

Independent Grenfell Recovery Taskforce
The Taskforce Initial Report –
31 October 2017

The fire at Grenfell Tower on the night of the 14 June 2017 was a national tragedy. The Taskforce would like to acknowledge and pay their respects to those who lost their lives and to everyone whose lives have been irretrievably changed by the fire at Grenfell Tower. We would like to express our profound thanks to those survivors, community groups and volunteers who have made time to speak to us about their experience, and are grateful for their frankness in discussing the experience of the efforts of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) since the tragedy. We have found it both moving and humbling to see for ourselves the immense dignity of survivors and the wider community who were directly affected.

We would like to pay tribute to the local community who have been supporting survivors and the wider community both in the immediate aftermath of the fire and ever since.

We would also like to pay tribute to everyone, including the emergency services, who responded both on the night of the 14 June and since, and the role played by London's Gold Command.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the first report of the Taskforce. These are our initial recommendations following nine weeks consideration of RBKC's response.

RBKC failed its community on the night of 14 June and in the weeks following. Prior to that we have heard that RBKC was: distant from its residents; highly traditional in its operational behaviours; limited in its understanding of collaborative working and insular, despite cross borough agreements; and with a deficit in its understanding of modern public service delivery.

Following a significant change of senior leadership, RBKC is working hard to develop and deliver effective support and services to survivors and the wider community. It is doing this while undergoing a fundamental change in the way it delivers its functions and its organisational culture and allocating considerable resources. We hope these recommendations will improve the success of the recovery programme.

INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

There are four themes that are common to all the recommendations of the Taskforce:-

- **More Pace:** the pace of delivery needs to be increased.
- **Greater empathy and emotional intelligence:** these attributes need to be put at the heart of RBKC recovery plans. On too many occasions we have received accounts from survivors and the wider community of poor treatment.
- **Skills:** all Officers and Councillors need training in how to work with a community that has been traumatised.
- **Greater Innovation:** RBKC should be bolder than it has been in its response.

Set out below are a number of detailed **recommendations**. Most of these fall to the council, but some to Government and the community. For each we have given an indication of timescales by which we think they should be addressed.

Governance and delivery		Suggested timescale
1.	Council Members: The brief for the review of governance commissioned from the Centre for Public Scrutiny should be extended beyond a review of structures and processes to include what good looks like in relation to the behaviours and performance in role of Members. This should be done with a view to incorporating this into the induction for new Members, post local election in May 2018.	May 2018
2.	Focus on delivery: The scale of the challenge is significant. To date the pace of delivery of many services has been poor - pace needs to be added as a matter of urgency. We recommend the Chief Executive further bolsters the capacity and capability at the most senior level to add pace to operational delivery. If this requires additional resource, then that should be allocated.	Immediate
3.	Oversight and accountability: Central government oversight was and remains necessary. However, the frequency and intensity is having an impact on the ability of RBKC to deliver on the ground. We suggest the weekly Ministerial Recovery Groups (MRG), chaired by the Communities Secretary, should be reduced in frequency.	Immediate
Housing		
4.	Rehousing: The pace of permanent rehousing (for Category A&B) residents must be accelerated with clear realistic targets for delivery.	Strategy and targets agreed immediately
5.	Housing Management: The future management and ownership of RBKC's housing stock should not be pre-determined. There are many ways that management of the housing stock can be delivered and all of them should be considered. A detailed consultation with residents will also be required.	June 2018
6.	Lancaster West Estate: A plan to be adopted in consultation with local residents for the comprehensive improvement of the estate. This is to include future plans for the site of the Tower.	June 2018
Community engagement		
7.	Care for Grenfell: Ensuring there are sufficient people focussing on improving the support to survivors and the wider community must be addressed immediately. Consideration should be given to innovative ways that will increase capacity quickly, for example looking at re-prioritising work across RBKC that could free up resource to bolster the immediate support.	December 2017
8.	Prioritisation: Many actions have been suggested and agreed that could make an immediate difference on the ground. However, in	November 2017

	too many cases these have not been delivered. Ensuring these are delivered will begin to engender trust in RBKC's ability to deliver. Actions for immediate focus that have been promised must be logged and delivery ensured.	
9.	Community Engagement: All policy development and service delivery across the council should have community engagement considerations and impact embedded at their heart, just like the approach to Equality Impact Analysis. The council needs to do a detailed mapping of its community so that it can better understand it.	December 2017
Cross-cutting		
10.	Working holistically: RBKC needs to bring together all information on victims and survivor needs into a central knowledge and data management system, ensuring that there is rapid transfer and sharing with all front-line staff and service delivery partners, with real-time management of accuracy.	November 2017
11.	Personalised Key Workers: RBKC need to provide designated key workers as the 'single point of contact' for victims and survivors, who can then represent them, take responsibility and are empowered to follow up action from across the council and support agencies. Systems need to be examined to make sure there are no "pinch-points" that hold up delivery.	Significant improvements by end of November 2017
12.	Improving support and empathy: Training provided for all staff directly involved in providing support to survivors in how to engage with those who have suffered major trauma. Sensitivity to culture and faith should be key aspects of this training. This will take some time but we would advise that this starts as quickly as possible.	Commence December 2017
The Site		
13	Covering the Tower: Management of the site is not currently the responsibility of RBKC. Nevertheless we would strongly recommend that those responsible for it accelerate covering the Tower. It is reprehensible that it has remained uncovered for so long.	December 2017

