

GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF EDWARD DAFFARN

1. I make this second statement in connection with Phase 2 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. In this statement I intend to build upon some matters set out in my Phase 1 statement dated 15 May 2018 (IWS00000169). My principal focus is on Modules 3 and 4 of Phase 2, but there are some matters that I raise that will be relevant to the Module 1 analysis relating to the commissioning, design and building of the refurbishment works and their implications for fire safety.
2. What follows is based upon matters that are within my own direct knowledge and those I believe to be true based upon documents I have seen, or conversations I have had with others. I used to keep documents such as leaflets, paper diaries and hard copies of meeting minutes but these documents were all destroyed in the Grenfell Tower fire. I have therefore been assisted in recalling events and key dates by considering emails, letters and materials attached to emails, blogs and other publicly available documents. I have particularly referred to the Grenfell Action Group ('GAG') blogs, because their text is a real time commentary on the events that I deal now with. I will refer to GAG throughout this statement and in doing so the Inquiry should be aware that in some instances GAG emails and blogs were drafted by Francis O'Connor, in others, by me, most often they were a collaborative effort. It has caused me a great deal of upset that despite a number of people within the Grenfell community advocating on his behalf, Francis O'Connor has not been granted Core Participant status in this Inquiry. As a result, one of the most passionate and knowledgeable voices concerning events prior to the fire has been airbrushed from this Inquiry.

PART I: BACKGROUND

3. In terms of my own personal background I am 57 years of age. I grew up in Kensington and Chelsea but attended Woolverstone Hall Grammar School outside the Borough. I moved in to Grenfell Tower in 2001. I am a Mental Health Social Worker by profession,

having qualified from Brunel University with a BA degree in Social Work in 2006. I am not an expert in fire safety and have never professed to be. In my dealings with the TMO, RBKC, LFB and others I just raised issues that I felt affected – or could affect - the residents of Lancaster West Estate, our safety and quality of life. Sometimes those matters touched upon fire safety and on other occasions they did not. In addition to my activism in support of residents of Lancaster West Estate and Grenfell Tower I have been involved in campaigns to save Wornington College, North Kensington Library, the West London Community Riding Centre, Canalside House and the community use of the land under the Westway. These are all much loved community resources.

4. I have not found it easy to prepare this statement. It would be impossible for me to express every detail and every experience I had living in Grenfell Tower which have informed my opinions of RBKC and the TMO. After the passage of time, and what has happened since, it remains difficult for me to remember specific events, or exactly where certain events arose in the chronology. I have been deeply affected by the fire and its aftermath and continue to receive support and treatment. However, I want to engage with the Inquiry in the hope that you will have an accurate picture, from a resident's perspective, of what life was like living in Grenfell Tower under the control of RBKC and the KCTMO.
5. I have now read some of the statements and documents provided by RBKC and the TMO. They paint a very rosy but untruthful picture of both their efforts and integrity. I have been lucky in many ways in my life and never had cause to feel I had been treated unjustly until I lived in Grenfell Tower. I have said before and I will say in this statement that in my view the KCTMO was a non-functioning organisation which was not motivated by the wellbeing of tenants but was driven by pure self-interest. It had a monopoly to provide social housing for the entirety of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) and so it was able to act like a mini-mafia. I do not use the word mini-mafia glibly or unthinkingly. I cannot find a better way to describe the culture of the organisation.
6. I never believed that the TMO was capable of keeping residents safe. I never witnessed it to be properly scrutinised by RBKC; and I never saw the TMO acting in a properly accountable fashion. The underlying reasons for this lie in the culture of governance that

prevailed and because the personnel held prejudiced views about how residents should behave: essentially to be thankful for their service; or effectively be damned. Their dealings with me were institutionally biased, and in many instances, animated by individual prejudice. In their eyes I was stigmatised as a ‘trouble maker’. They went out of their way to discredit me, my views were there to be managed, or discounted, or both. There was an incentive for RBKC not to properly scrutinise the TMO and of course an incentive for the TMO not to be properly scrutinised. I hope some of what I have to say in my evidence to the Inquiry will help to explain why I came to all my views over the 16 years I lived in Grenfell Tower and why GAG ultimately wrote a blog on 20 November 2016, which said that only a serious fire in a tower block would be the reason that those who wield power at the KCTMO would be found out and brought to justice
(IWS00000169_0040)

“Unfortunately, the Grenfell Action Group have reached the conclusion that only an incident that results in serious loss of life of KCTMO residents will allow the external scrutiny to occur that will shine a light on the practices that characterise the malign governance of this non-functioning organisation.”

...
“It is our conviction that a serious fire in a tower block or similar high density residential property is the most likely reason that those who wield power at the KCTMO will be found out and brought to justice!”

“The Grenfell Action Group predict that it won’t be long before the words of this blog come back to haunt the KCTMO management and we will do everything in our power to ensure that those in authority know how long and how appallingly our landlord has ignored their responsibility to ensure the health and safety of their tenants and leaseholders. They can’t say that they haven’t been warned!”

7. The fact these words turned into reality stands as a social indictment against those who were placed to prevent it. I was an activist trying to prevent these people from harming us and I have to live with the consequences that I failed to do so. I blame them for good reason, and the rest of this statement is designed to provide the evidence available to me to the Inquiry as to why my attitude is reasonable. I have to somehow find my own words to explain the power imbalances and human shortcomings that were at play here. The best and most appropriate quote I have to summarise the attitude of RBKC and the KCTMO is from King Lear where Shakespeare records the triumph of the wicked:

“As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods. They kill us for their sport”

8. If you have not lived through this or been dependent on the whims of others, it is easy to not register what I am trying to convey. Residents were treated as an afterthought throughout by the Council, TMO and their contractors, if we were thought about at all. This goes for the purported consultation and planning of KALC, through to purported consultation and planning and execution of the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower, how the TMO and RBKC dealt with our complaints and warnings. Some of what we experienced was encapsulated in the Executive Summary of the Grenfell taskforce report published in October 2017 which recorded as follows:

“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” (ED2/1:)

9. In terms of the attitude of the workmen of Rydon and its subcontractors there was one incident that summarises how I feel residents were treated. It was during a meeting with Rydon in the show flat, Flat 145, during the refurbishment works which I believe took place in December 2014 or January 2015. A Rydon worker, Jason North, was asked by a resident about the unsightly work they planned in our flats, and whether he would like it in his own home. Jason replied saying something like: *“I wouldn’t mind if I were getting it for free”*. This attitude, that we were getting the refurbishment *“for nothing”* so shouldn’t complain, permeated the whole refurbishment process.
10. In my own professional life as a registered mental health social worker I could not, and would never wish to, discriminate against clients of mine who objected to the State’s intervention in to their lives. It goes without saying that I have always been professionally obliged to treat all my clients with equal respect and dignity regardless of their opinion of the interventions I was employed to undertake. That is not the way the TMO and RBKC treated us.
11. Ultimately, residents’ experience of the TMO left me with no choice but to become a community activist. Under these circumstances I would use whatever legitimate means were available to me to challenge the injustice of how residents on the Lancaster West

Estate and in North Kensington in general were being treated. That could include blogs and demonstrations that I helped to organise to publicise what was happening to our community. I was very aware that as long as the Council and TMO could ‘manage’ complaints through methods that were within their own control there was little chance of any meaningful change.

12. I am proud of the role I played together with Francis O’Connor and other residents in standing up to RBKC and the TMO and trying to expose our living conditions and their behaviour which caused so much hurt and upset both before and after the fire. I am also proud of the work Francis O’Connor and I did on the Grenfell Action Group blog before the fire where we sought to document how we were being treated, document residents’ legitimate concerns and also lampoon those in public office for their incompetence. Whilst I wrote a large number of emails to those whose decisions affected residents lives my interventions were necessary and focused on issues that not only needed to be addressed but that I couldn’t see would be addressed through other means. If I had more time I would have written more emails and raised more concerns because there were so many issues we were being confronted with.
13. I hope that at the end of this legal process those responsible for the fire and failings in the aftermath will be brought to justice. I also hope the Inquiry will not only ascertain “what” happened but also the broader question of “why”, exploring the culture within the building industry, the TMO, RBKC and central government. I would like the Inquiry to answer the question of what kind of a culture existed within RBKC and the TMO. This local authority had a third of a billion pounds in reserves, yet its senior officers appeared to prioritise value for money over respect for the wellbeing of residents’ and their safety
14. I am not sure how I or any of the other bereaved, survivors and residents will ever be able to cope or will ever have closure if the Inquiry cannot answer these questions as well as ensuring that individuals are held personally accountable for the 72 deaths and the devastation of the community I loved.

PART II: THE ORIGINS OF THE REFURBISHMENT

The managed decline of Grenfell Tower and the Lancaster West Estate: an issue of historic underinvestment and threat of social cleansing

15. In terms of the local community, Grenfell Tower was a great place to live. However, in terms of residential amenity, I would describe Lancaster West Estate, including Grenfell Tower before the refurbishment, as being allowed to deteriorate into a ‘slum-like’ condition. The building had not received the investment it needed for many years. Kitchens, bathrooms, windows and the heating system were old and outdated and there were many other areas which suffered from neglect. Necessary repairs both inside our flats and in the communal areas took a very long time to get fixed, if they ever got fixed at all. One example of this is that for years and years the tarmac on Grenfell Road was broken and the surface was completely uneven. The entrance doors to the garages were constantly not working which allowed anti-social behaviour. There were some days, even whole weekends, when Grenfell residents had to go without hot water and sometimes even without drinking water. On these occasions bottled water used to be delivered to us by the caretakers but in more recent years the TMO even failed to do that (ED2/2: TMO10001346_003). Francis O’Connor and I wrote a number of blogs about the living conditions on Lancaster West Estate, one of which is produced as ED2/3 () entitled “Don’t mention the slum word” dated 12 February 2014.
16. I was concerned that the lack of investment in our community was part of what I would call ‘managed decline’. It was my fear that the council would under-invest and then say that as a result of its poor condition the Lancaster West Estate’s residents would need to move out and it would need to be knocked down to be replaced with ‘mixed housing’. This policy would reduce the amount of social housing with much of it replaced with homes that could be sold by the council or rented out in the private sector. I feared this would result in a form of ‘social cleansing’ in the borough and one of its consequences would be gerrymandering.
17. My fears around social cleansing were exacerbated when I read a 2009 document called the ‘Notting Barnes South Masterplan’ obtained by Francis O’Connor under the Freedom of Information Act. I exhibit this document as ED2/4 (). In the 2009 Masterplan report a recommendation was made to RBKC by ‘Urban Initiatives’, that

Grenfell Tower be demolished in part due to difficulties in adapting or refurbishing it. The report provided proposals for North Kensington, including the demolition of the Silchester Estate, the demolition of the Lancaster West Estate, and the building of a new school academy in one of three locations around the Tower. Its proposal on Lancaster West included the following:

“Grenfell Tower: We considered that the appearance of this building and the way in which it meets the ground blights much of the area east of Latimer Road Station. It also provides no outdoor space for residents and is likely to be of a type of construction that is hard to adapt. It does contain 120 homes. On balance our preferred approach is to assume demolition

...

“The phased demolishing of the Grenfell Tower, the Barandon Road arm of the Lancaster Estate, the Kensington Leisure Centre and Verity Close offers the opportunity for the comprehensive development of a new residential quarter.”

...

“With the removal of Grenfell Tower the spire of the Methodist Church on Kingsdown Close becomes again the tallest structure in Notting Barns South area east of the railway line.”

18. I am aware that the Masterplan report was presented to RBKC Cabinet Working Group Pre-Meetings in July and September 2009. The September 2009 Cabinet Pre-Meeting expressed support for the Masterplan concluding:

“The farsighted masterplan demonstrates a vision for the future of Latimer. Urban Initiatives produce a viability that will potentially deliver significant returns at the upper range of values, although much of it will come in the later phases.”

(ED2/5:)

19. At the time, we were told by the Council that the report was just “blue sky thinking”. I am now aware, through Grenfell Inquiry disclosure, that Jonathan Bore was Director of Planning at Urban Initiatives when the Masterplan report was prepared in 2009, leaving the company in late summer 2009. Mr Bore was then recruited by RBKC in March 2010 as Executive Director of Planning and Borough Development (ED2/6: RBK00034912_003).

20. Although the KCTMO had never formally recognised the Grenfell Action Group, around 22012, Caile Christenson from the Community Engagement Team at RBKC registered us as a Residents Association ('RA') with RBKC. I deal with this in more detail later in this statement. As a result of our RA status the Grenfell Action Group began to be invited to consultations, and we were invited to take part in a consultation about RBKC's 'Decant Policy'. I had never heard of a 'Decant Policy' before. Francis O'Connor and I attended and gave our views, and the Council later published a draft policy. It was a frightening document and detailed what would happen to residents if their housing estates were going to be 'regenerated' into mixed communities. For example, there was no guarantee that residents could return to their previous estates, there were no guarantees that RBKC would accommodate your partner if you weren't married, or your children if they were over 18 years of age. The draft Decant Policy also allowed the Council to be able to place you in a one bedroomed property, despite the fact you may have previously been living in a two or three bedroomed property. This draconian policy would simply return those residents impacted by regeneration back onto the "common housing register" with no guarantee that existing communities would be kept intact. Those whose properties were chosen for "regeneration" would be given one year to find a property inside RBKC before being made one "final offer" and moved to where the Council chose to place them. The prospect of finding such a property was remote given the lack of available social housing in the borough. If residents refused a final offer they would be deemed "intentionally homeless" even if the site of the property they had been offered was totally unsuitable. The Council would then have no duty to re-house them. A copy of the Draft Decant Policy is available on the RBKC website and is exhibited as ED2/7 (). The Final Decant Policy is also available on the RBKC website and is exhibited as ED2/8 ().

21. Alarm bells started to ring that residents who were "decanted" could be moved out of the borough to anywhere in the country. This was consistent with an interview with the then leader of the council Derek Myers on 20 May 2013 who said RBKC had been looking at properties in Peterborough where RBKC social housing residents could be moved, which I exhibit as ED2/9 ().

22. With the combination of the chronic lack of investment in Grenfell Tower, the Masterplan document, the Decant Policy and public pronouncements such as those by

Derek Myers, it felt like RBKC wanted our homes and were trying to socially cleanse North Kensington. It felt like social housing residents were seen as a “problem” standing in the way of gentrification. It was my understanding that the Council had lots of property developer contacts who could help them realise their plans to change the mix of housing in North Kensington. Securing investment in the Lancaster West Estate including investment in Grenfell Tower was a route through which I felt we could protect our homes from gentrification and demolition.

23. I believe the Council recognised that the land we were living on was a goldmine and they didn't even have to dig for the gold. All they had to do was marginalise and displace the people that were living there, and by doing so they could then, replace the social housing with “mixed communities”, make a fortune from property development and sales, change the electorate in those wards and possibly even benefit personally from these actions.

Investment in Grenfell Tower as an afterthought to ‘KALC’

24. The building of an Academy next to the Tower had been recommended in the Notting Barnes South Masterplan and so when it was proposed by RBKC it again reinforced fears that this was the first stage in what would ultimately lead to the ‘regeneration’ of Lancaster West Estate and possible demolition of Grenfell Tower and the Walkways (locally known as the ‘fingerblocks’). One part of the Masterplan had already begun in the Peabody development surrounding Frinstead House on the Silchester Estate.
25. During the purported KALC consultation it felt once again that the needs of Grenfell Tower and Lancaster West residents were being ignored and residents were not being treated with respect. In Grenfell we lived in a tower block without balconies, and the original architect had designed an area of green space around us, part of which was Lancaster Green, a park for the residents. In the end, the park was taken away as part of the KALC development.
26. A number of individual residents, as well as Residents Associations representing hundreds of residents, opposed the KALC project. My own motivation to fight against the KALC project was the fear that our lives would be changed forever by having a school encasing our tower block, disturbing our peace, taking away the Estate’s valued green space and increasing noise pollution.

27. After failing to invest for so many years the Council suddenly announced a massive plan of “investment” but this wasn’t investment in the residential amenity of people living on the Estate. RBKC were happy to run our estate down to the ground, but what they needed was somewhere to put a school and they probably felt that we would offer the least resistance. We were powerless and no one would listen to us. It felt deeply unfair that the needs of Lancaster West Estate residents were not being given primacy. The priority for the Council seemed to be the KALC project and we were an afterthought.
28. It was around this time that I printed A4 posters and displayed them on every floor of Grenfell Tower. They basically said we needed to wake up, unless we wanted our community to become like Wornington Green, another place in North Kensington that the Council had allowed to become ‘regenerated’ (ED2/10: RBK00000004).

The involvement of Leadbitter

29. Leadbitter were the construction company who were building the KALC project. A man called Colin Chiles was the Leadbitter project manager. As detailed later in this statement, once it was authorised, the KALC works were meant to run in tandem with the refurbishment works at Grenfell Tower, but that did not happen and the two projects ran separately in the end. I got to know Colin Chiles while he was working on KALC. In my opinion he seemed to be a competent professional who had some empathy for residents. However, I was not involved in any of the Council or TMO decision making processes that led to Leadbitter being appointed. Despite Colin Chiles seeming to be a competent professional himself, Francis O’Connor and I did have some concern that the company overall had been gifted the Grenfell Tower work just because they were also working on the KALC project, regardless of whether they were equipped to do the job properly. There was a GAG blog of 21 April 2013 which said: *“the Council decided to forego the normal process of competitive tendering and best value controls in appointing the team who have been tasked with delivering this project – Max Fordham’s and Churchman’s architects, Curtins Consulting, Taylor Young and, last but not least, the construction contractors Leadbitters. Instead they simply gifted the whole project to the same team of architects, and other contractors, who were already delivering, the KALC project.”* (ED2/11:).

