected to be an off-the-cuff meeting between a small group of residents from the estate, some volunteers and with those who were running the centre. This group was formed organically. These included Bishop Graham, and Claire and Howard who would go on to be involved in Grenfell United.

33. Then the Prime Minister turned up and we had a roundtable conversation with her. We were aware that she had been to the site the previous day to speak with the authorities, but had not spoken with any residents or survivors. We had not been told much about the purpose of the meeting, but we ended up talking quite generally about our understanding of how people were feeling and what needed to be done. St Clements staff also helped by providing some suggestions of what measures might help, from their perspective. We were not able to raise everything we wanted to there and then, but we were also aware that we were not in a position to speak on behalf of everyone. In any case, we were asked to go to No. 10 Downing Street the next day to continue the dialogue.

34. That weekend, I went with the same group to a meeting with various music artists. I cannot now remember how the meeting came about. They offered to put on a concert to raise funds and asked for other suggestions of how they might help support the community. I felt that other

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

7

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

people were better placed to comment, as I was not a resident of the Tower itself. I took a bit of a sideways step at this point and others took the lead. These meetings provided a point around which community efforts became organised.

35. On the Saturday, I went to No. 10 Downing Street with the same group of volunteers and community members who had been present at the meeting with the Prime Minister the day before. It followed on from the meeting the day before, discussing the key areas of need and action which we had seen and heard about in the days since the fire. The atmosphere was quite friendly and personal and I felt able to speak freely. I have remained in contact with people who were involved in actioning issues raised that day, as part of the longer-term effort to support the community.
36. We were aware that some TMO representatives were apparently working on the relief effort but they were not identifiable or made known to the community. We said that the TMO and the council needed to be taken off the recovery programme. They were in a total mess and there was obviously a lot of anger being directed at them by the community affected. In the circumstances, it was obvious to me that their involvement was inappropriate and could not be effective. The Prime Minister seemed to take note of our concerns about this.
37. After those initial meetings that weekend, I started gathering various contact details for the people who had responsibility for resources and support. It was not a conscious effort, but having met them in various meetings, I became a point of contact between service providers and for people I knew and came to know in the community. To those in authority, I would try to suggest solutions to glitches or shortfalls which I observed and in a matter of days, I built quite effective working relationships. This also meant that when I met someone from the community who had a particular need, I would often know who might have the resources and authority to meet that need. Keith from Ealing Council was also really helpful in terms of putting me in touch with people. At some point, I also got the phone number for Amanda Gill, the Housing Needs Manager at the council. I am not sure how I came to have this; it might have been through the staff at St Clements.

Emergency shelter and accommodation

38. I was able to help others with their accommodation needs by working with Amanda Gill – often it would only be a case of calling her and passing on someone's name and contact details, but I do not know what would have happened in these situations if I had not got her number by

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

8

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

chance and if I had not been able to act as a point of reference. There were phone numbers people were to call for support with their accommodation, but there did not seem to be a workable system for dealing with these sorts of enquiries and the response rate was always too slow. I think I ended up having some sort of role in over 40 people's housing cases.

39. At the beginning, people were not given reference numbers, so there was no way for their case to be easily tracked and chased up. From my experience of trying to help various people who needed accommodation, it did not seem that there was a standardised set of questions in place which people were asked in order to gain a full picture of their needs and to make sure individuals were appropriately prioritised.
40. There was no working system in place to find accommodation for people; it was completely chaotic. For people living on the estate but not in the Tower, they were forced to wait for up to four weeks before they were told whether or not they were going to be rehoused.
41. My friend, Nicholas Burton, was accommodated on the 14th floor of a Hilton Hotel, having just escaped from the 19th floor of Grenfell Tower. I contacted Keith from Ealing Council to make him aware of the situation and he agreed that this was unacceptable. That day, Nick was moved to a third floor hotel room elsewhere.

Psychological support

42. I was offered psychological support but to date I have not taken this up as it is not something which I felt I needed. There were support workers on hand at various hotels from about August 2017 and I did speak to them about other people but I did not feel that I wanted to use their services myself at that time. It was quite difficult to be present to support my own family when my phone would be constantly ringing as a result of the de facto role I had taken up in the relief effort. My wife is a hairdresser and she was working the day after the fire which meant that she returned to her normal routine immediately. This seemed to help her and she has not used the services available.
43. My daughter saw a counsellor for one session, but she was deemed to be coping as well as could be expected. She became quite heavily involved in the various activities for the children affected which sprang up in the aftermath like joining the choir and performing with them, which helped to give her focus and support. However, this also meant that her normal routine was significantly disrupted. Although my wife and I worked hard to try and make sure that her life

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/2020

9

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

continued as normal as much as possible, because her school, Kensington Academy, was moved, this in itself was quite a big change and for a period it was quite difficult to manage getting her to and from school from the hotel.