NEXT STEPS

We will continue to monitor how RBKC delivers its recovery plans and look forward to discussing these recommendations in detail with them. We anticipate that in the next three months we will want to delve deeper and look more closely at how effectively these plans are being delivered on the ground.

This intervention has not had the benefit of an inspection that would identify specific failings in a local authority and would precede a statutory intervention. Our recommendations present a series of findings that we will monitor the implementation of over the next period.

THE REPORT

1. RBKC failed its community on the night of 14 June and in the weeks immediately following. While many staff did their best to help, a leadership vacuum aligned with siloed service delivery and a distant council that did not know its residents meant there was little effective and structured support from RBKC.
2. Prior to the fire, there is evidence to suggest that RBKC was a council that was too distant from the community it served; old-fashioned in its operational behaviours; limited in its understanding and commitment to collaborative inter-agency work; insular, despite cross-borough arrangements; and with a significant deficit in understanding of modern public service delivery. As a result, RBKC is starting from a particularly low base both in terms of trust from the people it serves, and its historic structures and approach to community leadership.
3. There is a severe trust deficit between the local community and RBKC. To address this effectively will require an entirely different approach to community engagement and service delivery, which will require a long-term sustained commitment from the Councillors and Officers.
4. RBKC is now working hard to develop effective support and services to victims and survivors from the fire while at the same time undergoing a fundamental change in what it does and how it does it. Since the fire, RBKC has undergone significant changes: key members of the senior leadership team have changed including the Leader and Deputy Leader as well as the Chief Executive and members of the senior management team; services are undergoing fundamental redesign; a new Grenfell Department has been put in place; and a significant housing programme has been designed and is being implemented.
5. There is evidence of commitment from RBKC to delivering a comprehensive recovery plan, including from the new senior leadership team. RBKC has allocated significant additional funds to support the recovery efforts, and invested in bolstering its capacity. It has committed to continue to do so, as required. Overall however, at best these are green shoots of recovery, and there is long way to go before full confidence in the council can be re-established.
6. However, in translating these inputs into real delivery outcomes, much greater emphasis needs to be given to understanding the individual needs of the survivors, the bereaved and the wider community. Alongside longer term cultural change, RBKC needs to focus on immediate actions that will make a difference on the ground, and deliver those at pace.

CONTEXT

7. Although the Grenfell Tower fire was confined to a particular locality, the scale and impact of the tragedy on so many lives make it an event of national significance, requiring an exceptional response from the local authority and other public services including central government.
8. It is not part of the remit of the Taskforce to address any failings by RBKC in their immediate response to the fire and in the days following. Nevertheless, those failings have had on-going consequences for all subsequent recovery efforts. Simply put, they are still contributing to the current trust deficit between RBKC and residents.
9. No local authority could develop a response to a disaster of this magnitude without help from other local authorities, public services and government. The support required by survivors and their re-housing needs, for multiple hundreds of households would alone challenge any local authority's resilience.
10. The report is designed to:
 - **Reflect** what survivors and the local community have told the Taskforce about what they need from RBKC and how well that is being delivered
 - **Acknowledge progress** by RBKC in their work to develop and deliver a recovery plan and help survivors and the local community following the fire
 - **Hold a mirror up to the council** highlighting any shortcomings or blind-spots in their recovery work and recommending ways they can improve the support for survivors and the wider community
 - **Reflect back to central government** the impact of some of their arrangements on the recovery effort.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. In summary, there are four overarching key themes that RBKC needs to embrace and embed throughout its work. These are:
 - **Pace:** The pace of delivery needs to be increased, actions for immediate focus need to be identified and implemented within days. As the council tries to do everything at once, it is doing everything too slowly. There needs to be an absolute focus on the delivery on the ground now and getting that right.
 - **Empathy and emotional intelligence:** These attributes need to be put at the heart of RBKC recovery plans. We have seen many good intentions, which have gone unrecognised by residents. Often what has been lacking is the appropriate 'style' of delivery, where an approach that had empathy at its core would have had greater positive impact. Systems, policies and practice need to be designed with people's current needs at the heart as opposed to what is good or convenient administrative practice.