30. Whilst we had raised this concern I was surprised when Leadbitter were ultimately replaced by Rydon. As far as I knew, Leadbitter bailed out and I felt at the time that Colin Chiles and the company he worked for must have had concerns about entering into the contract.
31. I hadn't seen any tender documents to be able to assess Leadbitter's suitability to carry out the works. By mid-2013 a petition was circulated, I think it was by the Grenfell Tower Leaseholders Association (GTLA), calling for the refurbishment works to go ahead without further delay and that Leadbitter should do the works, the fear being that replacing them would cause further delay which would mean we would not have double glazing in place to protect us from the noise of the KALC works. I signed this petition together with 89 other residents (ED2/12: RBK00013826).

KALC planning application

32. Overall Francis O'Connor and I found the KALC planning process and associated consultation deeply unsatisfactory. As early as 2010 Francis O'Connor and I had been raising serious concerns that Lancaster West residents' views were being marginalised. On 19 July 2010 we wrote an email to Penelope Tollitt (Head of Policy and Design at the Borough Planning Department), a number of Councillors including the Chief Executive of the Council Derek Myers, Merrick Cockell (Leader of the Council), our MP Sir Malcolm Rifkind as well as a number of senior Council officers including Jonathon Bore and Laura Johnson (Director of Housing). The email was entitled "Residents view cast no shadow" to reflect that it was as if residents of the Estate did not exist. As well as documenting the lack of consultation we also raised a number of other issues that would impact on the Estate as a result of KALC, among these were the health and safety concerns around emergency services access to the Tower which I refer to later in this statement. I exhibit that email as ED2/13().
33. As part of the KALC application, the Council had to submit an SPD, a Supplementary Planning Document. As a community, we had a right to take part and submit our concerns to that document. This was supposed to be an important method through which we could express our opposition. We approached the Council for funding to help us oppose the proposals and they eventually agreed. The funds were given to the Grenfell Action Group ('GAG'), The Lancaster West Residents Association ('LWRA'), and the GTLA. GAG

were at the forefront of obtaining the funds, which amounted to £10,000. It was awarded in roughly February 2011. The fact that we were granted this money indicated that the Council, at that stage at least, considered the views of GAG to be legitimate, although as I deal with later in this statement the TMO refused GAG Residents Association status at a later date.

34. The Council, in particular Penelope Tollitt, wanted us to instruct a consultant of their choice but resident stakeholders were determined that someone completely independent should assist us. We found a charity called Planning Aid for London to help us.
35. Planning Aid for London worked with the residents to produce a document which detailed all of our concerns regarding the KALC development. The Planning Aid for London process was extremely collaborative and well thought out. They organised consultation drop-ins, one was at the London Lighthouse and one was at the Methodist Church. The first consultation meeting had around 60 attendees, around 40 at the second, and so on. We would go off into little groups and write down our concerns. There were several people from Planning Aid for London on site to facilitate the meeting. The whole process was done in a very community-focused and democratic way. Residents had never experienced this type of community engagement from RBKC or the TMO before and we didn't experience anything like this in relation to the Grenfell Tower refurbishment works. It allowed people to come and have a voice, that voice was recorded, and their views were put into an authentic document, which became the community response. Whatever our concerns regarding KALC, be it noise, the loss of our football pitches, the loss of the right of way, fire access, all of those concerns were put together in one concise document and that document was then submitted against the planning application. The process gave us some dignity after years of being marginalised.
36. Francis O'Connor set out our objections in GAG's 21 September 2012 response to the planning application, exhibited as ED2/14 (). The GAG blog on this subject dated 23 September 2012 is exhibited as ED2/15 () entitled: "The Planning Application – Late Objections from GAG". We sent our 21 September 2012 response to local Councillors, the RBKC Planning department, Mayor of London Boris Johnson and the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Planning Aid for London also made their own submission based on the above meetings. Amongst other things we noted that:

- a. The Council had issued numerous revision documents after opening the consultation and had not allowed sufficient time for us to consider these documents.
- b. The footprint of the KALC project had changed over time, it appeared to us that it was being deliberately underestimated to make it look as if less of our green space – Lancaster Green - would be taken away.
- c. There was now no provision for replacement of the outdated heating system that served the Lancaster West Estate.

37. I have now seen the Minutes of the Major Planning Development Committee meeting on 26 September 2012 at which I attended and spoke together with Tony Wilson from Planning Aid for London (ED2/16: RBK00019065). At the meeting I set out some of my own concerns about the application and Tony Wilson supported me by saying that the volume of documents about the application, together with the short space of time we had to consider them, were very difficult for lay people to assess. He shared my concerns about this and supported a deferral of the planning application so that more time could be given in order for a correct and robust decision to be made. This was rejected and the Council approved the application.

38. We documented objections to the KALC application and its process in our blogs on 29th August 2012 – “Weird Scenes Inside The Goldmine” (ED2/17:) and 27 September 2012 – “On The Nod” (ED2/18:).

39. Once it had become clear that KALC would probably be built a number of local residents groups relied upon it to seek investment for Grenfell Tower and the rest of the Lancaster West Estate.

KALC Residents Forum: July 2011 onwards

40. I attended meetings with the TMO and RBKC including those of the ‘KALC Residents Forum’. The establishment of the Forum in itself had followed many weeks of my trying unsuccessfully to arrange a meeting with stakeholders. I initially made those efforts around summer 2011, when the planning application was still pending. We really had to

fight for the Forum. Local residents were not going to have any of their voices heard unless we demanded it.

41. The KALC Forum was Chaired by Councillor Tim Coleridge, who was the then Head of Housing and Property at the Town Hall and had been in charge of the KALC project as a Councillor. Councillor Blakeman and some members of the local community were invited to take part in the Forum which was meant to give us a voice. However, it became a form of mediation. It didn't work for us as residents, because we weren't being listened to, and our complaints were never properly addressed. One of the main issues we were trying to argue for was to maintain our right of way through the estate and up to Portobello Road during the construction works.
42. My overriding memory of those meetings is not the detail of what was discussed, but that I found them very difficult and stressful. I felt sick to my stomach with anxiety because of residents' powerlessness in the face of people making decisions over our lives without proper consultation or respect for residents' views. The experience left a lasting impression on me. I felt these people could not be trusted to act in our best interests and their political power was not something we could hope to overturn at the ballot box. If local residents had been treated with respect during the consultation and planning of the KALC project then the Grenfell Action Group may well have disbanded.
43. A number of residents, including me, advocated on behalf of residents at those Forums - and through our relationship with Councillor Coleridge - that we needed some investment in the Lancaster West Estate. Some Labour councillors who attended the Forum also made similar arguments on our behalf. In essence, we argued that RBKC couldn't spend £60million on the KALC project and not invest at all in Lancaster West Estate.
44. While speaking about the budget for KALC I should add that out of the total budget we discovered that the budget for the Academy was only about £17 million. When it became clear the Academy would be built – despite opposition - we argued they should spend more than £17 million on its construction. We knew that the Chelsea Academy, which opened in 2009 and had been built in a wealthier part of the Borough, had cost around £40 million. I remember questioning the disparity in the budgets allocated to each school with Cllr Elizabeth Campbell at a public meeting but she simply said they were only prepared to spend £17 million. I have found some information about that other Academy

in the South of the Borough which I exhibit as ED2/19 (). That disparity led to the inescapable impression that the Council was building a school in North Kensington, on a low budget, for children from less wealthy backgrounds. Also, that in doing so it would mean children from the North of the Borough would no longer attend schools in the South of the Borough (for example Holland Park) which would now be attended mainly by wealthier children, leading to social segregation.

45. It was never GAG's intention to advocate solely for Grenfell Tower. We were concerned with securing investment in the entire estate, especially those properties in the closest proximity to the KALC development. Our focus was on double glazing for those properties as they would be most affected by noise from both building the Academy and also noise once the Academy came into use. We also advocated for an improved heating system.
46. The first such KALC Residents Forum meeting occurred on 18 July 2011 (ED2/20: RBK00030102). I have recently seen the minutes of that meeting and can see that my opening comments, and those of a fellow Grenfell Tower resident Peter Martindale, reflected that many residents felt we had not been listened to or treated with respect. I asked RBKC to involve residents in the shortlisting of architects for KALC. I had been making this request through emails in the run up to the first KALC forum. Following the meeting Laura Johnson, who was Head of Housing at RBKC, said in an email of 20 July 2011 that 6 shortlisted architects could come and show their designs to residents in the week of 5 September (ED2/21: RBK00030101_001).
47. On 16 September 2011 GAG sent an email to Laura Johnson, following an email from Cllr Judith Blakeman, complaining that neither we nor any other resident was involved in the selection of the architect or other contractors who worked on the KALC project (ED2/22: RBK00030110). Instead, there was a meeting on 13 September at which only the chosen architect attended, Andrzej Kuszell from Studio E. I recognised Andrzej Kuszell when I saw him giving evidence at the Grenfell Inquiry. Having looked at the plans it appeared the chosen site was not big enough for the Academy to be built. I also complained about the removal of sports pitches and Lancaster Green and also the level of noise the Academy would generate which would impact not just on the residents of Grenfell Tower but also the other properties around the Academy.

48. I provide further information about my experience of Laura Johnson later in this statement. In my opinion, Laura Johnson was part of the cabal of senior officers from Planning, Housing, and Corporate Property who wanted to embark on regeneration projects across the borough and dispose of public assets. She appeared willing and authorised to make sure that our voices were never properly heard. It also felt like Laura Johnson was in effect running the TMO. She was the fulcrum between the Council and the TMO and driving the Council and TMO's priorities. They did not prioritise residents' well-being. Rather we were treated as an obstacle to the Council and TMO implementing its policies.

49. I have now seen different versions of the minutes of a meeting on 29 November 2011 with RBKC Councillors disclosed by the Inquiry, which I exhibit as ED2/2 (TMO10001346) and ED2/23 (TMO10000979) and ED2/24 (TMO10000978). I can see that I attended together with a number of other residents. We all complained about the lack of drinking water some weekends, the fact the windows needed to be changed and that they weren't being cleaned from the outside (the TMO confirmed they did not have a contract with anyone to do so), the heating system didn't work properly, necessary repairs were not taking place and our kitchens and bathrooms were old and out of date. I can see we were told by Mark Anderson that a stock condition survey was taking place to identify investment needs.

The Emerging proposal for Refurbishment of Grenfell Tower: November 2011 to October 2012

50. I have found a website which provides minutes for a number of the KALC Resident Forum meetings, which I exhibit as ED2/25 (), but is not a complete record of all such meetings that occurred. It also provides links to some other associated documents. I have also now seen some KALC Forum minutes disclosed by the Inquiry. In addition, I have reviewed my emails and GAG blogs to identify some that are relevant to the motivation for the Grenfell Tower refurbishment, they provide evidence of some of the arguments we were making for investment in the Tower and then querying subsequent delays in the works commencing and lack of meaningful consultation or engagement with residents. The documents also help to chart the way in which the subject of the refurbishment was communicated to us:

- c. KALC Forum minutes of 25 January 2012 record that the Council had commissioned the TMO to ascertain how much it would cost to do some works to the Tower. At the meeting I also highlighted the improvements to the Edward Woods Estate in nearby Hammersmith as a model for the type of improvements that could be achieved. The minute taker inaccurately recorded this as the “Edward Woodwards estate”. This appears to be the immediate origins of the discussion with residents about doing refurbishment works. I exhibit these minutes as ED2/28 ().
- d. In January 2012 I sent emails to Andrzej Kuszell asking him to bring evidence that Studio E had considered noise and light pollution from KALC impacting on Grenfell Tower to a KALC residents forum. Laura Johnson replied that “*Andrzej and his team are too busy to answer queries from individual residents and rely on the Council to undertake this role for them all be it with their input*”. Instead she offered me a meeting with Max Fordham. I exhibit my emails on this as ED2/29 ().
- e. On 26 February 2012 the Grenfell Tower Leaseholders Association (GTLA) wrote to Councillor Coleridge requesting investment in Grenfell Tower and saying as follows: “*The irony is that the proposed academy is going to be build [sic] right next to Grenfell Tower, an academy with a 21st century heating system and double glazed windows. The council and the managing agents K&CTMO are allowing Grenfell Tower to remain a building which is stuck in the 60’s. The area cannot be considered to be regenerated without an upgrade to Grenfell Tower...The heating cost is 1/3 of all service charges at Grenfell Tower. It is because of heating that rent and service charges are so high. It was also discussed at the meeting how dangerous and [un]inhabitable the heating system is at Grenfell Tower. The council’s managing agents has reduced the Grenfell Tower to slum...The rents and service charges at Grenfell Tower are the highest in the Borough and this is most certainly not reflected in the level of services.*” The GTLA asked for Grenfell Tower to be improved similar to Edward Woods Estate with Rockwool: “*The project will see all of the tower blocks given a combination of Rockwool Rockshield and Rockwool Rockpanel that will smarten up the estate and improve the buildings whilst lowering resident’s heating bills.*” I exhibit this email as ED2/30 ().
- f. On 27 February 2012 Councillor Coleridge wrote to Keith Mott of the GTLA in reply and copied me in to say: “*I am fully aware that Grenfell Tower needs*

considerable attention, and both the Council and the KCTMO are looking very carefully at what should be done. It is clear that the hot water and heating system needs replacement and the Tower would be greatly improved were we to provide new windows. The insulation and general look could also be greatly enhanced if we were able to clad the outside with thermal efficient panels. I have been working with officers and the KCTMO for sometime now to see how such a refurbishment could be funded, and we will be consulting with residents in the near future.” I exhibit this as Exhibit ED2/31 ().

- g. I have now seen minutes of a “Hidden Homes Meeting” dated 13 March 2012 attended by various people from RBKC (Property, Planning, Housing), the TMO, “Hunter & Partners” and “Pellings” (ED2/32: TMO10001122). At the meeting Mark Anderson reports that Studio E had already been chosen to work on Grenfell Tower. He reports having visited my flat to look at my windows from the interior noting they are in repairable condition but unsafe. The minutes of the meeting record: “*Peter Wright [RBKC] will have an overview of both projects, though his main focus will be KALC. The TMO will provide an assistant PM with primary responsibility for Grenfell*”. This suggests to me that the decision to refurbish Grenfell was taken by RBKC and it was given lesser importance than the KALC project.
- h. On 15 March 2012 Cllr Coleridge wrote to me to say: “*...we are trying to do something for Grenfell Tower as residents here are most affected by the KALC project, and the condition of the windows and heating system is particularly in need of attention. The question of wider works for the whole estate are not something that I can answer at the moment, and will be the subject of a much longer term plan once the new "self-financing" regime is bedded down and a longer term capital programme is drawn up by the TMO, based on need.*” I exhibit this as Exhibit ED2/33 ().
- i. KALC Forum Minutes of 28 March 2012 (ED2/34: LBI00000129) recorded that Mark Anderson of the TMO presented options for the regeneration of Grenfell Tower including “*external fenestration, windows, void areas on lower level of tower, rationalizing office space, heating*”. The minutes record “*Initial survey of residents of Grenfell Tower, further discussions to be held with EMB*”. I questioned why Studio E had been chosen to do the work. This built on the point made previously by Teresa

Miles as to Studio E's membership of the Architectural Appraisal Panel. Councillor Coleridge responded that it was very difficult to have different contractors on site when there were two different projects going on. "*Synergises [sic] across projects design need between school, leisure centre, public realm and Grenfell Tower*". Given that Coleridge's response referred to Grenfell Tower, and that I can now see that Studio E had already been appointed to do the work on Grenfell Tower it is likely that my objection to Studio E's appointment was relating to their appointment to work on Grenfell Tower, not just KALC.

- j. On 2 April 2012 I emailed Councillor Coleridge after a meeting with Andrzej Kuszell from Studio E to complain that while Studio E had said they were consulting residents, in reality they weren't. I don't remember the detail of what happened at this meeting but Councillor Coleridge admonished me for raising my voice with Andrzej Kuszell. In the reply email I can see I apologised that things had become so acrimonious and that I would modify my behaviour in future. However, I explained that: "*For Studio E to sit in front of the Residents Forum claiming that we have been allowed to actively influence this project is deeply insulting. It took me seven weeks and constant emails to get Andrzej to honour his commitment to visit our Estate and when I wrote him an email requesting further local involvement he forwarded my query to Laura Johnson who informed me that the architect was too busy to deal with residents concerns. Through this and other oppressive actions (please refer to my previous email to you for evidence supporting this assertion) our community has now come to understand that the Council, architect, landscapers, etc, have no intention of facilitating meaningful local participation and, instead, use the Residents Forum as a place where they come to simply update residents on their progress?*". I exhibit the emails as ED2/35 (). I regarded Andrzej Kuszell as being complicit in the ill-treatment of residents. The evidence disclosed by this Inquiry suggests that I was right to do so; it haunts me that we could not have done more to ensure he paid due regard to residents' views, our welfare or to stop him and Studio E in their tracks. While preparing this statement I have had the time to look over a large number of emails and blogs as well as considering personal meetings, both public and private, with individual councillors, council officers and other stakeholders. Through this process I have reflected on my relationship with all these parties. For the great majority of the time I behaved in a professional, polite and constructive

manner to people who were acting in an oppressive manner towards us. However, it is fair to say that there were occasions when my emotions were tested and my frustration rose to the surface as a result of the injustice of residents not being listened to, cared for or respected resulting in decisions which caused ill-treatment of our community. Living in the conditions we were forced to, with the power imbalance we faced, did on occasion push me to the limit.