44. In that initial 12 to 14 months, she was kept so busy with all these new events and activities which sprang up in the community after the fire. She is a happy-go-lucky person and so she seemed to do well during that intense time, even though her life had changed so much and her routine was quite disrupted. I have been concerned that, as these activities and initiatives have begun to tail off, the fact of the fire and the adjustment for her has become harder to deal with and perhaps her psychological recovery was actually just delayed.
45. By Monday 19 June 2017, I began to be able to think about my own family's accommodation needs, as we could not stay with friends indefinitely and we had no indication of when we would be able to return to our home. I specifically asked for my family to be accommodated away from the Tower, but we were initially placed in the Travelodge in Park Royal on the A40. I could not stay there, so after two days, we were moved to the Park Plaza in Acton.
46. On 10 November 2017, we moved to temporary accommodation in South Row in North Kensington. It was a brand new building which I sourced myself. We stayed there until late September 2018, when we were finally able to move back to our home on Barandon Walk.

Financial assistance

47. In terms of financial support for myself, I went to the Westway filled in a form about what I needed and presented my ID. I cannot now remember how I knew to go there for this. In my view, the system was really badly managed, in that anyone who showed their proof of address would be given some cash, with no idea of how long it was supposed to last for or what it was intended to cover. I showed my proof of address and was given £500 in cash. I was a bit concerned about how unstructured this process seemed, so asked what I would be able to get the following day and was told they would need to know what I had spent the £500 on first. I was concerned that they had certain rules in place but that these were not being communicated to people, so people would still be unable to manage their finances.
48. I made some very simple suggestions about how the system could be improved in order to provide some clarity, so that people would know in advance what records they were expected to keep, who was entitled to what and what had been provided to whom and, as far as I am aware, these were implemented. I also pointed out that they needed to resolve how this

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

10

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

information would be recorded and where our data would be stored. I think Westminster Council took over the management of the financial support and the system improved.

Food and drink

49. As far as I can recall, there was an endless supply of hot drinks and snacks in the relief centres. In reality, for my part, I was so preoccupied with looking out for my family and my friends and trying to establish some sort of order that eating and drinking fell quite far down my list of priorities. The primary concerns were locating missing people and making sure people had somewhere safe to stay.

Coordination and leadership

50. An incident of this nature and scale had not occurred before and so I would not have expected those working for the authorities to have a precise plan in place for what needed to be done. However, it seemed to me the council had no effective plan in place for what should happen in the event of a major incident in the borough.

51. In my view, the senior department leads within the council should have joined forces with the police immediately and taken control. Instead, on the ground, no one was visibly taking control of or responsibility for coordinating the relief effort. There were so many helpful sites and hubs which volunteers had set up, but they had no means of easily communicating with each other in the immediate aftermath.

52. If there was a plan behind the scenes, there was little evidence of it on site and there was certainly no clear communication of it to the community, so that individuals could know who to report to and where in order to receive any given form of support, for example. For every official, there was about 200 people in need of urgent help. Local authority staff were totally outnumbered by members of the community who were in need. The community had no visibility of who was supposed to be in charge of the relief effort.

53. I can see that there would be difficulties in a borough council resourcing a relief effort of this scale. There should have been a plan in place to coordinate efforts between the local councils which should have kicked into action immediately. Instead, it took 72 hours for another council

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

11

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

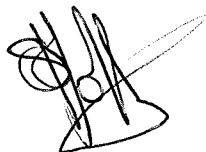
to be drafted in, during which time the relief effort had fallen almost entirely on the shoulders of volunteers, relying on the goodwill of the wider community.

54. No one seemed to have the will or resources to provide immediate structure and order. Part of me wonders whether the Army could have had a role in the first 72 hours, just shifting emergency supplies, clearing the surrounding streets of rubble, and auditing what had been donated so that it could reach those in need urgently. I appreciate that the sight of the Army could have increased tensions at the site. Of course, any response should be conducted sensitively. I only mean that we were in real need of people who were trained in urgent coordinated operations to start the relief effort off on the right track. Instead, the authorities seemed to waste those first few days because no one knew what was going on or who needed what. The Red Cross became involved, but I did not have any direct contact with them until a few weeks later. They were a helpful resource for people to be directed to when they needed signposting about all sorts of support. I remember liaising with them to ensure someone who needed it had the use of a wheelchair.
55. There was no trained, paid workforce until around Sunday, 18 June 2017, when Ealing and Westminster Councils seemed to take control and responsibility for the efforts on the ground.