- **Skills:** Officers at all levels and members, especially those who are working directly with survivors and the local community, need to be trained in working with a community that has been severely traumatised. Many new staff have arrived, but none of them will have been faced with this complexity of challenge before. Simply getting the community engagement approach right is a mountain to climb on its own. Their generic skills, and their laudable commitment, needs to be turned into positive, visible and rapid action, delivered with sincerity and empathy, but this won't be possible without specific support to them too.
- **Innovation:** Given the unprecedented nature of the recovery challenge, RBKC should be bolder than it has been in its response. Government should encourage the council to be highly innovative in responding to residents' needs and not be bound by tried and tested bureaucratic response systems that are not appropriate in these circumstances.

12. The report is set out in sections covering each area within our remit. Within these sections we set out our recommendations including indicating timescales by which we think they should be addressed. We also give the reasons we have reached these conclusions based on what we have seen within RBKC so far.

13. We will of course discuss the recommendations further with RBKC. We are aware that by the time this report is submitted, some work will have been done on some areas.

GOVERNANCE AND DELIVERY

14. Council Members: Our broader observations suggest that the scrutiny function in RBKC needs to be strengthened. All Councillors would benefit from training in what good performance and behaviours look like. RBKC has put in place the Grenfell Scrutiny Committee, chaired by the opposition. It must now start challenging delivery by RBKC on behalf of the local community. The Leader's declaration at the Council meeting that the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) will be carrying out an independent review of governance arrangements is a recognition of the need for change, but the brief for the CfPS is limited to Governance process arrangements, whereas the Taskforce believes any review should go to the core of organisation's values and culture, and include a focus on the behaviours and performance of Members too.

15. Focus on delivery: Greater pace and focus needs to be added to the delivery effort. Promised actions must be delivered within agreed timescales. The scale of the challenge is significant so we recommend the Chief Executive further increases the capacity within the Grenfell recovery effort with a distinct focus on the day to day personalised delivery. We think this should be a separate role at a senior level working across all services across the council. If this requires additional resource then that should be allocated. We have noted that no single local authority could develop a response to a tragedy of this magnitude without help from other local authorities. We feel that longer term support from the wider sector and the Local Government Association (LGA) would help in driving forward immediate delivery. In addition, it would strengthen the sector as a whole as

lessons are learnt. This is an area where the LGA and the wider sector may be able to help quickly identify a suitable person with a proven track record of delivery.

16. Oversight and accountability: Central Government and individual Ministers have, and continue to be, closely engaged with the response to Grenfell. The scale and extent of this tragedy requires close Government engagement, support and overview. However, the ongoing weekly reporting demands made of RBKC are adversely impacting on their ability to deliver. In addition, it risks confusing the lines of accountability, and confusing survivors and the wider community. The council has suggested to us that the current level of oversight is a distraction from delivery. We are mindful too that developing plans and reports, however necessary to the longer-term recovery by the council, do not equate to making a difference to people on the ground, and these are only useful if action is taken as a result. We suggest that weekly Ministerial Recovery Groups (MRG), chaired by the Communities Secretary, should be reduced. The frequency of the MRG should be under constant review. RBKC needs to demonstrate that it has made enough progress so that Ministers can be confident this small reduction in oversight will not retard progress.

Rationale: What we have seen so far

17. We have met few Council Members that have a firm grasp of the challenges that RBKC now faces. Some members give the impression that they believe that in a few months' time everything shall return to the way it used to be. Community trust of the council in the North of the borough has been eroded to such an extent that to recover from this will require a major shift in the members' awareness and focus. From what we have seen to date, there is more that concerns us than we can take comfort from.
18. The incoming Chief Executive has set out a vision for a new RBKC fit-for-recovery. His plans to streamline the structures within the council are sensible and will assist in addressing problems of silo working. We also welcome the creation of the new Grenfell Care Team. New programme boards focusing on Community Engagement, and Housing with an over-arching Grenfell Recovery Board chaired by the Chief Executive are appropriate. They should however focus more on delivery on the ground and directly address silo working where this is identified. We are pleased that Taskforce suggestions, for example about embedding community engagement as a key requirement in all policy development, have been taken up by RBKC.
19. We observed the Council meeting of 27 September. This was a creditable attempt to give a forum for survivors and the local community to express their views, though the clash with the inaugural AGM of Grenfell United should have been avoided.
20. The creation of the Grenfell Scrutiny Panel is welcome. We felt that the panel provided a good level of challenge at its first meeting on 10 October.
21. It is also clear that the fire exposed many weaknesses in systems and processes. Fairly straight forward data and tracking systems seem to have been absent. The subsequent work of PwC and other external support has been able to begin to install the tracking that is now required.