- k. On 16 April 2012 I wrote to Cllr Coleridge on the subject of noise from the KALC to say: *“Grenfell Action Group have been denied access to any information with regards how the architect and Council are going to safeguard residents’ wellbeing by mitigating against the worst effects of noise pollution on residents on Lancaster West Estate [caused by KALC]. Please could you inform me when residents will be provided with evidence that these concerns have/are being addressed by the Council and the architect?”*(ED2/36:). A meeting was ultimately arranged with Max Fordham and took place on 29 May 2012 at 2pm at Max Fordham’s office in Camden. Regrettably, the meeting was futile. The meeting was supposed to be for Planning Aid for London, myself and Max Fordham to discuss acoustics but without any prior warning a representative from RBKC attended and asserted that I should not be permitted to ask any questions as it was a *“professionals meeting”*. I later complained about RBKC’s conduct but they took the word of the RBKC officer and my complaint was not upheld. The pattern was therefore entrenched. Given that I had the ‘temerity’ to want to hold the professionals to account, I was the problem that they needed protection from. There was no enthusiasm that the residents and the professionals might be in a form of genuine dialogue and understanding; let alone, that professionals ought to be accountable to the residents for the plans that they had which would affect our lives.
- l. On 17 April 2012 there was an open EMB meeting for which I have now seen the minutes and can see I attended (ED2/37: TMO10001167). At the meeting Mark Anderson said the TMO board had approved an application to RBKC for funding for refurbishing Grenfell Tower. He noted that they wanted to take advantage of joint procurement with KALC and were mindful that residents and Councillor Coleridge wished the TMO to progress the works as soon as possible.

- m. In emails in June 2012 Councillor Coleridge took credit for securing investment into Grenfell Tower, while saying there would be no investment elsewhere on the Lancaster West Estate:

11.06.2012 (ED2/38:) *“The TMO has been very open about the future timescale of other works around the estate. We are going to do Grenfell Tower first, because Grenfell Tower is in the poorest condition, and you made it clear that the central heating was insufferable. We have listened to this and acted upon it. The H[ousing] R[evenue] A[ccount] does not at the present time have sufficient resources to undertake additional work, however we are working on ways to find extra resources for all our estates. We are probably agout [sic] £70M short at present, but we are seking [sic] ways to address this issue.”*

18.06.2012: (ED2/39:) *“I have worked hard to secure Grenfell Tower a major refurb. The rest of the estate as I and the TMO have explained will be the subject of future renewal when assets permit.”*

- n. KALC Forum minutes 20 June 2012 (ED2/40: LBI00000243) record a lengthy update on design proposals for works to Grenfell Tower from the TMO and Studio E. There was reference to a meeting on 29 May 2012 where these proposals were presented to residents. It was said that the works to Grenfell would take place *“in parallel”* to the KALC works and that the same construction team would work on both. A planning application for Grenfell was due to be submitted in August. I remember here, and elsewhere, Francis O’Connor and I were advocating for double glazing not just for Grenfell Tower, but also for the wider Estate. We wanted this to protect residents from the noise of the Academy, but also, as I said above, to secure investment in the wider Estate so it would be less likely that the wider Estate would be demolished. Cllr Foreman (A Notting Barnes Labour Councillor) also raised this issue. The response we received was that there was *“no more money”* for the wider Estate, so it would need to be looked into in the future. I can see that as an “AOB” a question was asked as to whether any asbestos would be disturbed as part of the Grenfell Tower works. It is likely that I raised this issue as I was the only Grenfell Tower resident present at the meeting. I see it was noted at the meeting that not all

Two – Rifkind Rides in” (ED2/45:). We noted that “...*our local MP Sir Malcolm Rifkind, has responded to pleas for his help from both ourselves, and some of the worst affected individuals. Sir Malcolm has at least found a suitably compassionate tone, unlike Cllr Coleridge who until recently, and despite being repeatedly warned of this, seemed oblivious to the fact that there were many vulnerable residents right on the frontline, whose welfare had clearly not even been considered.*”

- r. On 13 August 2012 I sent an invitation to all RBKC Councillors to visit the Estate and said: “*Despite the impending imposition into our community of the new Kensington Academy Leisure Centre (KALC), the vast majority of Lancaster West Estate has seen no significant investment in the past 40 years and, as a consequence of this neglect, the Estate's housing stock now resembles a ghetto. Our heating system (when working!) pumps out water so hot it is a Health and Safety risk and our windows are draughty, dangerous and certainly no longer fit for purpose. Many fearful and frightened residents face the prospect of their homes being turned into a giant building site without any adequate protection from the dust or noise pollution during the construction of KALC. The exterior of the Estate is crumbling and has an appearance of dereliction while very few improvements have been initiated to the interior of any of our properties in many, many years.*” (ED2/46: RBK00035893).
- s. In August 2012 I became aware that the first planning application concerning the works to Grenfell Tower was submitted by KCTMO to the RBKC Planning Committee which would have happened after a statutory public consultation. The application was submitted by the KCTMO.
- t. On 15 and 20 August 2012 I was copied in to emails from Peter Martindale of 144 Grenfell Tower to Bruce Sounes at Studio E and McQuatt of Max Fordham which referred to a Grenfell Tower extractor fan not working properly and needing to be replaced: “*It frequently not only fails to extract but is the source of incoming smells from other flats*”... “*This has been brought to the attention of the TMO over many years, who have failed to do anything*” ... “*It was emphasised then that this clearly also presented a fire and suffocation risk should there be a fire in another flat. It would appear nothing has been done about it as the problem persists.*” (ED2/47:

MAX00003083). His flat subsequently became the ‘show flat’ when Rydon were carrying out the works to Grenfell Tower.

u. In October 2012 the original planning application was withdrawn and a new application was submitted. Funding was increased from about £6million to £9.7million without any explanation being given to residents.

51. The above references provide just a snapshot of the efforts residents had to make to be heard, to ensure we could finally have some investment in our homes after decades of under-investment. The minutes of meetings and Leadbitter KALC Newsletters suggest that RBKC and TMO chose to invest in issues we had been campaigning about and that investment was a response to our campaigns.

52. In May 2013 I exchanged emails with Councillor Coleridge about who would be the new chair of the KALC forum and be responsible for KALC and the Grenfell Tower projects as he was moving on to Planning. I also invited him to a meeting with me and Francis O’Connor where we might have a cup of tea and speak off the record about what had gone on between the Council and Lancaster Wests residents. He replied: *“The new Cabinet member for Housing and Property is Cllr Rock Feilding-Mellen, I therefore assume he will chair the KALC Forum and he will be responsible for the delivery of KALC, and of course the Grenfell Tower refurbishment works etc.”* ... *“questions about when Grenfell will finally go to planning etc should be addressed to either Cllr F-M or of course Laura Johnson or other senior officers, as I simply will not have the day to day knowledge of what is going on.”* ... *“It has (genuinely) been a privilege to have worked with you and other residents, and despite some stormy Forums we have continued to talk to each other.”* (ED2/48:)

PART III: FIRE SAFETY CONCERNS FOR GRENFELL TOWER ARISING FROM KALC

Emergency vehicle access

53. Focus on whether the TMO were compromising our fire safety began with the KALC building works. One of the specific reasons for opposing KALC in the first place was to do with the impact it would have on access to Grenfell Tower for LFB appliances in the

event of a fire. We had a carpark in Lancaster West that was situated where the old Lancaster baths (a listed building) were before they were knocked down in the late 1970s. The car park was very well used, not just by the residents, but delivery companies and contractors. It was also used by the police and ambulance service each year during the Notting Hill Carnival. In this sense it was a health and safety resource. GAG argued that if they took our car park away this would lead to increased traffic and parking on Grenfell Road, which was the route through which the LFB would gain access to Grenfell Tower in the event of a fire. It was our opinion that people would also now park closer to the base of the Tower, and take up the space normally used for emergency vehicular access, where fire engines could park in the event of a fire and point their hoses up at the Tower. As it transpired, people did start parking at the base of the building more after the car park was taken away. We thought that if you take away a large car park people are going to park wherever they can, and as close as they can to the Tower. It was obvious to Francis O'Connor and I as well as Planning Aid for London that this could cause problems for emergency vehicles, such as fire engines. The Council was also planning on creating a rat run by opening up a North/South route between Silchester Road and Grenfell Road which also felt unsafe.

54. GAG drafted a leaflet, which a number of us handed out prior to a public meeting on the subject on 20 September 2010. This is exhibited as ED2/49 (), a copy was also sent to the caretaker Rob Regan who was employed by the TMO but also had many concerns about the impact of KALC on the Estate. The leaflet said as follows: *"Has the Council fully investigated the Health and Safety issues related to access to Grenfell Tower by emergency services and providing residents with room to evacuate Grenfell Tower in event of fire, etc?"*. The meeting itself had been called by councillors due to lack of consultation with Grenfell residents in relation to the Academy. I have found a copy of the Councillors' leaflet in my emails and it is now produced as Exhibit ED2/50 ().

55. Much later, once the KALC project had been approved and Leadbitter had been appointed to carry out the construction GAG raised this concern via emails sent to Colin Chiles and Leadbitter, the TMO and RBKC councillors between 2 October 2012 and 10 October 2012 (ED2/51: TMO10001692). In our email of 10 October 2012 I also asked for

the name and email address of the TMO/Leadbitter's Fire Strategy Consultant, but I can't find any reference in my emails to having been provided with those details.

56. In relation to the Council's intention to remove the resident carpark and the impact it would have on emergency vehicular access the Planning Aid for London report had said:

"8.2 The new through route via Grenfell Road is a major concern to the local community and it does not believe that the effects of this route have been properly assessed. At the current time, this route is a private route that is accessible only to residents, servicing vehicles and the emergency services. The opening of this route will inevitably lead to a high level of usage, especially at peak periods as drivers seek to avoid delays on other parts of the road network.

...

8.3 There is concern that the opening of Grenfell Road to all traffic will inhibit emergency vehicle access to Grenfell Tower and Grenfell, Barandon, Testerton and Hurstway Walks." (ED2/52:)

57. I have found emails which show that I spoke to Matthew Ramsey at Hammersmith Fire Station who advised me to contact Janice Wray (Health & Safety at the TMO) regarding concerns about emergency vehicle access. However, Yvonne Birch (Executive Director of People and Performance at the TMO), did not provide me with Janice Wray's details so I contacted Cllr Judith Blakeman who sent me her email address on 16 October 2012 (ED2/53:).

58. GAG subsequently emailed Janice Wray, copying in Yvonne Birch in relation to this issue between 16 October 2012 and 21 January 2013 and received various replies

(ED2/54:). We specifically asked whether there was an ongoing fire risk assessment in relation to access for fire appliances along Grenfell Road as a result of the removal of the car park. In an email of 22 October 2012 we said *"If a fire was to break out in Grenfell Tower (as it did on the sixth floor a few years ago) residents have no confidence that the fire brigade would, either currently or in the future, be able to gain guaranteed access to our tower block"*.

59. Judith Blakeman wrote an email to Janice Wray the same day 22 October 2012, copying me in, where she agreed with us that an updated Fire Risk Assessment would be needed not just for Grenfell Tower but for all parts of the Estate affected by the construction works (ED2/55: TMO10037932).

60. On 26 October 2012 Mark Anderson provided a response in relation to this issue (ED2/56:) He said: *“As previously advised all enquiries relating to the operational delivery of the KALC project should now be directed to Colin Chiles of Leadbitter. Grenfell Tower Regeneration Project enquiries should be directed to myself and Paul Dunkerton and general estate enquiries should be directed to Siobhan Rumble. With regard to fire safety at Grenfell Tower and for that matter the remainder of the estate, and as advised at the Estate Management Board meeting, the fire safety and management arrangements form part of the respective projects and at present there is no impact upon the access routes that LFEPA would utilise in the event of an incident. We shall also be reviewing this aspect of the projects as they evolve and progress and will ensure via the project teams that appropriate provision is made for fire safety.”*
61. Ms Wray ultimately emailed Yvonne Birch on 16 January 2013 (forwarded to me by Yvonne Birch on 21 January 2013) to say that she had met the Station Manager from North Kensington Fire Station on 20 December 2012 and that he had found no reason for concern. She also said as follows: *“I responded to Mr Daffarn on 19th October 2012 advising that the fire safety legislation explicitly requires landlords to carry out Fire Risk Assessments on the communal areas of residential blocks. The purpose of this assessment is to consider the fire safety of the internal communal areas and to record necessary actions and significant findings. However, it would also highlight any issues or concerns regarding London Fire Brigade access to the block etc...”* (ED2/54:).
62. Importantly, I am now aware that in an email from Janice Wray to Mark Anderson, Robert Black and Anthony Parks on 22 October 2012 she had said the opposite: *“I can instruct the risk assessor to review the fire risk assessment, however, this would be confined to the communal areas of Grenfell Tower and would not consider roads and traffic issues that are of concern to them”* (ED2/57: TMO10037934). She asked the recipients how to respond to the concerns raised by me and Councillor Blakeman. Mark Anderson’s reply to me of 26 October did not mention any of this. I did not receive any evidence upon which the TMO purportedly based their assertion that traffic would not increase as a result of KALC.
63. On the night of the fire I believe that emergency vehicles had difficulty getting close to Grenfell Tower including having to move parked cars out of the way, just as we had warned. Some of the Firefighters that were slowed down in their access to the site

included the first FRU team, Gillam (ED2/58: MET00008025_0004) and Roberts (ED2/59: MET00007890_0003) as well as Gallagher (ED2/60: MET00010083_009). The FRU Team could not access the Tower from the direction of Lancaster Road and so had to go around the Tower and approach from Whitchurch Road moving parked cars along the way. Regardless of whether those difficulties had a material impact on the spread of the fire and its impact on residents on 14 June 2017 I would like the Inquiry to consider the relevance of how GAG's concerns were dealt with, whether they were properly addressed or not as it is relevant to the culture within the TMO in relation to fire safety concerns.

Parking around the base of Grenfell Tower

64. In addition to the anticipated problem of increased parking along Grenfell Road local residents often witnessed vehicles parking in the emergency access areas around the base of the Tower. This was raised by a Lancaster West resident, Teresa Miles, who passed away after the fire and was a GAG member and also active in local issues, as well as Francis O'Connor and myself. Francis O'Connor wrote emails about this to the TMO and LFB (ED2/61: TMO10002126) as well as GAG writing blogs about it around the end of 2012 and beginning of 2013.
65. Some of the blogs we wrote about this issue were "Fire Safety Scandal at Lancaster West" (ED2/62: TMO10017466), "More on Fire Safety" (ED2/63: TMO00830282), "Another Fire Safety Scandal" (ED2/64: TMO00835301) and "TMO asleep at the wheel" (ED2/65: TMO00833831). In the first three blogs we criticised the conduct of Siobhan Rumble (TMO Neighbourhood Manager at Lancaster West).
66. In response to the blog of 28 January 2013 Francis O'Connor informed me that he had received a call from Siobhan Rumble threatening him with legal action. The blog in relation to this is dated 22 February 2013 entitled "Oops" and I exhibit it as ED2/66 (). None of the legal threats we received in relation to defamation ever materialised, we were never sued.
67. Later, once the KALC construction works had begun, I raised concerns about vehicles again parking in an area I thought would impede access for the LFB. I exhibit my emails with Ben Dewis at LFB in March and April 2014 as ED2/67 ().

68. I am aware that on the night of the fire there was a vehicle parked in the emergency access area at the bottom of Grenfell Tower, photographed by Miguel Alves (ED2/68: IWS00000536).

69. I am concerned that the removal of the car-park and the building of the Academy surrounding Grenfell Tower prevented the London Fire Brigade from being able to quickly access all the areas of the Tower that they needed to with high rise aerial ladder platforms. I believe that the Council and planners should have paid more attention to the issues that were raised by residents and Planning Aid for London when we highlighted our concerns at the planning stage.

PART IV: DELAY ON THE REFURBISHMENT

Slow progress on Grenfell refurbishment works after the decision to invest

70. After the decision to invest in Grenfell Tower was taken GAG became suspicious that the work would not be done at all. There was significant delay to the project. I had also been told that there was significant opposition to the works being funded within the Council. As I have mentioned previously, I was told by Judith Blakeman that Councillor Feilding-Mellen (who was sitting on the RBKC Cabinet but was not a Cabinet Member for Housing and Property at the time) was vehemently opposed to the project. Councillor Blakeman told me that he was actually opposed to any investment in Lancaster West as a whole. We believed that there were politicians in the Council who were generally reluctant to spend any money on Lancaster West because they were preparing for regeneration, and we believed that individuals, like Councillor Feilding-Mellen, were waiting for the opportunity to get their property developer contacts involved.

71. Although Grenfell residents had been told that the refurbishment works would be done at the same time as the KALC project that didn't happen. Throughout 2013 and for the first half of 2014 Francis O'Connor and I wrote a series of blogs recording our frustration at delays to the refurbishment project. We started to think they were never going to take place and from conversations I was having with the Grenfell Tower Leaseholders Association (GTLA) I think they felt the same. One of our blogs on this subject was written on 15 June 2013 entitled "The Grenfell Tower project – What's going on?" where

we called a residents consultation meeting on 17 June 2013. I exhibit the blog as ED2/69 ().

72. Residents and Leaseholders had very little information about what was going on during 2013-2014. I now know that during this time Leadbitter were being replaced by Rydon, but at the time I had no idea this was happening and don't recall any other residents I spoke to being made aware of this or being invited to participate in the procurement process before we were notified that Rydon had taken on the job.

73. It was in that context that I sent an email to Claire Williams on 7 April 2014 asking about the level of resident involvement in the decision to hire Rydon. She replied: "*There were 3 residents involved in the evaluation of tenders for Grenfell*". I exhibit these emails as ED2/70 (). I now know that Claire Williams was not truthful in her response (ED2/71: TMO00840364_0008, paragraph 39).