Adequacy of the response

56. The relief effort would have been smoother had the authorities engaged more with the community and listened to what their priorities were, to tailor their response accordingly. For example, a lot of people were very worried about what might happen to their pets if they were accommodated elsewhere and that no consideration had been given to this by the relevant authorities. It was something which might have seemed insignificant to some, but there was obviously the possibility that for some people their pets were an important source of comfort and familiarity and the only thing which they might have where their homes had been destroyed.
57. I was directly involved in the support of one very vulnerable person who could not return home immediately after the fire and who was refusing to leave the area without their pets. For the council's part, as this was a reason why people felt unable to go into emergency accommodation, it should have been tackled immediately and its solution was relatively simple. I contacted the RSPCA and Battersea Dogs Home and asked to speak to someone in charge. I explained the situation and Battersea Dogs Home then arranged with the council to send

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

12

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

vans down to the St Clements Centre to collect people's pets and keep them safe until more secure accommodation was found. I have since learnt that Battersea Dogs Home had got in touch with the council directly to offer support on 15 June 2017 {RBK00003933}, but I was not aware of this offer at the time and I don't think others were aware of this either. It is disappointing if unsurprising that this was not immediately taken up. For one reason or another, nothing happened until I contacted them.

58. The authorities' response did not take proper account of the fact that everyone within the community, to varying degrees, was traumatised. It did not seem to be informed by input from any medical professionals with relevant expertise – when the authorities were asking the community questions, they were not the right questions. For example, survivors were placed on the upper floors of high-rise hotels. Often they were too traumatised to be able to effectively advocate for themselves.
59. As a result of the lack of coordination between services generally, people did not know which hospital their loved ones had been taken to. When people were discharged from hospital, there were no arrangements in place to immediately take them to suitable accommodation. People were forced to return to the site of Tower in order to obtain the support that they needed.
60. My friend Nicholas Burton was in hospital until 16 June 2017. He found out that his wife, Pily, had been taken to the Royal Free Hospital, discharged himself and I drove him to see her. There was no support in place for him as he left hospital. There was not even anyone at the hospital who was able to give him any information about what he needed to do next, what to expect, how to access any financial support or how he could find accommodation. We shadowed and supported each other for much of following week.
61. Another friend was discharged from hospital about three weeks after the fire, and even at that time, there was no one official available to tell him about what support was in place for him. I explained to him my understanding of what would be available to him and did my best to help him to access it.

Returning home

62. During the first few days, I said to the police that they needed to have two officers on site, so that we were able to re-enter our homes and gather up anything we needed. We grabbed

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

13

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

everything we could. Over time, access to the site became more closely regulated, so it was more a case of quickly going in and out.

63. At no time were we given any warnings about the air quality, the dust which covered our home, or whether there was any risk to us in even just touching our possessions. I am not aware of any environmental evaluation of our flat before we were allowed to return to it.
64. In the period following the fire, whilst I was living in the hotel, I did a lot of estate walks with councillors and Greater London Authority officials. As part of these, I would show people inside my home on Barandon Walk. Whoever had forced access to our flat during the evacuation of the Walkways had left it open and so it had filled with smoke. Every single person who entered my flat commented on the stench; it smelled burnt and toxic. In the end, I paid for it to be completely cleaned. I was reimbursed for this a few months later, via the recovery effort funds.
65. I was told that I could just get things like our mattresses cleaned, but the smell was so unbearable we had to replace everything. We were worried about the toxicity.
66. We wanted to be able to move back into our home, but by the end of the summer of 2018, there were still only a few people who had returned. The council is obviously trying to persuade people to move back and move in and they have been much more accommodating since the fire. For example, our flat underwent four electrical checks in two months, between us agreeing to return home and the move itself.
67. As far as I am aware, there are still about 16 flats which are empty. I think some people have said they are never coming back. Unsurprisingly, it is difficult for people to live there looking directly up at the Tower every day, knowing that it will be a long process to bring it down and rebuild.

This statement, consisting of 14 pages each signed by me, is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed: 

Dated: 21/2/20

SIGNED:



DATED:

21/2/20

14

RESTRICTED