HOUSING

22. Rehousing: This remains a substantial and immediate challenge for RBKC. With 320 households in hotel accommodation, attempts to temporarily and permanently rehouse these residents are proving a complex exercise. Permanent rehousing numbers are increasing at a painfully slow rate. At core the challenge is striking the balance between the need for a fair, equitable and transparent lettings system whilst at the same time meeting the personal needs, aspirations of each of the households. The circumstances for rehousing are unprecedented at this scale and the rehousing response must be unprecedented in its attention to the personal needs and aspirations of each family.
23. The theme of the Taskforce's comments thus far has been to increase the personalisation of the re-housing response. Much has been done to offer an exceptional response, but the full extent of the offer needs to be finalised. A range of enhancements have been offered to the traditional social housing lettings offer. For a range of reasons, it is evident that residents are hesitating to accept rehousing offers to optimise the benefits to be secured. The rehousing offer needs to be finalised in all its aspects and RBKC enabled to progress rehousing at a quicker pace. This appears to have been achieved with the small number of leaseholders.
24. In order to meet the demand, RBKC has embarked upon what appears to be a successful purchase programme. However unless it is able to finalise permanent moves, it runs the risk of a large number of quality properties standing empty, whilst survivors continue to live in hotels.
25. Those residents who have been rehoused from the areas surrounding the tower (treated as Category B for permanent rehousing) should have offers to return to their refurbished homes as soon as possible. If they are not ready to return their homes on the Lancaster West estate, then the opportunity to move out of hotels to alternative temporary accommodation should be offered as soon as possible.
26. The Housing Management Service: The decision has been made to end the contract with the Tenant Management Organisation. This is planned in three phases:
- The management of the Lancaster West Estate – immediate
 - The management of the capital programme across the stock
 - The full management services
27. This plan faltered at the TMOs AGM, which effectively postponed a decision. The emergent default position is that these services are undertaken by RBKC in the future. We recommend that a full options appraisal be undertaken for the future ownership and management of the Council stock either as a whole or in smaller parcels/packages. We are unconvinced that RBKC offers any better option as landlord, particularly in the medium to long term, than the offer from the TMO.

28. Lancaster West Estate: The remnants of Grenfell Tower cast a shadow (literally and metaphorically) over the whole estate. The strength of the local community was observed in the wake of the tragedy and remains visible in the period of recovery. The immediate area deserves to be transformed. There are signs of underinvestment in the area known as “the walkways” and in some of the surrounding blocks, notwithstanding that the fabric and designs of many of the buildings are popular with resident, including some high quality open spaces. We recommend that RBKC commissions a plan for the area, with substantial input and critical influence from the local community. This plan should conceive of the future use of the Grenfell tower site.

Rationale: What we have seen so far

29. The Taskforce agrees with the focus on re-housing all those made homeless by the fire as a priority. RBKC has rightly invested substantial amounts of money to secure new suitable housing stock and continues to do so, without raising much concern about the resources available. RBKC has engaged constructively and in detail with the Taskforce on this priority, particularly on the need to have a detailed assessment of housing needs for everyone; building in greater flexibility in to what housing is on “offer”; extending the offer beyond the W10 and W11 postcodes for those who wish for this; putting in place comprehensive re-housing support for 18 months following take up of a new home to address the many difficulties inherent to moving home.

30. Whilst the rehousing challenge is undoubtedly a difficult process and RBKC has offered a number of enhancements to the “business as usual” allocations policy, it now appears to have created a pipeline of demand in which the ultimate outcome (permanent rehousing) is happening at a painfully slow pace. Clearly those made homeless by the fire should not be forced in any way to move to anything other than a home of their choice with which they are satisfied. However RBKC needs to inject pace into the delivery of sensitive housing outcomes.

31. The Taskforce believes the decision to end the contract with the TMO is the right one. However the execution of this decision needs to be properly managed and the deep suspicion by residents of the council needs to be taken into account. The haste in making the decision without a detailed plan has been exposed at the recent AGM where the recommendation to bring the TMO to a close was not carried.

32. Aside from the requisite choreography required to implement this decision there may be a tendency to assume that the council can take over where the TMO leaves. If this is the case then the Taskforce believes this to be flawed and a wider range of options need to be considered.