74. From the very beginning I questioned the ability of the TMO to properly manage the refurbishment works and whether they should have been given this enormous responsibility. I can remember, during a residents meeting with the TMO, that a poster they had attached to the wall fell off. I remember thinking that if these guys can't even stick a poster to a wall, how on earth are they going to supervise the improvement works to our building? There was also a meeting where Claire Williams attended with her name badge on the wrong way up, I thought if she couldn't even manage that, how could she be an effective Project Manager?

GAG Blogs criticising the delay

75. The GAG blogs written throughout 2013 and the first half of 2014 included as follows and indicate that from our perspective the refurbishment project was being carried out in a haphazard way with residents being kept in the dark:

- a. 21 April 2013: "Whatever happened to..." (ED2/11:)
- b. 14 May 2013: "Whatever happened...and other stories" (ED2/72:): We were still awaiting for the planning decision to be acted upon by the Planning Committee and then we had news in May 2013, around the time that the residents in Grenfell Tower were experiencing power surges, that the second planning application

had been withdrawn and that a third planning application was going to be in the summer of 2014. The TMO and the Council did not communicate the reasons for the delays at the time.

- c. 22 July 2013: “Trick or treat – the Grenfell Tower Project” (ED2/73:): In this blog we highlighted some of our concerns, for example that Leadbitters stated that the Regeneration works will cost £11.3 million and that was £1.6 million more than the funds that were available to do the project. The blog refers to a meeting that took place on 19 July 2013 with the Cabinet Member for Housing and senior officers from the Council and TMO. I sent a proposed agenda before the meeting (ED2/74:). Amongst other things I wrote: *“Will any cost cutting be to the detriment of the project as a whole and will it lead to lower quality standard of works?”* and also *“Why has the TMO been given overall responsibility for the GT Reurb [sic] and why hasn't a Council Cabinet Member been given a lead role in overseeing the whole project. It is our understanding that this refurb should be under the ultimate responsibility of the Council and that an appointed Cabinet Member must come from outside of Housing.”* It was my understanding at the time that a project of this nature should have been overseen by a Cabinet Member not from the same department as the one commissioning the works. I have now seen two version of the minutes of that meeting (ED2/75: RBK00000034 and ED2/76: RBK00003561). According to both versions of the minutes, my concern about cost cutting and inadequate RBKC oversight - by a Cabinet Member from outside Housing - were not addressed. I disagree with the characterisation of the meeting at the final paragraph of ED2/75 which wrongly suggests all residents were satisfied with the outcome.
- d. 22 October 2013: “Whatever happened to the Grenfell Tower Project – reprised” (ED2/77:). In this blog we referenced a Resident Engagement Meeting on 19 September 2013. During a meeting we were told by Peter Maddison that the planning application was on track and had been submitted to the RBKC and that any delays were the responsibility of RBKC. Francis O'Connor and I did some digging around and spoke to the Planning Department at the Town Hall and we actually found out that wasn't true. We found out, during a telephone conversation I had with the Planning Department, that the reason the Planning Application had been held up was because the KCTMO had not supplied some kind of satisfactory legal agreement

refurbishment on residents (ED2/12: RBK00013826). I deal with the power surge issue separately below.

77. After substantial delays the work on Grenfell Tower was finally commenced by Rydon. The Council had by now approved a bigger budget for the project. The first blog we wrote referring to the project having started was dated 14 July 2014.

PART V: NO TRUE ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Information Commissioner's office (ICO)

78. There were a number of occasions when I was completely frustrated by the refusal of RBKC and the TMO to provide information to me. In my first statement I set out the difficulties GAG faced in obtaining information from the TMO under the Freedom of Information Act and the ICO position in relation to the TMO. The problem embraced my request to see the TMO's minutes that discussed the building works at Grenfell Tower, including input from the TMO, Rydon and Studio E (IWS00000169_026 paragraph 99-104).

79. My obvious greatest regret is that we were not able to obtain more information about the shortcomings of the refurbishment that are being disclosed in the Phase 2, Module 1 part of this Inquiry. We wanted to understand how Studio E and Rydon were appointed and we were endlessly concerned about the fact that fire safety was not being protected properly. Greater access to information, with additional support on how to understand it, would have made the consultation a true one, instead of a sham.

TMO refusing to disclose documents under the Data Protection Act

80. Before the fire I made a request to the TMO for all documents they held about me under the DPA. I did this, not least, because I believed that the TMO had become institutionally biased against me and others who were complaining about their conduct. The correspondence is produced as ED2/83 (). The documents were provided to me by post and destroyed in the fire. However, having reviewed documents disclosed on Relativity and more recently under the DPA I can now see there were many more documents held about me that should have been disclosed in 2016 but were not.

PART VI: THE AVAILABLE MEANS OF EXPRESSING CONCERN

81. The Public Inquiry's Updated List of issues dated 25 September 2019 explains that the Inquiry wishes to investigate communication with residents including the systems available for residents to express concerns and views about fire safety. I am aware of the following systems in place or opportunities for overseeing and complaining about the TMO and I provide some background on them before detailing complaints made during the refurbishment works and how they were dealt with:

- a. KCTMO Board of Directors
- b. Formal complaints process;
- c. Informal complaints;
- d. Residents Associations;
- e. The Grenfell Tower 'Compact';
- f. The RBKC Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee;
- g. Local Councillors.

82. Prior to addressing these matters I will briefly explain the context of TMO governance deficits set out in the Maria Memoli report of 2009.

The Maria Memoli report

83. In 2009 the TMO were investigated by the Local Government Authority, by way of a report prepared by Maria Memoli. I believe this was the only independent report ever prepared on the TMO. It was damning and I believe that many of the problems highlighted by Maria Memoli became worse as time went on. They were still evident, and may be relevant to, the causes of the Grenfell Tower fire. The Memoli Report is publicly available on the GAG website. I exhibit it as ED2/84 (). It was a comprehensive criticism of a leviathan TMO empowered by the Modular Management Agreement.

84. The report found, amongst other things, as follows:

“The Council and the TMO now find themselves in an impossible situation in that funding falls far short of the level of investment needed to maintain the stock at the appropriate level”

“The Council faces some tough decisions on establishing priorities for reduced capital expenditure and the TMO will have to balance the needs of the residents with the budget allocated to it by the Council.” [p.7]

...

“The Council should be more robust in monitoring the management functions of the TMO under the MMA 2006– specifically: • complaints about the performance issues of both itself and the TMO as manager of the Council’s properties, • management of complaints policy and procedure • monitoring and development of the management functions delegated to the TMO” [p.12]

...

[Out of a summary of 400 complaints] the main complaints elaborated within the themes identified below: bad workmanship by contractors, lack of contractor supervision...monitoring of contracts and works, lack of customer care, etiquette and ethics generally...lack of respect by certain individuals at the TMO towards residents and vice versa...lack of training and development of Board Members on understanding their roles and responsibilities. [pp16-17].

“There was a general feeling amongst residents (leaseholders and tenants alike) that: The quality of cyclical repairs and major works were sub-standard, Requests for repairs were ignored, there was insufficient monitoring of the contractors on site doing the work to prevent the sub-standard quality of the work, Comments such as “being short-changed”, “bad workmanship”, “not fit for purpose”, and “lack of attention to detail” were made frequently.” [p. 18]

“Some residents direct their queries and complaints to the Chief Executive of the TMO with copies to the Chief Executive of the Council and to the Leader of the Council, and expect a response direct from the Chief Executive of the TMO (this was the normal procedure used by her predecessor). According to the complainants, the reason for this copying of complaints to others is the hope that someone will at least take notice.” [p. 28]

“By far the largest volume of complaints by residents was in relation to disruption to resident’s lives during major works programmes...The next highest volume was in relation to contractor attitudes and their lack of respect for the residents.” [p. 38]

85. Maria Memoli made the following recommendations:

“Conduct a skills and competency audit of staff to match posts, particularly the Technical Services department”

“A review of the Complaints procedure in the light of the findings of this report”

“Review procedure for Tenant Repairs response times and follow up”

“The Council should take a more robust role to ensure TMO technical services are capable of delivering an effective major works programme and Cyclical repairs”

“TMO to be more robust in monitoring Major Works Contracts and Cyclical repairs”

“Better communication between the Council and the TMO and protocols for joint working”

“The TMO to create a separate committee to oversee performance, standards, probity and ethics, made up of independent members and coopted individuals to report directly to the TMO Board”

“The Council to re-consider the level of investment in the fabric of their buildings; although it is appreciated at the time of writing this report the Council is considering its stock options”.

“TMO or TMO’s contractors to ensure only skilled labourers are used so as to comply with MMA 2006 in that contractors are of “an acceptable standard of quality”. TMO to consider making specific reference to this in the contract documentation when work is to be tendered (case study 5).”

“A Clerk of Works to sign off only that work which has been carried out in accordance with specification documents (case study 5).” [p. 21]

“TMO to ensure all snagging items on major works is satisfactorily and efficiently dealt with.” [p.22]

25. The Council, as Freeholder, to take more of a proactive role in the monitoring of Major Works Contracts and Cyclical repairs and be robust in checking the TMO’s performance under the MMA 2006. 26. TMO to take a more robust monitoring role of Major works contracts and cyclical repairs and to take immediate action against the contractor for noncompliance. [p. 46].

86. The nature of this criticism came as no surprise to the residents. I knew that the report was damning of the KCTMO and I heard a rumour that the KCTMO had a chance to soften the report, so it may have originally been even worse. As a result of that report, the Council threatened the KCTMO with closure and served them with a ‘Breach Notice’ which gave them six months to get their house in order. Robert Black was appointed Chief Executive with the task of improving the KCTMO, which in my opinion he didn’t manage to do.

87. As with other senior TMO employees, I do not believe Robert Black had sufficient qualifications or training to run a housing organisation, especially one the size of the TMO. I believe that anyone tasked with running social housing should have a formal

qualification in that discipline and undergo continuing professional development. Robert Black's purported experience to run a large housing organisation was detailed in his Phase 1 evidence (ED2/85: T74/140/24 - T74/142/19). The fact that Robert Black started out managing residential care for 'rough sleepers' surprises me in terms of how little compassion he was able to show once he became a corporate housing manager. Another aspect of the problem with the KCTMO was that the endeavour was too big, comprising the management of 10,000 housing dwellings.

88. Elizabeth Campbell, the now leader of the Council, was on the KCTMO Board at the time the Breach Notice was served on the KCTMO. The Memoli Report put Councillors on notice that the TMO required robust scrutiny but that didn't happen.
89. I wasn't involved with the Memoli Report but it later became the Grenfell Action Group's goal to get another independent investigation to look at how the KCTMO had handled the refurbishment, but of course that never happened.
90. Had GAG known about the Homes and Community Agency and the functions they were supposed to carry out with regard to regulating social housing, perhaps we could have gone to them and maybe they could have helped us by investigating the KCTMO and finding out that everything we were saying about them was true. After the fire I became aware that one of the TMO's directors, Anthony Preiskel, was on the HCA's board but nobody at the TMO or RBKC ever suggested we could go to the HCA if we wanted them to scrutinise the TMO.

KCTMO Board of directors

91. It is my understanding that the KCTMO's work should have been scrutinised by its Board of Directors. However, the Grenfell Action Group questioned this in a blog entitled "Pants on Fire" on 9 January 2016 (ED2/86:). We gave a 'Pants on Fire Award' periodically to those who we felt most deserved them. Faye Edwards, who was widely seen by residents as an ineffective chair of the KCTMO board, had just been awarded the British Empire medal as part of the New Year's honours list. My understanding of her role as Chair of the KCTMO was that she was responsible for holding the management of the KCTMO to account, scrutinising what they did including at the annual AGM. However, we discovered from a local news report that she was

nominated for an honour by the person she was supposed to be scrutinising, Robert Black (ED2/87:). We wrote about this conflict of interest in our blog: *“One has to wonder, therefore, to what extent her ability to promote and facilitate that scrutiny, in a detached and independent manner, may have been compromised by Mr Black’s nomination of her for such a prestigious honour. One has to wonder also whether it was appropriate for Mr Black to have made the nomination in the first place, and whether it will now be possible for Ms Edwards to act in the best interests of RBKC residents, when her palm has been crossed with silver (in the form of this nomination) by the chief executive of the TMO, over whom she carries a particular duty of oversight and scrutiny.”*

92. To be a Resident Board Member, I believe you just had to put yourself forward for election, then you would need a couple of KCTMO residents to second you. I did occasionally think of putting myself forward to become a resident board member but I just couldn’t stomach the idea because of how the KCTMO treated us. My general feeling about the Resident Board Members at the KCTMO was that the KCTMO officers found residents who they could manage and manipulate.
93. I was also struck by the inability of more robust Council nominated KCTMO Board Members such as Councillors Blakeman and Emma Dent Coad to effectively advocate on behalf of residents to effect meaningful change. I felt, if they were unable to be effective, how could resident board members be?
94. There was one resident Board Member that I was acquainted with who was an exception to that rule. His name was Iain Smith and I know he rocked the boat while a resident Board Member of the KCTMO. He is now the Chair for the Residents Association for Pond House, which is South of the Borough. He sat on the Board for a long time and was a thorn in the side of the KCTMO. I believe the KCTMO eventually sacked him. In my view the treatment of Iain Smith provides evidence that if, as a board member or former board member, you stood up to the KCTMO, they would target you and make life difficult for you.

My experience of the KCTMO complaints process and Housing Ombudsman

95. One of the only complaints ever upheld in my favour by the KCTMO was a complaint I made against Peter Maddison in late 2013. I had requested the Rand Report, a survey of

the condition of the TMO's housing stock, which indicated investment was required in the region of £105 million by 2017. The current allocation was £7.5 million per year for the following four years for capital works, so there was a potential shortfall between the funding needed and the funding available of £67 million by 2017.

96. Peter Maddison went out of his way to supply a meaningless redacted document, when he should have given us the full document (ED2/88: TMO10045047). Janet Seward, the KCTMO Policy & Improvement Manager reviewed my complaint and stated; *"In conclusion, I would say that the way in which your enquiry was dealt with, falls below the standard expected at the TMO.* GAG subsequently blogged about this. I exhibit the relevant blog as ED2/89 (). I was ultimately provided with an unredacted copy of the Rand report on 31 October 2013 by Angela Bosnjak-Szekeres, Company Secretary and Head of Governance at the TMO. I attach that document as ED2/90 () in the event that it is of use in the Inquiry. The report made annual provision of £575,000 for the TMO in maintaining "fire safety and means of escape". I would like the Inquiry to consider whether this was a sufficient sum given the size of the TMO housing portfolio and also whether it was spent each year if so to what end. Whilst I was provided with the report itself I was not provided with the appendices. I understand having reviewed disclosure and statements provided by the Inquiry that the Rand study and its appendices were relied upon by RBKC and the TMO in the decision to refurbish Grenfell Tower. I have requested that the Appendices be obtained and disclosed by the Inquiry and await their receipt.
97. In my view the TMO complaints procedure was defective. They did not take my complaints seriously even where those complaints related to our homes, our safety and wellbeing. The TMO just weren't interested in properly responding to complaints, taking necessary action to remedy what was being complained about and learning from the complaints being made. The TMO made you feel like you did not have the right to question, complain or scrutinise their activities despite the fact that these were our homes. I am aware from conversations with neighbours that many of them felt the same way and that complaining to the TMO was a waste of time.
98. As far as I know, the TMO would collect information about the time it took to respond to complaints but there was no scrutiny over whether the complaints process was effective, whether the TMO learnt from complaints and whether complainants received proper

disclosure of information relevant to their complaints so there could be a level playing field between a complainant and the TMO.

99. My recollection of the TMO complaints process is that if a resident wanted to make a formal complaint to the KCTMO, they would have to put it in writing and then the complaint was dealt with in three stages.
100. The KCTMO had a certain period of time to respond to a Stage One written complaint which I believe from memory was 20 working days. I recall that at Stage One my complaint would generally be investigated by the person or department at the KCTMO that I was complaining about. This felt slightly perverse and unfair to me.
101. Often I would lodge a Stage One complaint through Councillor Blakeman, who would write an email on my behalf to the KCTMO. On other occasions I would address my initial complaint in an email to the KCTMO, and they would respond to my complaint with their findings via an email. I felt that I seldom got any satisfaction from Stage One of the complaints process so I would often then escalate the complaint to Stage Two.
102. For Stage Two, I would reply in writing to the response I had received in Stage One, stating I wasn't happy with the Stage One findings and that I would like to take my complaint to Stage Two. I recall Stage Two complaints were investigated by a member of the Management Team, in my case often Sacha Jevans, the Executive Director of Operations.
103. After Stage Two I would have to wait for another period of time before they would come back to me with, in my experience, the same evasive, non-investigative response which I had already received from Stage One. Therefore from my perspective Stage Two was no more fair than stage one.
104. Stage Three was the final stage of the complaints process, and allowed residents to present their case to a panel of KCTMO board members. I have found an email I received on 12 April 2016 from the TMO attaching a copy of their complaints policy in force at that time. I attach that as Exhibit ED2/91 ().
105. I recall two of my complaints went to a Stage Three panel but I only recall attending one such panel sitting in person, which was held in their office at Kensington High Street

and concerned the solicitors letter I received about access to my flat for contractors. The other Stage 3 panel involved the power surges and I deal with this further below.

106. I found attending the Stage Three panel a very humiliating and abusive experience. This is the only complaint that I took to the Housing Ombudsman. They rejected my application (ED2/92: RBK00001670). However, having obtained documents from Rydon under the Data Protection Act I am now aware that the TMO did not provide some of those documents, which were relevant to my complaint, to me, to the TMO Stage Three panel, or to the Ombudsman. Had those relevant documents been disclosed my complaints might have been upheld. At the very least the Stage Three panel and Ombudsman would have had the full picture.

107. There are a number of emails on this issue over a long period of time. I have not mentioned or exhibited all the emails to this statement but I am happy to provide them if the Inquiry requests. My Ombudsman complaint related, in part, to access to my property for the Heating Interface Unit (HIU) to be installed. In summary, in late 2014 I explained to Rydon that whilst I wanted the new HIU installed I sought assurances as to where it would be located. I also wanted further information about where the pipework would be placed as I did not want unsightly and hot pipework to be visible in my hallway and was also concerned that they should not drill into my ceilings as I believed there was asbestos there that would be disturbed if they did. I also sought assurance as to who would pay for any damage caused to my property by Rydon. (ED2/93: TMO10028196). I received a response from Claire Williams at the TMO on 11 November 2014 which did not address the points I had raised (ED2/94:). Over the coming months I was engaged with other residents in seeking to ensure the TMO and Rydon installed the HIUs in the location they had initially promised and continued to ask for a meeting with the TMO to discuss these matters. I set out later in this statement residents' complaints about the location of the HIU and how we came together to argue collectively in relation to that. Ultimately in June 2015 the TMO and Rydon agreed to place the HIU where residents had initially been promised but the TMO continued to refuse to meet with me personally in relation to the work they intended to carry out in my own flat.

108. On the morning of 1 December 2015, Lynda Prentice and another Rydon worker attended my flat. They said they intended to fit my HIU the next day. I said I was still waiting to speak to Claire Williams, and had been for some time, I wanted some clarity

on the position of the pipework. By now I was also involved in a complaint about the door to Flat 136, which I have detailed in my Phase 1 statement (IWS00000169_0015 paragraph 46-57) and refer to later in this statement. In the course of that Complaint, Peter Maddison had, in effect, accused me of lying by saying the door could have been pulled shut when it could not. I had reported that the self-closing device was not working. In terms of granting access for the HIU work I was therefore also worried about letting Rydon and the TMO into my home because I felt if they could lie about my complaint relating to Flat 136 they could come into my home, damage my property, and lie about that as well. During my conversation with Rydon on 1 December I felt they took on board what I was saying and they said they would speak to the TMO to follow up on my outstanding request to speak to Claire Williams. By that stage I wanted the HIU to be fitted in my property, because by that time the TMO had agreed to place it where we had been initially promised. Placing the HIU in its originally planned location, as opposed to in the corridor, was a key matter we advocated for with regard to the refurbishment works.

109. Following my conversation with Lynda Prentice, at around 4 o'clock in the afternoon on 1 December 2015 I received a solicitor's letter – notably dated 27 November 2015 - hand delivered through my door, stating that contractors would come to my flat at 8am the next morning to carry out the works, that I had to grant access. It said:

“We should make very clear that this is the only opportunity our client can offer to carry out the works...if the works have not been completed, you will be left without heating or hot water and all our client will be able to provide you with is an electrical heater.”

...

“Therefore if access is not provided on 2 December our client will apply to the County Court immediately without further notice for an injunction requiring you to allow access for these works and will seek to recover the costs of that process from you.”

110. By the time I received the letter it was too late in the day to obtain legal advice from the North Kensington Law Centre. I felt that the TMO were using this solicitor's letter as a weapon to bully me. I am aware that other residents had received solicitors letters and had also felt threatened by this correspondence.

111. As a result of receiving the TMO solicitor's letter I had a sleepless night and woke up early intending to let them in to my flat. I had decided to let the contractors in because I was worried about the potential court costs if I didn't. The whole process felt really intimidating and caused me a great deal of upset. However, at 8am the workmen didn't arrive. I called Rydon to find out what was going on and they said the solicitors letter was nothing to do with them but instead was the TMOs responsibility.
112. At 10.56am on 2 December 2015 I sent an email complaining about the TMOs use of the solicitors letter to bully and intimidate me. I explained it was disproportionate and that despite the threat Rydon hadn't turned up to complete any works that day. I said as follows: "*I, therefore, wish to formally complain that I was threatened by a solicitors letter sent on behalf of the TMO to allow workers entry to my property but that no workers from Rydon had any knowledge or plan to commence works at 08.00am on 2nd December.*"
113. My complaint was dismissed by the TMO at all three stages. By the time we arrived at the panel hearing on 1 February 2016 the TMO had put together a file of evidence. I didn't have a lawyer to help me with any of this and so couldn't enforce my right to obtain evidence in support of my complaint under, for example, the Data Protection Act, as I have done now following the fire. It was clear to me that a number of people within the TMO were employed to prepare their file of papers, essentially evidence to be used against me. At the time I was astounded and most upset that there was no parity of arms and the KCTMO was using substantial resources against me whereas I had no resources or support to deploy in support of my case. At the Stage Three panel one of the panel members, Ms Duru, even went as far as to question my mental health, for which she later gave a half-baked apology in writing (ED2/95: ; and ED2/96: TMOH00004731). I am a mental health social worker. I was not suffering from any mental health problems. In addition to questioning my mental health the panel also asked me lots of personal questions which were unrelated to the subject matter of my complaint for example whether I was in a relationship and whether I lived alone. I found this line of questioning abusive and offensive and it felt like the TMO and the panel just wanted to deter me from ever making a complaint again.

114. Having read that Data Protection Act disclosure from Rydon, I am now aware that Rydon and the TMO did not disclose all relevant documents to the Panel, and therefore presumably did not disclose them to the Ombudsman:

- a. The first set of documents, which I produce as ED2/97 () are a series of emails of 2 December 2015 between Claire Williams and Lynda Prentice in which Prentice confirms: *“We did not knock this morning as you know Stuart and I knocked yesterday and he said he wanted a meeting with yourself and us to sort out any issues. Stuart spoke to you about this and as far as I was aware we was not due to knock this morning”*.
- b. The second document, ED2/98 (), is an email dated 3 December 2015 at 3.40pm from Lynda Prentice to Steve Blake which summarises some of the events and conversations leading up to the solicitor’s letter. In the email Lynda Prentice explains that:
 - i. Before I went on holiday that autumn Lynda Prentice and ‘Stuart’ from Rydon visited me to arrange a suitable time to carry out works to my flat. I explained I was still waiting to hear from Claire Williams about the works. Prentice says she emailed Williams to ask her to contact me. (I did not receive any response from Claire Williams).
 - ii. After my return from holiday, on 1 December, Stuart and Lynda Prentice visited my flat again. We had a conversation during which I again requested a discussion about the works. She writes that Stuart spoke to Claire Williams over the phone when *“it was agreed that [Rydon] would take 134 out of the programme and try and resolve the issues before booking him back in. As he was not going ahead the next day, it was also agreed that there was no need to knock on his door the following morning. At about Wednesday 09.30am, I received a phone call from 134 demanding to know why I had sent him a solicitors letter...I told him that the letter would have been sent by the TMO and not by us. He replied that it had felt like a slap in the face as he thought we had actually listened to him the day before...I was as surprised as him about this letter, as I understood that Claire was aware these works were not going ahead. I spoke to Claire and she said there had been confusion with the letters, and*

they had not been hand delivered on Friday [27 November] as she expected. Claire said that this was because Siobhan was not around (My emphasis).

115. All of these documents are evidence that I should not have been sent a solicitor's letter demanding that I permit access to Rydon on 2 December because:

- a. By the time the letter was delivered to me Rydon and the TMO did not plan to carry out any works to my flat on 2 December;
- b. The solicitor's letter falsely claimed that 2 December would be the "*only opportunity*" for the works to my flat to go ahead, however Rydon and the TMO clearly anticipated the works could take place at a later date.
- c. The true reason I received the solicitors letter on 1 December was because of a mix-up by Claire Williams and Siobhan Rumble at the TMO and the solicitors letter should not have been delivered to me.

116. Instead of just apologising, upholding my complaint and meeting me to discuss the issues I had asked to discuss with Claire Williams the TMO defended their position throughout without being truthful or disclosing relevant documents.

117. Councillor Judith Blakeman lodged my application to the Ombudsman after the rejection of my Stage 3 Panel complaint. The application included reference to my complaint about the broken door closer to Flat 136, but the Ombudsman didn't address that issue at all. The Stage 3 panel had also rejected that complaint, accepting Peter Maddison's account that the door was in working order and just had to be pulled shut. It was not true that the door was working properly and Maddison's response ignored the fact that the door closer wasn't working properly, I address this complaint in more detail later in this statement. Again, the TMO did not provide documents to the Ombudsman to show that the door did need to be fixed, or that even on his own account it needed to be pulled shut.

118. The Inquiry will be well aware of the significance of the continuing defects in the self-closing mechanism to door 136 to the events on the night of the fire. It compromised floor 16 in a rapid and dramatic fashion. It led to the death of people on that floor, and

could have led to my own death were it not for the help of Firefighters Stern and Hippel. At the time, Peter Maddison's account had the effect of making me look like a vexatious complainant by asserting it didn't require repair and that I had been wasting the TMO's time and there was nothing I could do about this. I didn't have a lawyer then and couldn't seek advice on how I could present my complaints to the TMO or to the Ombudsman or how I might have obtained any of the information that has now been provided to me by Rydon under the Data Protection Act. It had taken a very long time for the Ombudsman to respond to my complaint and by then I had moved on with my life and the issue didn't have the same importance to me as it did at the time. I do not know for sure what happened with door 136 after this ill-fated complaint, but it is clear that the neither TMO nor its complaints system was in the least bit interested in making that situation right. Instead, it was determined to find against me.

119. From my lived experience the KCTMO just weren't ever interested in investigating anything I complained about properly. In fact, in my case they would not only refuse to uphold complaints but also try to bully me into not complaining in the future by lying about the true events. The ineffectiveness of the complaints process was one of the reasons why I would try to raise issues with the TMO through other means, through my local councillor, through emails copying in lots of other people including other councillors so they couldn't be brushed under the carpet and through blogs to publicise what was going on. In relation to the GAG blog Francis O'Connor and I wanted a public record of how we were being treated. Given the number of problems in Grenfell I sometimes wondered why more people didn't complain. I believe there are two main reasons for this. Firstly, those that did complain soon found out that the TMO and RBKC complaints systems were not fit for purpose so simply decided that complaining was pointless and just decided to make do and get on with their lives. Secondly, I believe some people may not have complained because they felt lucky to be living in social housing and didn't want to do anything to jeopardise their tenancy. In the end there was only a limited number of people living on the Lancaster West Estate who were really determined and who carried on complaining to the KCTMO, because often it just wasn't worth wasting your time to complain.

Informal complaints during the refurbishment works

120. Siobhan Rumble was our Estate manager. Her office was based in the old EMB rooms at the base of the tower. If residents wanted to speak to her they could go and see her at this office.
121. I have referred to issues we had raised with Ms Rumble earlier in this statement. I couldn't think of a more unsuitable person to be an Estate Manager than Siobhan Rumble as she seemed so lacking in empathy and divorced from the concerns of estate residents. Her role was meant to be a full time position but the KCTMO also employed her to supervise rent collection. Combining the two disciplines is hardly sensible. Siobhan Rumble was highly effective in rent collection. She managed to get KCTMO rent arrears down to a bare minimum. In my view she prioritised that over dealing properly with residents' complaints. The complaints process was largely hopeless but if people fell behind with their rent the TMO would be on them like a Rottweiler.
122. One example of Siobhan Rumble's lack of empathy for residents relates to an incident in June 2015. The front door entry system to Grenfell Tower had not worked for a while so people could enter the Tower as they pleased without a key and without anyone having to let them in. It remained faulty despite residents complaining about it to the TMO and asking for it to be fixed. During that time there was a burglary in the Tower. In response, Siobhan Rumble put up signs around the Tower asking residents not to let in anyone they didn't know. This was a prime example of the 'victim-blaming' culture residents experienced from the TMO. She should have known full well the burglary was not the fault of a resident but because the TMO had not fixed our communal front door. The emails in relation to this is are produced as ED2/99 (). We blogged about this, and the fact that Siobhan Rumble's focus seemed to be on rent collection as opposed to Estate Management in a blog entitled 'Rumbles of Discontent at Lancaster West' (ED2/100:).
123. We had earlier blogged about a similar incident of the TMO not fixing our front door in December 2014 in a blog called "Doors wide open" (ED2/101:). In an email of 19 December 2014, Claire Williams upheld our complaint in relation to this incident because Grenfell Tower was *"left without a functioning door entry system for a considerable period of time"* (ED2/102: TMO00830971). The issue re-emerged yet

again during the refurbishment works and we blogged about it, and the TMO not taking care of residents, especially children's health and safety, on 1 November 2016

(ED2/103:).

Efforts to gain recognition for a Lancaster West/Grenfell Tower Residents Association

124. One vehicle through which any social housing resident can ordinarily raise concerns or be consulted on their housing estate is through a Residents Association ('RA'). The Grenfell Action Group had been trying to secure formal recognition as a Residents Association for a number of years. We were not satisfied that the Lancaster West Residents Association (LWRA) or the Estate Management Board (EMB) were capable of properly representing the interests of local residents.

125. GAG wrote a blog about the EMB which provides a summary of our experiences entitled 'Who killed Bambi – revised and expanded' (ED2/104:).

126. Teresa Miles, Francis O'Connor and I invested a considerable amount of time trying to gain recognition, from both RBKC and the TMO, for a local RA from 2012 onwards under the banner of the Grenfell Action Group. We intended to speak on behalf of all Lancaster West residents whose lives were going to be impacted by the KALC project. There were many issues arising from KALC, as set out above, including fire safety given the impact on LFB access to the Tower. Despite all these efforts the Grenfell Action Group was never recognised by the TMO as a legitimate Residents Association but, back in 2012 RBKC did recognise us for a time.

127. I have looked back at my emails and can see that in order for GAG to form a Residents Association in 2012 we made contact with Caeli Christianson, RBKC Community Engagement Project Officer. In June 2012 Teresa Miles sent her our draft written constitution for the GAG. We met with Caeli Christianson on 20 June and she made some suggested amendments to our constitution. Ms Christianson was very supportive of our efforts to form an RA and sent us information as to how to register on RBKC's list of Resident's Associations. The RBKC Residents Engagement Team agreed that RBKC would formally recognise us and we were put on the RBKC RA database in early September 2012. I exhibit my emails with Ms Christianson as ED2/105

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128. Having lodged our application with RBKC I emailed Janet Edwards at the KCTMO to explain the application had been lodged with the Council and to ask the KCTMO how to register with them as well. However, the KCTMO (Yvonne Birch and Janet Edwards) refused on the basis that there was already a Residents Association representing the Estate as a whole. They were referring to the LWRA. In my experience the LWRA was ineffective in properly representing the residents of Lancaster West and so, whilst we were content to work alongside them, we wanted the GAG to be able to advocate on behalf of residents.
129. The KCTMO told us they had written to the Tenant's Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) who had confirmed that they were correct in their decision. The TMO relied on TPAS advice to justify their refusal to grant us RA status. One of the TMO's justifications was that there should not be two Residents Associations within the same estate but that didn't make sense to me as the TMO seemed to recognise both LWRA and the Grenfell Tower Leaseholders Association.
130. I subsequently contacted Jon Warnock at TPAS and explained that the LWRA was not effective but that GAG had a harmonious relationship with them and had their support in GAG being formally recognised as an RA. I pointed out that the Grenfell Tower Leaseholders Association had formed and been recognised. I hope the clear inconsistency of this is not lost on anyone. Having spoken with Jon Warnock he changed his advice to the KCTMO and was good enough to email them to say we should be allowed to form an RA. Despite this, Yvonne Birch wrote to us on 8 October 2012 to say the TMO would stand by its original decision and would not grant us status. It felt unfair and oppressive that the KCTMO could rely upon TPAS advice when it suited them, but refuse to do so when it didn't. As a result of not being granted RA status we were refused the small amount of funding we sought (£250) for running costs including stationary. I exhibit some of the emails on this between me, Janet Edwards, Yvonne Birch and Jon Warnock (ED2/106: ; and ED2/107:), they date from 13 August 2012 until 31 January 2013.
131. Whereas GAG's early efforts were to form an RA for an area bigger than just Grenfell Tower, over time a number of people living in Grenfell Tower itself wanted to become involved in setting up an RA specifically for the Tower. By the time the refurbishment

works were underway there were around 100 people in the Tower who had expressed support for this.

132. I saw it as important that Grenfell Tower should have its own RA so that Grenfell residents could be included in all consultations that affected us, including in relation to plans for the refurbishment, also so we could raise concerns and complaints collectively. Whilst the entirety of Lancaster West Estate had suffered from years of underinvestment, there were specific issues affecting Grenfell Tower residents which did not affect other Lancaster West residents: for example the repeatedly defective lifts and problems with running water and hot water.

133. LWRA was pretty much a non-functioning organisation except for their organisation of the annual Estate 'Fun Day'. I always felt that the LWRA never really had the capability to represent the complex issues experienced by the residents of Grenfell Tower. We lived on a large estate which not only consisted of Grenfell Tower and the Walkways, but also many other properties. It didn't feel right that the LWRA was expected to represent so many hundreds of residents. I can't see how it would ever have been capable of doing so properly given the size of the estate. I also saw it as a point of principle that residents of the Tower should have had the right to commune and be recognised if we so wished.