33. As part of the first stage of the end of the management agreement, RBKC are creating a Grenfell Department which will oversee the local management service. This may be an appropriate initial response but looks expensive and therefore unsustainable in the longer term.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

34. Increase capacity and capability in the Care for Grenfell team: Plans are in-hand to recruit suitably qualified people to work in the new Care for Grenfell team and as the new model of key workers, but these will not be complete until December. We recommend that RBKC bolster the team as a matter of urgency and consider innovative ways to do so. Consideration should be given to whether a further re-prioritisation of work across the council on a short-term basis would enable greater resource to be devoted to Grenfell related delivery and immediate actions for immediate. This work should start immediately with a view to bringing the Care for Grenfell team up to full capacity by beginning of December at the latest.
35. Prioritisation: For the recovery effort to begin we feel it is essential that RBKC identify actions for immediate focus that will begin to make a difference on the ground in a matter of days and weeks. This is very much about those requests that can be dealt with relatively quickly. As an example, we have heard several times that there needs to be a leaflet or booklet with a comprehensive list of all services available to victims and survivors, and that this has been promised. While this may need updating and distributing on a regular basis we recommend that RBKC deliver this as quickly as possible. However this will only be effective if the people providing the service are well trained and have the capability to deliver in a timely manner. This should start immediately with actions logged and achieved week on week.
36. Community Engagement: Community engagement can only happen where you know who the people are that you are serving. In order to reduce the trust deficit, RBKC needs to start understanding that every interaction it has with residents is community engagement and can help it build up trust. Everyone who interacts with people on behalf of the council needs to understand that is an opportunity to engage positively. They need to be empowered and informed on how to feed intelligence back into the organisation. Community engagement needs to be a factor in development of policy from the beginning. While formal consultations have a role to play more innovative human based engagement should be incorporated. All policy development and service delivery across the Council should have community engagement considerations and impact embedded at their heart, just like the approach to Equality Impact Analysis.

Rationale: What we have seen so far

37. The historical relationship between the local community and the council has been described to the Taskforce as at best “distant”, and at worst one of “neglect”. It is not our wish or remit to make judgements about how the council delivered services to residents in the past, however, we have heard that prior to the fire the local community in the North of the borough did not feel they had a constructive or close relationship with the council. Some have commented that they suffered from ‘political neglect’ and that their local area was a ‘political blind spot’ for RBKC. We raise this as a material factor in the current relationship between RBKC and the local community. It will take a long time to build up any sense of trust between survivors, victims and the community

affected and RBKC.

38. The senior leadership team and senior officers continue to engage with community forums on a regular basis including Grenfell United, the “Core Group” and Lancaster West Residents Association amongst others. Community representatives have been invited to speak at RBKC meetings including the Council meeting on 27 September and the new Grenfell Recovery Scrutiny Committee on 10 October. Numerous letters and regular newsletters have been distributed to residents including via key workers. We acknowledge and welcome that RBKC has had some discussion with the panel who worked with the local community following the Hillsborough tragedy to learn from their experience. We hope that it will be possible to learn from their work in moving toward a more coordinated and supported community voice.
39. More generally, the Taskforce has been highly impressed by the work of the various voluntary sector agencies that responded to the immediate needs after the fire and have continued to respond to this day. Local individuals alongside the various faith-based organisations, local, national and international aid charities, have come together to provide trusted support and relief, which deserve great praise. The council now has the opportunity to learn from, harness and embed the social capital that has been created in the borough.

CROSS-CUTTING SUPPORT

40. Working holistically: RBKC needs greater focus on operational delivery and putting its effort into addressing the immediate needs of those affected by the fire. To help do this RBKC needs to understand the individual needs of survivors, and currently it does not have a coordinated central means of understanding the full range of survivor needs. There is some evidence that this is now being addressed which is welcome. We consider this is an immediate priority for RBKC and resource and effort need to be committed to it as a matter of urgency. The Council needs to bring together all information on victims and survivor needs into a central knowledge management system, ensuring that there is rapid transfer and sharing with all front-line staff and service delivery partners, with real-time management of accuracy, delivered by the end of November.
41. Personalised Key Workers: RBKC needs to challenge the model of delivering services in disjointed and disconnected departments. All frontline staff and their managers should be aware of the full range of services and support available to Grenfell Tower victims and survivors. It is essential that officers understand that delivering these services and support to survivors is a priority. Personalised Key Workers need to be designated as the ‘single point of contact’ for victims and survivors, who can then represent them, take responsibility and are empowered to follow up action from across the council and support agencies. Systems need to be examined to make sure there are no “pinch-points” that hold up delivery. We suggest that significant improvements must be achieved by the end of November.

42. Improving support and empathy: training for all staff directly involved in providing support to victims and survivors of the Grenfell Tower Tragedy in how to engage with those who have suffered major trauma. Sensitivity to culture and faith should be key aspects of this training. This will take some time but we would advise that this starts as quickly as possible.

Rationale: what we have seen so far.

43. In the immediate aftermath of the fire, there is much evidence that many council departments, local support services, the voluntary sector and the wider London family of councils and services worked hard to respond. The London Gold Command took rapid control, and has been frequently commended for its deployment of a wide range of staff over many weeks and months. The emergency services, particularly the Fire Brigade, have received considerable praise.