134. A Grenfell-specific Resident's Association would also stop once and for all the constant suggestion that GAG's activity was the work of a tiny disgruntled minority. I felt that if we were recognised as a properly constituted RA with regular elections and meetings, the Council and the TMO would not be able to ignore the collective problems we all faced. Our concerns would be treated as legitimate. The TMO could not simply marginalise those of us who were raising complaints by them arguing that we had our own personal gripes. Having a system through which Grenfell Tower could complain collectively became more important during the refurbishment works and power surges. On more than one occasion during those times, residents were told by the KCTMO that an issue affecting them was not being experienced by others, when in fact it was. We wanted to be respected as a force for legitimate representation. However, by the time the refurbishment works had begun the TMO and RBKC had refused to recognise a Grenfell Tower RA on a number of occasions.

Tower began we had already had to suffer two years of noise and disruption from the KALC works.

140. A number of Grenfell residents felt there were now further reasons for us to be recognised as an RA: to ensure the works were carried out by Rydon and the KCTMO in partnership with residents and to a high standard as opposed to poor quality work being imposed upon us. Those of us who formed the Compact felt it was important for an RA to exist because we have a right to commune in order to speak on behalf of vulnerable or fearful residents where they had complaints or concerns. Although I was a ‘Lead Representative’ of the Grenfell Compact it is important for the Inquiry to hear evidence from David Collins and to grant him Core Participant status. He was the Chair of the Compact, but has not been granted Core Participant Status in this Inquiry. He moved out before the fire so will have many more documents relating to it than I do. He was closely involved in communicating with the TMO, RBKC, local Councillors and Rydon during the works. I am aware that David Collins kept agendas and minutes of the meetings and should be able to provide them to the Inquiry.
141. I set out below a rough overview chronology of the formation of the Compact based on my memory and other blogs, emails and documents I have seen.
142. The first record I can find of residents meeting in relation to the works took place in June 2014. That was prior to the works commencing. Our blog said as follows: *“We wish to discuss a vote of “no confidence” in Claire Williams and the TMO and their ability to manage the Grenfell Tower improvement works properly. We wish to discuss the TMO’s refusal to allow the residents of Grenfell Tower to form a Residents Group to help us through the improvement works and we demand that the views of the residents of Grenfell Tower be taken seriously by the TMO and not be simply ignored.”* (ED2/82:)
143. On 10 September 2014 I wrote to Fola Kafidiya, Head of Governance at the TMO asking the TMO to justify: *“refusing to allow tenants and leaseholders to come together to form a Grenfell Tower Improvement Works Residents Group to help us have some power in the current building works being carried out on our homes.”* (ED2/110: TMOH00004881). I received a response from Janet Edwards on 17 September 2014 who confirmed that despite the existence of the LWRA the TMO would now have *“no objection”* to such a group being formed and consulted with and that the TMO had no

objection *“to any residents wishing to form a resident group for the purposes of consultation”*. Despite this assurance it did not happen in practice as evidenced by the emails of April 2015 referred to later in this statement.

144. I have now seen Inquiry disclosure which suggests there was a meeting on 22 December 2014 where a couple of residents saw the HIU layout that was proposed (ED2/111: ART00008751). I presume this would have been in the show flat. Claire Williams reports that I was adamant I could not accept the HIU to be located in the hallway. It is correct that I did oppose the new location. This may have been the meeting where Jason North at Rydon made his comment that residents shouldn't complain as we were *“getting it for free”*.

145. On 29 January 2015 residents were invited to the show flat, flat 145, to be shown the new windows that would be fitted to our properties. This was not a *“consultation meeting”*. We were not being asked if we wanted them. We were being told that this is what we were going to get.

146. Grenfell residents came together again to discuss forming a residents group for the building. On 9 March 2015 I emailed Claire Williams to say we were holding a residents meeting on 17 March and said: *“In the meantime, a number of residents have requested that TMO/Rydon do not enter their properties until residents have had a chance to meet together on 17th March and we are asking that the TMO/Rydon respect these residents wishes and do not apply pressure to continue with works inside these properties... Thank you for your understanding of these issues and we trust that you will want to work with residents in a constructive manner to ensure a smooth resolution to these concerns.”* Williams replied the next day to say the TMO had *“already consulted residents and so they would be carrying on with their works programme.”* I exhibit this exchange as ED2/112 ().

147. There were a series of well attended meetings which generally took place in the Caretaker's office close to the base of Grenfell Tower where numerous residents discussed their own objections to the works and we formed an unofficial residents group, *‘Grenfell Community Unite’* with assistance from Pilgrim Tucker from Unite the Union. There was a door knocking exercise that was conducted by Grenfell residents and members of Grenfell Community Unite including Willie Thompson, Ben (a resident from

the fourth floor who subsequently moved out), Hanan Wahabi and Antonio Roncolato. Issues raised were, amongst other things, dissatisfaction with the quality of the work, Rydon bullying residents and picking on the most vulnerable to secure access. GAG wrote a number of blogs around that time to summarise residents' experience. Throughout this time neither RBKC nor the TMO would formally recognise us as a residents group and they refused to meet with us:

- a. 11 March 2015: 'Grenfell Residents Resist TMO Intransigence' (ED2/113:)
- b. 14 March 2015: 'Resistance Grows to TMO/Rydon "Brutalism"!' (ED2/114:)
- c. 15 March 2015: 'TMO and the Smell of Bootleather' (ED2/115:)
- d. 19 March 2015: 'Who You Gonna Call? Rydonbusters!' (ED2/116:)
- e. 27 March 2015: 'Minutes from the Grenfell Tower Emergency Residents Meeting (17/03/15)' (ED2/117:)
- f. 31 March 2015: 'A Collective Voice for Residents As "Grenfell Community Unite" Is Formed!' (ED2/118:)
- g. 12 April 2015: 'Grenfell Community Unite Request Public Meeting with TMO/Rydon' (ED2/119:)
- h. 16 April 2015: 'Grenfell Community Unite – Why are we Waiting?' (ED2/120:)
- i. 30 April 2015: 'The TMO Tried to Bury Us – They Didn't Realise That We Are Seeds!' (ED2/121:)
- j. 15 June 2015: 'Grenfell Tower Fun Day Remembered' (ED2/122:)

148. On 6 April 2015 David Collins wrote to Claire Williams to relay a number of problems with the works identified by residents. He also asked the TMO to formally recognise "Grenfell Community Unite". On 17 April 2015 Claire Williams wrote to David Collins and I to refuse to recognised residents group. This was despite the assurance that we could as communicated to us on 17 September 2014. (ED2/123:

). In her email Claire Williams said: *“In your email you ask whether the TMO would acknowledge the Grenfell Community Unite group as a representative voice of leaseholders and tenants. I am advised that this group will not be recognised by the TMO, as there is a Residents Association already in existence. The TMO are currently working with the existing Lancaster West Residents Association, and are currently making arrangements with them to hold an AGM. There was communication with Mr Daffarn in early 2014 relating to forming an alternative residents’ group.”*

149. Amongst my emails I have found a letter David Collins sent to the Considerate Contractors Scheme dated 12 May 2015. I attach this as Exhibit ED2/124 (). I did not write the letter and so the Inquiry will need to clarify with David Collins when the letter was sent and any associated correspondence including conversations he had with them and what contact they had with the TMO or Rydon (if any). In the letter David Collins said as follows:

“The reason for writing is that around 60% of residents are unhappy with the quality of internal workmanship and are being refused the right to engage with the client and the contractor about this. The client has started to suggest legal action may be taken (not to all residents, but certainly the more vulnerable), and residents’ right to collective representation refused. Some residents are reporting being threatened by Rydon, and Rydon accused of forced entry (when tenants have been away from home and the most vulnerable of relatives at home on their own) to carry out works not wanted. Resident concerns stem from Rydon promising residents one thing in 2014 (which most were happy about) and then changing these plans in 2015 without any consultation. The works as now designed are causing stress and emotional problems for many, as they are a lower standard than previously promised, cause H&S risks for any household with children, pose a risk as gas, water and electricity units will all be located on top of one another and right by the only fire exit residents have from their homes. There is a consultation ‘process’ in place for the work, only it is meaningless as no one from Rydon will interact with residents about the work or the change in plans, simply blaming the client. And the client is refusing to engage with the concerns of the group, simply citing the Rydon consultation plan. The list goes on, but I won’t bore you with all the detail.

Residents have collectively gathered, and joined the Unite Community Union, in an attempt to have Rydon and TMO listen to their concerns as a group. As of writing, these requests have been denied.”

150. The meetings, door knocking exercise and emails over March to May 2015 culminated in a letter being sent by Grenfell Community Unite to Cllr Nick Paget-Brown and a letter from Unite the Union to Robert Black. I exhibit those letters, both dated 13

May 2015, as ED2/125 () and ED2/126 (). The letter from Unite requested a meeting for residents with the TMO and their contractor. Our requests up to this point had been refused or ignored. By working with Unite we hoped that our situation would gain some prominence, given that other strategies had failed to date.

151. While the primary focus of our residents meetings was on the HIUs, as the works progressed residents began to share with each other complaints about Rydon. The complaints and concerns that may be relevant to the Inquiry are around the following:

- a. Cheap looking materials and shoddy workmanship;
- b. Windows;
- c. Boxing-in of pipework;
- d. Bullying and harassment by workmen including threats of legal action and unauthorised access to properties;
- e. Lifts being used by workmen and lifts not working.

152. David Collins has minutes of meetings where these were discussed.

153. I believe that residents finally secured a meeting with the TMO and Rydon in 11 July 2015 in Flat 145, the 'show flat' and there is a photograph of the meeting on our blog published on 22 July 2015 where I can see myself, Willie Thompson, David Collins, Sheila (deceased), Denis Murphy (deceased), Mouna El-Ogbani, Turufat Yilma, Bertki Haftom (deceased), Yasin El-Wahabi (deceased) and Flora Neda (whose husband died) and her son Fahad Neda (ED2/127:). I can also see in the photograph my neighbour who used to live in Flat 136 before Hamid Wahbi moved in. Councillors Blakeman and Atkinson were at this meeting. I have been sent photos from the meeting taken by a filmmaker named Constantine Gras who had initially been paid by the TMO to make a positive film about their refurbishment works but who seemed to gain sympathy for how we were treated. He recorded some of our resident meetings before making a film called "Lancaster West, The Forgotten Estate". Other residents in Constantine's photos of this meeting include: Mariem Elgwahry (deceased), Nick Burton, Pilly Burton (deceased), Miguel Alves, Marcio Gomes (whose child tragically died) and Danny

Griffin. The photos also show Simon Lawrence from Rydon in attendance. I exhibit these photos as ED2/128 ().

154. At this meeting residents would have raised the above issues. In addition, I believe we asked for the TMO and Rydon to accept “collective complaints” which identified the same problem occurring in more than one place. Our reasoning was that we had all come together with similar problems but had to complain individually. I believe Simon Lawrence promised to receive collective complaints. However, sometime later the TMO/Rydon reneged on this promise and said they would not accept collective complaints and that residents had to make individual complaints. I believe from memory that Councillor Blakeman raised the fact that the TMO/Rydon would not receive “collective complaints” as a problem but that the TMO and Rydon did not change their practices.

155. I have found a letter of 16 July 2015 sent by Councillor Blakeman and Councillor Atkinson after the 11 July 2015 meeting. The Councillors provided a summary of some of the matters discussed at the meeting and confirmed that our local MP Victoria Borwick would visit the tower on 17 July 2015. That letter is exhibited as ED2/129 ().

156. The meeting on 17 July 2015 was very well attended by residents. In addition to Victoria Borwick, Councillor Blakeman and Peter Maddison attended. It was also filmed by Constantine Gras. I have listened to the audio recording of that meeting, provided to me by Constantine Gras after the fire, to remind myself what happened but I haven’t seen the footage. I am able to provide this audio recording to the Inquiry if they have not already obtained it from Mr Gras himself but it would be better if the Inquiry could obtain the video which I have not seen. The audio I have listened to covers four meetings: 27 June 2015, 15 July 2015, 17 July 2015 and 14 December 2015. I really do think it would help the Inquiry also to see Constantine’s film “*The Forgotten Estate*”. It captures part of the reality of life in Grenfell Tower and Lancaster West prior to the fire. I commended the film to the Inquiry in my Phase 1 statement (IWS00000169_0002).

157. At the meeting on 17 July 2015, Peter Maddison finally agreed that if residents wanted their HIUs installed in the location where their boilers currently were (where we had initially been promised they would be) then that would now be facilitated. This was a great victory for us all. However, it is worth pointing out what a struggle it was.

an RA as including being able to speak on behalf of residents, being funded for certain projects and being consulted.

159. On 27 July 2015 David Collins wrote to RBKC and the TMO (Janet Edwards) to ask that we be recognised as a Residents Association. The TMO would not refer to us as a 'Residents Association', but only as a 'Compact'. In any event we were now finally recognised, which I doubt would have happened without Victoria Borwick's intervention. Some relevant emails are exhibited as ED2/130 (). This resulted in monthly meetings to discuss the refurbishment works and the Compact lead representatives signing the Compact agreement. I was a Lead Representative together with David Collins, Willie Thompson, Marcio Gomes, Hanan Wahabi, Turufat Yilma and Antonio Roncolato. In addition to the Lead Representatives there were many other residents who did a great deal to advocate on the community's behalf. Some of those people tragically died in the fire. They include but are not limited to Sheila, Steve Power, Denis Murphy, Mariem Elgwahy and Mohamed Saber Neda. Their efforts, and the efforts of other residents, to bring justice to our community should never be forgotten.
160. We were sent information by the TMO about the benefits of forming the Compact which included: full voting rights at our Area Review Board and making proposals for improvements to the Tower. Another aim of forming the Compact had been so that we could collectively raise complaints about the refurbishment works affecting our homes but we soon realised that the TMO and RBKC still didn't really take any notice of us. In fact it felt like we were treated with even less respect after the Compact was formed which was extremely demoralising.
161. I have found an email David Collins wrote to Cllr Blakeman, Rydon and the TMO amongst others on 3 September 2015 where he sets out the experience of a vulnerable woman in the Tower. He forwarded that on to David Crook of the Considerate Contractors Scheme on 3 September 2015. David Crook replied on 4 September 2015, it appears in response to David Collins' letter of 15 May 2015 and his 3 September 2015 email, as follows: *"Whereas we fully appreciate the seriousness of your concerns, standards of workmanship are excluded from our remit, and we are therefore pleased to note that you are taking these issues forward in consultation with your local councillors."*

162. David Collins replied to Mr Crook on 4 September 2015 and said as follows: *“This is not about workmanship, though the result of their attitude and lack of community engagement shows up in some of the workmanship. Someone like myself, who is willing to fight them as an individual can get a good result in terms of workmanship. Anyone who cannot fight them is in danger of receiving appalling service, as the evidence shows”*. I attach this exchange of 4 September 2015 emails together with the entire email chain that David Sent to me as ED2/131 (). In my view David Collins’ assessment was accurate, those residents who could advocate for themselves and sometimes looked over Rydon’s shoulders at what they were doing received a better service than those who were more vulnerable or did not, or could not, advocate for themselves.

163. In September 2015 the TMO took over the Caretaker’s Office close to the base of Grenfell Tower that residents had been using to meet. Although it was referred to by residents on the Estate as a Caretaker’s Office it was more than that, as historically it had been used to facilitate community meetings in various guises. As a venue it was far from ideal but at least it was something. It had a kitchen, a meeting room with a desk and some IT equipment and at the back of the building was the caretaker’s actual office. It came as a shock to residents when this space was taken from us, so soon after we had been granted recognition as a Grenfell Compact and had used the room to meet with the TMO and Lady Borwick. We were not given any notice of the decision, let alone consulted, and we had been using the rooms to meet for a considerable period of time. This followed other community meeting spaces being taken away from us in recent times including the EMB rooms and the North Kensington Resource Centre (NKRC). I wrote to Janet Seward to complain about this lack of notice or consultation and to complain that the TMO were not going to help us to find an alternative meeting space (ED2/132: ; ED2/133: TMOH00004312; ED2/134: TMOH00004784). Taking away the community rooms had the effect of denying Grenfell residents a meeting space to discuss concerns about the refurbishment works and other matters affecting us. The rooms were taken to be used as a nursery and Janet Seward explained this was done after the nursery had become homeless and because the Council had asked the TMO to resolve the situation. She also said she had thought the room was only being used by residents in the evening and so using it as a nursery in the daytime would be fine. However, after it was converted into a nursery we were not even allowed to use the space in the evenings. I do not know what

completely unable or unwilling to respond sympathetically to the legitimate concerns of residents.

Complaints are often sidetracked, ignored or simply responded to with brazen lies and falsehoods. KCTMO staff are frequently just plain rude and unhelpful and any individual who risks putting their head above the parapet to expose wrongdoings or shortcomings can expect malicious persecution by those in power within the KCTMO.” (ED2/140:)

166. GAG wrote further blogs in November and December 2015 in which, because of our mistreatment by the TMO and Rydon, we jokingly called for the resurrection of the EMB (ED2/141:).

167. Around this time the Grenfell Compact gathered signatures on a petition calling for urgent scrutiny into the refurbishment works. By the time it was submitted to the Council the documents show it had gained 60 signatures. To gain signatories Compact members would take a number of floors each and ask residents if they wanted to sign.

168. There was a Full Council meeting on 2 December 2015 where Councillors Blakeman and Atkinson presented the residents petition (ED2/142:). The prayer of the petition included the following: *“We, the undersigned residents of Grenfell Tower, ask the Chairman of the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee to undertake an urgent scrutiny of the TMO and Rydon’s management of the refurbishment project currently underway at Grenfell Tower. Time and again residents’ views have been ignored or downplayed. Despite interventions from our MP, Victoria Borwick, and our ward Councillors, our day to day concerns are belittled and sidelined...as part of this investigation, the residents of Grenfell Tower ask that their views and experiences be canvassed and included in the scrutiny report.”* The petition was referred to the Scrutiny Committee under Standing Order 10 which required that *“Every petition so presented shall stand referred to the Executive or to the relevant committee within whose terms of reference it falls”*.

169. Councillors Blakeman and Atkinson proposed and seconded a motion for debate. However, the motion was itself amended by Cllr. Husband and Cllr Mackover in the following ways so that it no longer reflected residents’ experiences and concerns:

- a. Instead of accurately describing our living conditions as “*intolerable*” and “*harrowing*” they used the term “*very inconvenient*”.
- b. Instead of accurately recording “*because of the new size of the windows, residents will have to purchase replacement blinds and/or curtains*” they said “*because of the replacement of the windows residents may want to purchase replacement blinds and/or curtains*”.
- c. Instead of our call that internal decorations damaged by the installation of windows, radiators and pipework should not be undertaken by Rydon and its contractors, the motion was amended to say the Council’s contractors would help in finding a solution to any necessary damage/repair works.
- d. Reference in the motion to the fact that demolition of the Tower and associated decanting and replacement of homes (at least £25M) would have cost the Council more than refurbishment (£12M) was deleted. It was replaced with “*Residents understand that £10.6M is being spent on this refurbishment which is a very substantial amount when considered as part of the total resources available in the HRA Capital programme*”.
- e. The resolution, which was carried, was changed from one where residents were asking the Cabinet to consider more than the £50 compensation currently on offer to one which said: “*This Council therefore resolves to continue to work with K&C TMO and Rydon to ensure that when approached by residents of Grenfell Tower they will try to assist them to re-hang curtains or blinds or find a solution to help them put up new window fittings.*”

170. In our blog on 9 December 2015 ‘Grenfell Tower residents pleas fall on deaf Tory ears’ we reported on the aforementioned Full Council meeting (ED2/143:). We recorded that at that meeting, despite the residents’ petition and representations from Cllrs Blakeman and Atkinson, Cllr Rock Feilding-Mellen said he knew exactly what was happening in the refurbishment works. Cllr Husband said we were lucky to have had investment in the Tower (ignoring the fact that our heating system had to be replaced by then in any event). Cllr Mackover said that he and other Councillors were planning a scrutiny visit to Grenfell Tower, so the residents petition was unnecessary and that once the works were completed we would all be very grateful. This is a good example of the Council Meeting Minutes failing to accurately record exactly what Councillors said,

leaving it to the Grenfell Action Group to shine some light on their deliberations. The assumption that we should all be grateful and perplexity as to why we should not be, is indicative of the disdainful attitude that was held towards us.

171. I have seen the minutes of a Grenfell Compact meeting on 9 December 2015 which are now produced as Exhibit ED2/144 (). They record that David Collins, on behalf of the Grenfell Compact, had conducted a survey (I recall this was different to the earlier residents petition). He had spoken to 48 households in Grenfell Tower and 90% supported an independent investigation into the KCTMO. Only 4 out of 58 responded that they were happy with the outcome of the works. I pointed out we could not rely on the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee to get any justice for residents. Despite this, as far as I knew, the Scrutiny Committee was our last port of call when seeking to hold the TMO to account. Regarding the quality of work the following were discussed: “*unsightly pipes*”, “*drafty windows*”, “*Lift refurbishment/floor numbering*”, “*state of common areas and hallways*”. There was a further call for an independent investigation into the TMO and specific reference to “*Threats/ intimidation, harrassment- use of solicitors letters, threats of eviction and loss of tenancy for noncompliance with Rydon/TMO. Lack of respect shown to residents by the TMO*”.

172. On 14 December 2015 residents met again with Lady Victoria Borwick MP and the TMO. Constantine Gras attended this meeting and I have listened to the audio recording he has provided. At the meeting residents discussed our residents survey. There were reports that some residents had felt pressured and lied to by the TMO and Rydon. This had been raised previously at the meeting on 11 July. Some people had feared the loss of their tenancies if they had complained (a risk that the TMO never once seems to have publicly accepted as a possibility in the entire time I dealt with it). Despite this Peter Madison said in effect that residents hadn’t provided sufficient evidence and the TMO and Rydon would only investigate individual complaints made through the TMO complaints procedure. However, obviously if someone is being pressurised, threatened, lied to and bullied they would individually be reluctant to complain. It became a circular conversation the result of which was that the TMO refused to properly investigate this issue.

173. The outcome. We wanted a proper independent investigation. Instead, Sacha Jevans, the TMO's Executive Director of Operations, said she would conduct a door knocking exercise to gauge any complaints about the works. Victoria Borwick MP said that this should include the TMO looking for any problems with the works other than just problems with the new heating system. She thought it was important for individual residents not to be forced to go through the complaints system which she described as "*tedious from all sides*". A number of residents said that they would not trust the TMO to carry out this "*door knocking exercise*", essentially checking on the work they had overseen. I had little faith in the TMO marking their own homework. Also, the context was that many residents were too afraid to complain because of the impact it might have on their tenancies. In those circumstances it is understandable that they would be reluctant to complain when their Landlord came knocking at their door. Another Grenfell Tower resident at the meeting, whose name is Leroy Augustus, complained about his windows being defective. He and I both complained at having received letters threatening us with legal action. I can hear another Grenfell resident, Maher Khoudair, complaining that the needs arising from his disability had not been taken into account during the refurbishment works.

174. On 16 December 2015 GAG wrote a blog, 'RBKC Labour and the elephant in the room', calling for a thorough new and independent investigation of the KCTMO, again recalling the 2009 Memoli report. We noted discrepancies between TMO satisfaction surveys (which were internally contradictory) and those carried out by an independent group called West London Citizens. Neither GAG nor the Grenfell Compact had any connection with West London Citizens but their survey chimed with our own surveys and experiences living in the Tower. In the blog GAG also criticised Labour Councillors for not supporting our call for an independent investigation into the TMO. The blog accurately summarises my own view of those Labour Councillors as follows:

"Cllr Blakeman and her colleagues already know there to be widespread and deep dissatisfaction and distrust of the TMO among their constituents. It is noteworthy that Cllr Blakeman sits on both the TMO Board and on the RBKC Scrutiny Committee, but she is also a ward councillor of long standing who does a lot of casework on behalf of many of the poorest and most disadvantaged residents of North Kensington, many of whom are TMO tenants, and we are quite sure that both she, and her labour colleagues, know full well, if only as a result of this casework, the unpallatable truth

about the culture of negligence, incompetence and abuse that is rampant among TMO officers at all levels of the organisation

“There is no denying the excellent casework that Blakeman and (some of) her colleagues do on behalf of individual constituents, but we have learned from long experience that, on the macro level, the RBKC Labour Group is notable for its political duplicity, and they sometimes choose to run with the hare, but are also known to hunt with the tory hounds.” (ED2/144a:)

175. On 28 December 2015 GAG wrote a blog about the meeting with Victoria Borwick of 14 December 2015 entitled: “‘TMO Investigation – Borwick Steps In’ (ED2/145:).

176. By the end of 2015 the Grenfell Compact had gathered 60 signatures from residents who wanted an independent investigation into the refurbishment works and this was placed before the RBKC Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee, chaired by Cllr Quentin Marshall, who agreed to let us address the committee.

177. In the run up to that Scrutiny Committee there were a series of emails between David Collins, Judith Blakeman and Lady Victoria Borwick MP which I produce as Exhibit ED2/146 (). These record what happened at the 14 December 2015 meeting. David Collins asked Borwick to speak to members of the HPSC before we were to go before them to encourage an independent investigation of the TMO which was the Grenfell Compact’s “*number one priority*”. Blakeman mentioned the issue of collective complaints (that was raised previously with Simon Lawrence and Peter Maddison) being raised at a TMO Board meeting but indicates that all that Robert Black had agreed to was as follows:

- “1. look at examples of good practice around mechanisms to consider collective and/or general complaints.*
- 2. consider allocating a dedicated complaints officer to future projects of this nature.*
- 3. review the overall project once it was completed, using the resident board members, Independents and council-nominated board members, this will provide the independence, challenge and support to the process.”*

Strangely, these are recorded by Judith Blakeman but not recorded in the publicly available minutes of the TMO Board meeting

178. The irony of it all was that after we had formed a Compact the TMO treated us even worse, with even more disdain and contempt than they had treated us when we were individual residents. It was clear to me, from how the Compact was treated that our efforts to form the Compact and give residents a voice were pointless. You can only go to so many meetings and not be listened to. In the end even I'd had enough of it all. We had worked so hard to form a Compact. Being treated in that that way, after all we had done, was soul destroying. It was not a good experience.

179. We begged Victoria Borwick to come back and help us because she had been instrumental in encouraging us to form a Residents Association. However, when we really needed her, and we were writing emails to her saying we've formed an RA but they're really mistreating us and you need to come and give us some help, she did not to come back to the Estate to help us. An example of those communications is in Emails between David Collins and John Sweeney to which I was copied in of 24 April to 6 May 2016. David Collins tried to book Victoria Borwick MP for an urgent visit to Grenfell Tower to meet with residents and discuss matters relating to the management of the improvement works before the contractors left but she did not attend. I exhibit these emails as ED2/147 ().

RBKC Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee

180. One of the purposes of the RBKC Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee (HPSC) was to scrutinise complaints brought to them by residents. The Scrutiny Committee meetings should have involved the Local Authority's Councillors independently scrutinising what was going on at the KCTMO. However, they didn't properly undertake this function despite residents' warnings. The inadequacy of the HPSC was reflected in the way it dealt with the two occasions when Grenfell Tower residents brought concerns to them: once in 2013 in relation to the power surges and once in 2016 in relation to the refurbishment works. In the case of the power surges I felt residents experienced a cover-up between the Council, the KCTMO and the insurers. In the case of the refurbishment

works (2016), I felt there was a cover-up between the Council, KCTMO and Rydon. I will deal with the refurbishment works Scrutiny Committee of January 2016 first before going back to the power surge Scrutiny Committee of 2013.

RBKC Scrutiny Committee consideration of the Grenfell Tower refurbishment works – January 2016

181. I was nominated by the Grenfell Tower Compact to address the HPSC on 6 January 2016 on behalf of Grenfell residents. Residents did not feel that our individual complaints had been properly considered. Our aim was to get the HPSC to appoint an independent ‘Working Group’ to scrutinise what had happened during the refurbishment works by raising our complaints collectively. However, instead of our complaints being properly examined I feel we were stamped on and marginalised again by the HPSC, exactly as we had been in 2013. Laura Johnson and Robert Black were in attendance at the Committee meeting along with many senior KCTMO officers. This was a fundamental lost opportunity to uncover the extent to which the refurbishment had brought fatal danger into our lives. Instead it led to a terrible whitewash, which not only exonerated the refurbishment of any shortcoming, but positively praised it.

182. I had prepared a speech to read to the HPSC on behalf of the residents. I wanted to deliver our complaints to the Council in a measured, coherent, cogent voice, without being rushed. However, I wasn’t even allowed to deliver the full speech, as Quentin Marshall cut me off about two thirds of the way through because he said I was taking too long. The speech I was delivering was representing the views of a great number of residents who had endured years of hellish building works in and around our homes. One of our first residents meetings had involved around 120 residents. The petition we had circulated which led to the HPSC meeting was signed by over 50 households. However, we were told by Quentin Marshall that my speech (that only lasted a few minutes) was too long and he tried to prevent me from finishing its delivery to the HPSC. The minutes of the meeting are available on Relativity and record a summary of my speech where amongst other things I raised:

- a. Lack of consultation and resident engagement;
- b. Threats, harassment, lies and intimidation from the TMO;

- c. Lack of response to legitimate complaints;
- d. Poor workmanship and site management;
- e. The need for urgent scrutiny and an independent investigation
- f. The need for lessons to be learned for any future works. (ED2/148: RBK00000338)

183. I exhibit the full text of my speech as ED2/149 (). Of significant difference to the above summary, my speech reflected our belief that Peter Maddison *“has taken no responsibility to ensure that the legitimate complaints are followed through and has, instead, worked tirelessly to ensure that any voices of dissent or complaints among residents are crushed without an adequate or appropriate response from the TMO”*.

184. The myriad legitimate concerns residents had been raising for months and which were summarised very briefly in my speech were not properly addressed. There was an imbalance of power between residents and RBKC/TMO. Instead of the HPSC redressing that power imbalance, it served to, at the least reflect it and at worst, exacerbate it. It is difficult to convey in this statement how abusive and unfair this process, and what followed, felt.

185. The one issue there was some limited discussion in relation to at the HPSC meeting was any system for raising and addressing collective complaints. Councillor Marshall is reported as having asked at the meeting if there was a procedure for collective complaints, or if each individual had to complain separately. This echoed the Grenfell Compact’s concern raised in the earlier meeting with Simon Lawrence and Peter Maddison, followed up by Judith Blakeman. Cllr. Marshall suggested there may be a gap in governance as there should be a process to allow a group to complain and permit the aggregation of a complaint. He recommended the TMO look at its procedures and Robert Black agreed to do this.

186. Marshall agreed that a Working Group would be commissioned at some point in the future subject to a number of factors. I feel this only happened because Councillor Sam Mackover had made a point of standing up for residents’ concerns and without his intervention I doubt there would ever have been any initial commitment to the formation of an independent ‘working group’.

187. During the Scrutiny Committee Meeting I saw Laura Johnson and Robert Black smiling at each other in relation to what we had to say, which reflected the closeness of their relationship and shared attitude towards residents. I felt like they had so much power that we couldn't have won, we weren't taken seriously. We didn't get a proper investigation. They basically treated us with contempt and it felt like the outcome of the Scrutiny Committee was predetermined.

188. At the RBKC Scrutiny Committee meeting, we were promised an independent 'working group' to come and look into our complaints. However, this promise fell away in the months that followed. What we were ultimately presented with was a KCTMO 'investigation' into itself. It was no surprise to me therefore that their report, dated 31 March 2016 (ED2/150: RBK00002419; ED2/151: TMO00830401), "*commended*" Rydon "*on their performance and ability to deliver a complex construction project*" [10.4]. It characterised the "*combination of all [construction] partners involved in this project*" as having "*contributed to very successful improvements to the building and residents homes*" [10.5]. It further commended "*the excellent work*" of Peter Maddison and the TMO team "*involved in high quality management of the project over 22 months*" [10.6].

189. The Report additionally recorded that:

- a. Resident engagement and consultation had been very comprehensive [3.2].
- b. There had been sufficient communication and consultation with residents over the HIU positioning [4.2]
- c. There had only been seven formal complaints, four of which were from one resident [6.2]
- d. The TMO had responded to all complaints and enquiries adequately and there had been no evidence of threats, lies or intimidation by TMO or Rydon [6.3]
- e. The Board saw no reason to allow residents to file a "group complaint" about a problem which affected more than one private flat [6.5].
- f. Examples of "*poor workmanship*" referred to in my speech to the HPSC "*was work in progress and that was misleading*" [7.2]

190. The report included reference to a "Review day" of 12 March 2016 and what it entailed but residents were never shown this document or allowed to input (ED2/151:

TMO00830401). As far as I know, the TMO did not interview a single resident and they certainly didn't meet with the Grenfell Tower Compact to hear from us directly.

191. It should be noted that the report itself was not automatically made public to us. The TMO Board initially had wanted to keep the findings of their 'investigation' to themselves as an internal document. This is recorded in the 'Part B minutes' of the 11 May 2016 Scrutiny Committee meeting which also recorded Robert Black saying he would speak to the Chair of the TMO Board and decide whether the report should be released (ED2/152: RBK00028532). By this time I was aware that the TMO Board had sidelined Councillor Blakeman citing a conflict of interest. The meeting also records Robert Black saying that the TMO complaints procedure could now "*pick up and deal with group complaints*" but I do not believe that was the case. Maybe it just related to group complaints about communal areas, not inside people's flats.

192. Residents ultimately did get a copy of a TMO board report after I requested it under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). I was provided with it by RBKC on 7 June 2016. The relevant emails are exhibited as ED2/153 (). I do not know if there was ever a more comprehensive report or if all the documents related to the review have ever been disclosed. It seemed perverse to me that a report which had been commissioned after residents had called for it should be withheld from us for so long and only provided upon my request under the FOIA. The email from Fola Kafidiya also shows the inconsistent way in which the TMO dealt with FOIA requests. If they wanted to, or had to for some reason disclose something, they would. If they wanted to keep information secret they would say they were not bound by the FOIA.

193. It will be important for the Inquiry team to take statements from the members of the TMO working group responsible for this report as to how they were recruited and what instructions or briefing they were given by Robert Black, Laura Johnson or others in relation to their work on this report. I am concerned that Board Members were selected on the basis that they would be willing to ignore residents' legitimate concerns and find in favour of the TMO. For example, two of the Board Members selected were Anne Duru and Cllr Condon Simmonds who found against me at my Stage 3 Panel on 1 February 2016 concerning the broken door closer to Flat 136 and TMO solicitors letter regarding access to my property. Anne Duru had to apologise to me after asking inappropriate questions during that Stage 3 Panel. I would like to know whether all the authors of this

report stand by their analysis and/or whether any of them felt pressurised to adopt it in the first place.

194. I am also aware that Judith Blakeman disputed the report's findings. She emailed me and David Collins forwarding her email of 11 May 2016. I exhibit this as ED2/154

(). David Collins continued to contact Councillor Marshall demanding the formation of the Independent Working Group after it became apparent that no such group would be formed. For me this is the shameful stand out moment of injustice prior to the fire, which could have been an opportunity to prevent it. It haunts me that we were so comprehensively defeated in our efforts to acquire adequate and effective independent scrutiny.