44. However, residents speak powerfully about the disjointed nature of the response overall. It seems that this lack of coherent collaborative working across agencies is a long standing weak point, which the council allowed to fester unchallenged.

45. In relation to housing, the particular needs of the elderly, the young, those that already had poor health or have become ill since the fire, have added a multi-dimensional challenge that is proving difficult to respond to in a fashion that gives local people confidence in their council. Considerable effort has been made by staff from Children's Services, Adult Services, NHS teams and the local voluntary sector, which has given some comfort to some of those in need, but it has not reached all. Despite the array of resources being deployed across the service departments and other agencies, there remains some distinct weakness in the response. For example, it is hard to understand why the various responders continue to say they don't have a common and comprehensive list of survivors and displaced residents, where they are currently living, and what their assessed needs are. Various lists do exist, but rarely do any of the agencies believe that they have accurate comprehensive information in their hands. Even if the lists need to be updated on a daily basis, rapidly sharing this data with those that need it to deliver services, should not be beyond the technology that is readily available.

46. As weeks have gone by, the needs of survivors have become more complex, requiring comprehensive multi-agency co-ordination and response, and this has not been as responsive as has been necessary.

47. The now discredited first attempt at a Key Worker programme, initially set up and run by London Gold, has left many survivors feeling let down at their time of greatest need. This seems to have been an example of an action with very good intentions, but showing a distinct lack of clear vision for what the Key Worker role should have been for. Training staff well and keeping them informed on development on a daily basis in the first few weeks could have mitigated some of the criticisms the first batch of Key Workers have received. Inconsistencies of approach, lack of clear guidelines on what support can and can't be provided, varying degrees of availability of support, a wide variety of skills and competencies – all are examples of the majority of survivor feedback that has

exacerbated their now entrenched view that the council is not committed to helping those that need their help most. We think that it took too long for RBKC to acknowledge and address the failings of the original model.

48. The new Chief Executive acknowledges that the original Key Worker model was not working. A new model is being put in place in line with early Taskforce suggestions. However, this relies on an effective and rapid recruitment system. At the very least, future Key Workers must become the single point of contact for each individual/family that they are supporting, having the knowledge, skills and authority to drive action on their behalf. Anything less will be another opportunity missed.
49. Highly skilled trauma support for those affected by the fire, both from the Tower and the surrounding areas, is now an increasing and critical need. Support services seem to be stretched already and some survivors have reported dissatisfaction with what has been provided in terms of appropriateness, accessibility and lack of cultural/faith sensitivity. NHS staff have reported their regular frustrations at getting timely and accurate 'location lists' from the council.
50. Where there are signs of a good service in RBKC, for example in most Children's Services/School based interventions, these should be built on and the good practice shared rapidly with other services.

THE SITE

51. Grenfell Tower Site: It is disappointing that for technical and legal reasons it appears it has not been possible to cover the tower. The separation of the management of the tower from RBKC (for understandable reasons) has caused a lack of accountability for the management of the site. The scaffold work and covering has now commenced and should proceed with greater haste. The decision on the future use of the site should be given over to the local residents.
52. As the Grenfell Tower site is currently a crime scene it is not under the management of RBKC. It could therefore be considered to fall outside of the remit of the Taskforce which focusses on the working of RBKC. Nevertheless, we consider the handling of the site an essential component in helping survivors and the local community begin a pathway to recovery.
53. The Taskforce welcomes the establishment of a physical 'platform' where the bereaved can spend time in grieving and paying their respects at the site of the tragedy. The supervised visits for some survivors to their flats to retrieve precious items have also been very well received.
54. The key challenges beyond the crime scene restrictions are to move more quickly to covering the remaining building, and then to work with the local community on what they want for the site. Any extended delays will further add to the ongoing trauma that the community is living with.

ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS

55. Below are further reflections from the Taskforce of what we have seen in RBKC over the past nine weeks. We have witnessed a lot of activity by RBKC which has become more organised as the new leadership team establishes itself and new ways of working begin to take effect. The intention is to provide the Secretary of State with a more in-depth understanding of the background to our recommendations.
56. We have seen evidence of a council in transition. Prior to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the council was highly traditional in its behaviours and practice, insular and with a limited understanding or indeed commitment to the need for collaborative inter-agency working in the delivery of the public services for which it is responsible. It is also evident that there has been a significant deficit in the understanding of the council's community leadership role. This was evident on the night of the fire and the council has been in recovery mode ever since. The result has been a dramatic loss of confidence and trust in RBKC.
57. As a result, our impression is that RBKC was not a council that had either the breadth of skills needed or the competence to organise, manage and drive through an immediate and significant change in operational delivery in the days and weeks immediately following the fire.
58. RBKC's immediate response to the fire was at best disjointed and seemingly rudderless. Although front line staff and volunteers worked as hard as they could to meet the needs of those affected, often beyond the call of duty, the leadership from the council's headquarters is most frequently described by residents as either in 'disarray' or 'absent'. This damning view is rarely, if ever, disputed by the other support agencies involved in the immediate response to the fire.
59. Over four months later, it is clear that RBKC has undergone a wide range of changes. The majority of the senior leadership team has been changed including a new Chief Executive (Barry Quirk) and a new Leader (Elizabeth Campbell). They have shown their early commitment to making fundamental changes to how RBKC operates, and in developing a recovery plan for survivors and the wider community. We acknowledge that there has been a lot of hard work and commitment to delivering recovery.
60. Therefore, the commitment of the new senior leadership team that has been brought in is not in doubt. They, alongside some Councillors and Officers, have been working hard to put in place plans with the clear intention of delivering a long-term recovery for survivors and all residents in RBKC. The Taskforce does not under-estimate the challenge ahead of them. It particularly welcomes the realism shown by the new senior leadership team in acknowledging that true and full recovery will take many years and constant and consistent effort on the part of the council.

On-going resilience of RBKC

61. RBKC's current capacity and capability is stretched to the utmost. While plans are in place to recruit more staff with the requisite skills and abilities, the resilience of RBKC to cope with any further emergencies must remain a cause for concern.

Can RBKC delivery a recovery plan?

62. The Taskforce feel that the new leadership, and the best of Officers and Councillors within RBKC are making every effort to deliver a recovery plan. As indicated earlier in this report more work needs to be done to make sure that actions are suitably prioritised and reflect the needs of the community it is serving. There are indications that they will achieve this in time. However, we would reiterate that over the next three months RBKC must focus on driving the day to day operational services that will make a real difference to the experience of victims and survivors on the ground.

DISCUSSIONS WITH SURVIVORS AND PEOPLE AFFECTED BY THE FIRE

63. The Taskforce has been able to meet, listen to and speak with some survivors, some survivor groups, individuals and representatives from the wider community, and a small number of volunteers. We would once again like to express our thanks and gratitude to them for being willing to speak to us, their patience, frankness and dignity. Their testimony has been moving.

64. While we have heard differing, and sometimes directly contradictory views, the Taskforce have also heard consistent messages from survivors. We think therefore that recovery for survivors, the wider community and indeed RBKC can only begin by addressing individual's specific needs, doing this sensitively and responding quickly. To do so it is imperative that RBKC has a thorough in-depth understanding of what those needs are and the full range of those needs. While we welcome the work that those working on housing have made in their attempts to fully assess the housing needs of individuals, we feel that looking at only one aspect of need in isolation from others is insufficient.

65. The myriad of needs does and will continue to present a significant challenge for RBKC in developing policies and services that meet those needs, but also in the delivery of relevant action on the ground. We have heard that some survivors do not wish to engage with people in RBKC, as they consider them to have contributed to the tragedy. They also complain of "meeting fatigue", with little or no discernible follow up action from these meetings. We respect this, and would only suggest that they continue to work through their needs with officers and intermediaries.

66. We have appended to this report a summary of the views of those we spoke to. This is not a verbatim report of our discussions but reflect the main points we heard. They should not be considered to reflect the views of the Taskforce or otherwise, but we felt it was important to include them in this report.

NEXT STEPS

67. Our terms of reference make it clear that the Taskforce will be in operation for as long as the Secretary of State deems necessary. Over the next period we will of course continue to monitor RBKC work overall and provide challenge and feedback on how they are doing. We anticipate that we will be able to delve deeper into delivery to make sure that it is making an immediate impact, however small or large, to survivors and the wider community. We will continue to provide constructive challenge at all levels.

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS WITH SURVIVORS

As noted in the report this annex summarises the main issues that we have heard from those most directly affected by the Grenfell Tower tragedy.

Meetings with Grenfell United

1. We have met Grenfell United three times. At all meetings it was clear that members of the Grenfell United committee felt that neither central nor local government were really listening to their concerns and translating them into action. They were clear that they were exhausted at highlighting the failings of central government and RBKC and their patience at doing so was running out.
2. They were clear that there needed to be an “immediate improvement in the way that the bereaved and survivors are treated, how their needs are met and that consultation and communication about services must be improved”.
3. The lack of trust toward the council was amply demonstrated by Grenfell United saying that they “do not acknowledge the authority of RBKC Councillors or council”. They felt that many of the current Councillors are responsible for the culture within the council that lead to the fire. They repeated their request for “special measures” to remove Councillors and put decision making in the hands of Commissioners appointed by central government.
4. Grenfell United also objects strongly to the on-going salary payments to the former Chief Executive of Kensington and Chelsea Tenants Management Organisation.
5. They asked that the very small number of survivors of the fire whose residency status was not settled at the time of the fire be given full permanent “leave to remain” in the UK.
6. They asked that the former Leader and Deputy Leader of RBKC resign from the Council.
7. They noted a range of problems with the housing offer from RBKC, including the need to provide more offers; lack of trust of RBKC Housing Department; concerns from residents that accepting a short-term tenancy will leave survivors disadvantaged; failure to provide like for like service charges to Grenfell Tower.
8. They felt there was still an attitude within RBKC that they can now return to “business as usual”.
9. Four months after the fire, bereaved families are still not being identified by RBKC. Separately the treatment the bereaved are receiving is inadequate.
10. Four months on there is still not a full list of the bereaved and families.

11. Grenfell United tells us that confidential information about a bereaved individual has been shared inappropriately, without consent.
12. Confidential information has been leaked with safeguarding implications.

Lancaster West Resident's Association

13. We have met with representative from Lancaster West on four occasions.
14. They felt that RBKC had ignored the north of the borough for many years. As a result, the local community had learnt to rely on each other and not on the council for services and support. They felt that on-going health concerns, including understanding the health implications from what local people had breathed in as a result of the fire need to be addressed.
15. They had immediate concerns for people from the wider Lancaster West estate whose homes were not currently habitable, and requirement that this be addressed as a matter of urgency. The Lancaster West Residents Association also has concerns about what they perceive to be underinvestment in the council housing surrounding the tower. Whilst the walkway blocks may be a priority, they feel there to be investment requirements in the remainder of the housing on the Lancaster West estate which should be addressed.
16. We heard from a number of individuals that some officers from RBKC had demonstrated a lack of empathy in their dealings either with survivors or community volunteers who were trying to provide help. We will not comment on the individual stories we heard, however it is clear that while some RBKC officers did indeed provide empathic innovative support, whilst others appeared insensitive and more concerned with administrative convenience.

OUR REMIT

On the 5 July, Sajid Javid, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced that he would be intervening in RBKC and establishing an Independent Recovery Taskforce with a remit to:

“provide advice and practical and strategic support to RBKC. It will work alongside the council to make sure that they have the manpower, expertise and resources necessary to take on the longer term recovery work beyond the immediate Civil Emergency Response.”

On the 26 July, our membership of the Taskforce was announced. We began our work in earnest the following week. Our remit is to consider how the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is developing a recovery plan for those affected by the fire, and whether those plans will deliver positive outcome for survivors and the wider community to help them in rebuilding their lives going forward.

The Taskforce was specifically asked to look at:

- **HOUSING:** Ensuring that Council Housing management and services across the borough are on a sound footing to support the re-housing of survivors; addressing weaknesses in the Tenant Management Organisation.
- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:** Ensuring there is effective and timely engagement with the community from the council about their plans for recovery.
- **CROSS-CUTTING SUPPORT:** Making sure that the council has the right arrangements in place to provide intensive cross cutting support to those affected by the fire
- **GOVERNANCE:** Making sure that governance arrangements across the council are appropriate to deal with the on-going challenge that recovery will present
- **THE SITE:** Ensuring that a long term plan for the site is in place that has been developed with central Government, the Greater London Authority and above all the community.

TASKFORCE WAYS OF WORKING

Following a useful discussion with senior officials from your department on 1 August the Taskforce has over the past months been meeting a wide range of stakeholders including:

- Representatives of survivors and the local community: this was a priority so that we could hear about their needs first-hand and get their views on their relationship with the council.
- Meetings with GOLD Command to understand the services they were providing, their plans to wind down, what services were being handed back and to whom.
- Meeting representatives from other public services involved in the recovery planning and delivery including, the police, fire and rescue and health service to understand how they are working with the council currently and what their relationship with them was prior to the fire.
- Extensive meetings with Officers and Members of RBKC. Initially these were fact-finding meetings getting information about what they were doing, how they were approaching the challenge of supporting such a devastated community, what were their current plans and what did they anticipate they would need in the future. We have been challenging both what they are doing and how they go about it as well as providing practical support and suggestions on how they can do better.

We have been:

- **Listening:** especially to survivors and the local community to hear first-hand what their needs are, what they think about the Council and the support they are currently receiving.
- **Fact finding and information gathering:** about how the different public bodies are working together, what services they are providing to everyone in need, current and future plans.
- **Assessing and triangulating** the information and plans we have seen against each other, asking how they compare against what we know is best practice and works on the ground.
- **Supporting and challenging:** providing feedback to both Officers and Members of RBKC and checking what has been delivered.