195. Following the KCTMO report there was a report prepared by Laura Johnson on 11 May 2016 which was very similar to the KCTMO's own report and which I Exhibit as ED2/155 (). This report also commended Rydon on their performance and ability to deliver a complex construction project and said everyone involved had contributed to very successful improvements to the building and residents homes. Peter Maddison's work was commended and "*The Group noted that a full project review and resident satisfaction survey would be undertaken six months after the project is completed. The results of this review will be presented to a future Board meeting.*"

196. I have found an email exchange of April and May 2016 where we requested that the 'resident satisfaction survey' be provided. This is produced at ED2/156 (). Those emails show that Claire Williams claimed to have given draft documents for the survey to the Compact but this was not the case. Peter Maddison then promised to circulate drafts within a fortnight and considered that the best time to conduct the survey would be 6 months after completion. As far as I am aware the resident satisfaction survey was never sent to residents. Had it been circulated residents could have commented on poor quality workmanship, gaps around windows and other matters about which they were dissatisfied. On the other hand, so many residents were so fed up of the KCTMO failing to conduct repairs to their properties that many may have just given up reporting any defects to the works. I recall that Compact members ultimately did not suggest questions for the survey.

197. In my experience the Council and the KCTMO would work together to ensure that resident complaints were not properly addressed, even by the RBKC group responsible for acting upon them, the HPSC. Quentin Marshall and his Committee made sure that residents' concerns were not addressed and that we did not have any justice. It seemed to be all part of their plan to marginalise residents' concerns because it suited them to turn a blind eye to what was going on. I would like to know what communications there were within Cabinet and amongst Councillors and Council Officers in particular Rock Feilding-Mellen, Condon-Simmonds, Quentin Marshall and Laura Johnson about how the residents' submissions to the HPSC were to be 'managed' and with the TMO as to how they could avoid being subject to an independent working group.

198. We blogged about our experiences at the Scrutiny Committees as follows:

- a. 31 January 2016: "Grenfell Tower Residents address RBKC Scrutiny Committee" (ED2/157: ()).
- b. 19 June 2016: "RBKC Cover Up at Grenfell Tower" (ED2/158: TMO00832439).

199. In my view, the HPSC process and the TMO internal investigation that followed was a missed opportunity for the Council to identify, with the benefit of independent scrutiny, the failings of the TMO, its inability to properly manage a refurbishment project of this size, the paucity of the TMOs complaints process and to identify fire safety failings in the Tower especially those arising from poor workmanship.

200. A blog on 30 October 2016, "The Grenfell Pathway, will lessons be learned?", primarily authored by David Collins, expressed concern that the TMO would not learn lessons from the Grenfell refurbishment. The blog set out 15 recommendations for the future. I exhibit the blog as ED2/159 (()).

RBKC Scrutiny Committee consideration of Power Surges – July 2013

201. I am aware that the Grenfell Tower Inquiry has concluded that a power surge was not the cause of the Grenfell Tower fire. Even though it wasn't causative I believe the way the power surges were dealt with by RBKC and the KCTMO is relevant to the systems in place for raising fire safety concerns and how those concerns were dealt with. The

complaint we took to the Scrutiny Committee about the power surges was specifically about a fire risk affecting a large number of residents. The Inquiry's understanding of this issue is important, because it should confirm:

- a. The lack of proper oversight of the TMO by RBKC's Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee;
- b. The way in which the TMO treated legitimate fire safety complaints - by essentially underplaying the seriousness of the issue and withholding relevant information from residents;
- c. The TMO's relationship with contractors who were responsible for maintaining fire safety (in this case RGE);
- d. The TMO's refusal to meet with residents despite legitimate requests; finally
- e. Robert Black and Peter Maddison providing misleading evidence to the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee.

202. I first became aware of the power surges on 13 May 2013 when I was sitting in my living room and the overhead lights went from being really dim back to really bright. During the power surges residents' electrical equipment would malfunction, smoke would be emitted from electrical fires, appliances would be destroyed for example a TV or computer would fuse and stop working. I personally suffered electrical faults in a number of items including my Sky box, the stereo in my front room and my speakers in my bedroom amongst other things. I heard that some residents lost thousands of pounds in electrical equipment. I remember being so concerned that I Googled 'power surge' and was surprised to find that there was no information that corresponded to what we were experiencing within the Tower. That of itself was very troubling. Residents were complaining about the power surges for a long time before they were addressed.

203. Residents called up the KCTMO to complain about the power surges. Some would be told that it was not a collective problem, and that they were the only resident experiencing the power surge. This is something that happened not just with this issue but also others. We weren't allowed to raise a group complaint so the TMO could just brush us off as speaking only for ourselves, not collectively.

204. I attach as Exhibit ED2/160 () emails I exchanged with Siobhan Rumble on this subject and some TMO letters. The documents speak for themselves so I will not repeat the content in this statement. By 28 May 2013 the problem still hadn't been resolved, on the contrary my main computer seemed to have been damaged about which I wrote to Siobhan Rumble again. By 28 May the TMO still could not confirm what was causing the power surges. GAG wrote our first blog about the power surges on 28 May entitled "More Trouble at Grenfell Tower" (ED2/161: TMO00830988).
205. In the meanwhile in an email from Laura Johnson to the GTLA she had said she thought the problem was with the power supplier rather than the TMO or KALC project.
206. On 29 May 2013, as we wrote on a blog that day: "*The whole electrical system went into meltdown, and by the TMO's own admission, fused several key meters and damaged or destroyed electrical appliances in 40 individual residences*" (ED2/162: TMO00831436). I heard from residents that their appliances started to smoke, and one resident's room completely filled with smoke after their TV blew up. The resident told me he was relieved it happened during the day time as he feared the consequences if it had happened at night. There were reports of sparks coming out of light fittings, events that felt seriously dangerous. On the day of this catastrophic incident, a group of concerned residents descended on the KCTMO offices demanding that someone should do something. Understandably, we believed at the time that the KCTMO had narrowly averted a major fire disaster at Grenfell Tower, given that residents above the (original) 9th floor had suddenly been at risk of multiple appliance fires in multiple flats. It might be difficult for someone who has never lived in a high rise residential block to appreciate how frightening it is, for electricity to start destroying possessions and for smoke to fill the air, especially when you discover it is going on across the building. We were entitled to candour, transparency and the utmost scrutiny of the situation. That is not what occurred.
207. Importantly, I have now seen what appears to be the full version of a report by RGE Services Limited dated 29 May 2013 which confirmed that in their view the power surges presented the risk of a fire in an electrical riser (ED2/163: ZUR00000025). The relevant sections of the report are on page two and read as follows:

“Further investigation found badly damaged enclosure and service cable in the lower ground floor riser cupboard where there is evidence of severe burn and arcing damage”.

...

“On inspection we found loose connections and the neutral cable had melted away from the clamp connections and could have caused a fire within the riser”.

...

“The Client was informed and witnessed the damage”.

208. I have concerns as to whether RGE Services Limited should have been tasked with investigating this at all for reasons I set out later in this statement. However, in any event, this report was not provided to me despite my requests for all documents associated with this issue which I refer to later in this statement. I have also not seen any evidence that this report was ever provided to the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee. The RGE report seems to vindicate the concerns being raised by residents that the power surges presented a fire safety risk.
209. Between 30 May and 12 June 2013 I was in email correspondence with Paul Dunkerton about the power surges requesting an emergency meeting with residents. Those emails are exhibited as ED2/164 () and culminated in Dunkerton saying the TMO were not ready to have such a meeting as they were still investigating.
210. On 31 May 2013 Thea McNaught-Reynolds the TMO’s Interim Communications Manager provided an update where she described the problems with the electrical supply as affecting *“a small number of residents on 29 May 2013”*. This underplayed the issue.
211. On 3 June we received a letter from the TMO to say *“We have appointed engineers from Royal repairs to check and test electrical equipment for repair. This work has been ongoing since Friday 31 May and if you have not yet had your faulty equipment tested Royal repairs will be on site again Wednesday 5 June”*.
212. I have now seen an email from Laura Johnson to Cllr Rock Feilding–Mellen dated 4 June 2013 which she describes as *“a more comprehensive response on why there was a problem with power surges in Grenfell Tower”*. In the last paragraph of page 1, she

recites a sentence from the withheld RGE Services Ltd report but finishes the sentence omitting the words after the word “connections”, resulting in the following words being omitted by her from her email: “and could have caused a fire within the riser” (ED2/165: RBK00033470). She also omits the word “smoke” from her email despite it being in the RGE Services Ltd report. It is not clear to me whether Laura Johnson had seen the RGE Services Ltd Report and made these omissions herself or if she was provided with inaccurate information by someone at the TMO. Given how closely she was involved in Grenfell Tower I suspect she had seen the report.

213. On 10 June 2013 GAG wrote another blog on the subject about what was going on (ED2/166: TMO00828783).

214. On 13 June 2013 the TMO briefed RBKC on the power surges and said, amongst other things: “*The problem has been identified and the building made safe. Temporary repairs were completed on 29 May to ensure resident safety. Further work will be required to fix the problem permanently and we will advise residents of timing once we have confirmed arrangements.*”

215. On 14 June 2013 we wrote a blog in which we said as follows:

“According to evidence heard by the Lakanal inquest earlier this year, the fire was caused by a fault in a television set in one of the flats – so there is no doubt that electrical faults can and do cause lethal fires in highrise blocks. The Lakanal inquest was also highly critical of the negligence of the landlords – the local authority – which contributed significantly to the tragic outcome of the Lakanal incident. ... Any one of the power-surge incidents that occurred throughout that period might have caused a serious outbreak of fire, and the underlying fault was almost certainly caused by the incompetence and/or negligence of the TMO and their electrical contractors (ED2/167:).

216. On 3 July 2013 Siobhan Rumble wrote to residents to say that RGE Services would be carrying out repair works to replace the electrical power supply cable and the 10 distribution boards that hold the fuse links to all 120 flats.

217. On 15 July 2013 I wrote to the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee in relation to the power surges and also the delays to the refurbishment works (ED2/168: RBK00030261).

218. On 16 July 2013, in response to residents’ pressure the RBKC Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee agreed to consider the issue.

219. On 9 July 2013 the Grenfell Action Group e-mailed the Committee to say as follows relation to the power surges and how they had been dealt with by the TMO:

“The Council/TMO have constantly tried to minimise the impact of the power surge by stating that only a small number of residents have been affected. This is untrue and most households living between the 10th and 20th floors of Grenfell Tower experienced the very frightening power surges and lost the majority of their electrical appliances. It is understood that over 40 households have been affected. We believe that the power surge at Grenfell Tower posed a major fire risk to the residents of Grenfell Tower and that this is not highlighted in [Laura] Johnson's report. Residents experienced smoke coming out of our light fittings and many electrical appliances literally blew up! Despite the fact that these dangerous incidents were reported to the TMO/Council on 11th May 2013 no serious action was taken by the TMO to solve the problem until the power surge problems escalated out of control on 29th May 2013. Residents, to date, have received no compensation for the loss of our goods or information as to the cause of the power surge. We want to know why were we left to live in a potential fire trap for nearly three weeks despite our landlords being made explicitly aware that there was a major problem with our electrics?”

....

Finally, with regards to both the refurbishment and power surge issue, Ms Johnson claims that only "a small number of residents" have been raising concerns. In doing so, she appears to seek to minimise the level of discontent felt by our community.

The truth is, in fact, very different. Following the recent demise of the Estate Management Board, the refurbishment and power surge issues have been repeatedly raised by the three leading stakeholders that operate on Lancaster West Estate namely, the Lancaster West Resident Association, the Grenfell Action Group and the Grenfell Tower Leaseholders Association.

Many ordinary residents of Grenfell Tower and the wider Estate are also concerned at how our community has been treated over this issue. Repeated requests by the three local stakeholder groups for the TMO to hold a meeting for residents to discuss our concerns have been denied to us despite the fact that the TMO claims to be a resident led organisation.”

220. On 11 July 2013, after seeking guidance from a resident of Barandon Walk, Joe Delaney, I lodged a claim form with RBKC for damage to some of my electrical goods. He had some experience of dealing with issues such as this, I didn't.

221. On 15 July 2013 the Grenfell Action Group wrote again to the Committee to say that almost every household in Grenfell Tower had signed a petition in relation to the power surges.

222. On 16 July 2013 the RBKC Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee Meeting considered the issue and later issued a report exonerating the TMO. Residents were not invited to address the meeting. The minutes of the meeting (which we had to fight to obtain) include as follows and are publically available:

“[Mr Maddison] reported that the causes of power surges in May were uncertain but an arced cable had been discovered and cabling to all parts of the block had now been replaced. He confirmed that the block’s electrical wiring was checked every 5 years under the existing maintenance contract.

He reported power surge protection for the block was now in place and there had been no reoccurrence of power surges and monitoring would continue. Mr Maddison confirmed that Grenfell Tower’s mains cabling was separate from the Kensington Academy and Leisure Centre cabling.

In response to questions from the Committee on insurance and damage to residents’ possessions, Mr Maddison reported a log of all damaged electrical equipment was kept up to date. Some 40 properties had experienced some damage. Loss adjusters acting for the insurers were still to confirm the amount of compensation required and to advise on settlement of payments.

Mr Maddison reported that the smoke emitted from one flat had, on investigation proved to be steam and this problem had been resolved. Before May’s power surge, the block had been assessed for fire risk and deemed to have full fire protection. In relation to the risk of smoke released into common parts, Ms Johnson reminded the Committee that all leaseholder doors had been fire risk assessed and leaseholders advised on the level of compliance to fire protection standards. She stated that her officers were seeking further advice on liability for fire risk.

Mr Black assured the Committee the TMO had taken this incident and the resulted damage to tenants’ property seriously. The TMO he said took health and safety matters seriously. He noted some of the claims linked to the incident had been factually inaccurate.”

223. In my view Peter Maddison and Robert Black both tried to minimise the effect of the power surges and did not provide full disclosure to the HPSC; Peter Maddison by referring to an incident where there was “*steam*” instead of “*smoke*” and Robert Black by stating “*some of the claims linked to the incident had been factually inaccurate*”. Neither of them was able to substantiate these allegations when GAG later questioned them. There is no reference in the minutes to the TMO accepting that the power surges created a fire risk. There was no reference to the RGE Services Ltd report. I am also not clear whether Peter Maddison’s claim that “*the block had been assessed for fire risk and deemed to have full protection*” was factually correct and whether any purported

assessment for fire risk was in fact adequate given the fire risk referred to in the RGE report.

224. On 17 July 2013 RBKC wrote to Councillor Blakeman acknowledging receipt of the petition signed by 90 residents including myself. The petition was circulated by the Grenfell Tower Leaseholders Association. It called for the TMO to explain what caused the power surges, what the chain of responsibility was for this at the TMO. It also noted that Peter Maddison had not taken the matter seriously by referring to only seven properties where there had been power surge problems (ED2/12: RBK00013826_0004).

225. On 18 July 2013 Laura Johnson wrote to Councillor Blakeman to say the KCTMO had carried out some repairs and continued to monitor the situation but it was too early to say whether the problem had been fully resolved and where responsibility lay for the cause. She said it was possible that the fault that had been rectified was not the primary cause. This contradicted the TMO briefing to RBKC of 13 June that *“The problem has been identified and the building made safe”*.

226. On 19 July 2013 there was a meeting between the Deputy Leader of RBKC and members of the Grenfell Leaseholders’ Association and the Grenfell Action Group. Cllr Blakeman’s Minutes record the following, amongst other things:

“Peter Madison said that the TMO was investigating the causes of the power surges, whether they were linked to KALC, to the external grid or within the tower block itself and a monitoring system had been put in place. A problem of arcing at the incoming mains had been identified and this had been addressed. A trip had been installed so that if the problem recurred the whole system would trip. All affected properties have been inspected, tested and confirmed to be safe. All damage similarly has been inspected and logged and claims will go to the insurers for a swift decision. About 40 properties in total had been affected.

227. On 4 August 2013 GAG wrote another blog on the power surges citing the Scrutiny Committee meeting, *“The Disempowered of Grenfell Tower”* (ED2/169: TMO00832606). We said: *“We believe that the power surges at Grenfell Tower posed a major fire risk to many residents but this is not highlighted in the Committee report.”*

228. I received a letter from Zurich, TMO’s insurer, dated 9 August 2013 to say they denied liability for my damaged electrical goods because *“all required electrical inspections had been carried out and therefore it was not foreseeable that a power surge would occur”* and *“Once our Customer was on notice of the electrical issues, we believe*

that they acted promptly and reasonably, working with UK Power Networks and their contractors to identify and resolve the same.”

229. On 12 August 2013 Siobhan Rumble wrote a letter to residents to say as follows:
“...all necessary repair works to the electrical system have now been completed and we have received the final outcome of the insurance investigation into the power surges at Grenfell Tower. Zurich insurance, the TMO’s insurer, has completed its investigation following the power surges in May 2013 and has found that the TMO is not liable for any damage to electrical appliances. Zürich found that it was not foreseeable that the power surges would occur, given that all required electrical inspections had been carried out in accordance with statutory requirements. Once the TMO was aware of the electrical issues, it was found to have acted appropriately, working with UK Power networks and the TMO’s contractors to identify and resolve any issues. For these reasons Zürich has found that the TMO has not been negligent in regards to this incident. They have therefore declined to provide compensation with regards to residence insurance claims. The TMO does recognise that due to the power surges you’ve experienced some inconvenience stop for this reason, the TMO is offering a goodwill payment of £200 per affected house. This offer is not an admission of liability and is made without prejudice.”
230. There was no consideration here as to whether the steps that were ultimately taken on 29 May could and should have been taken much earlier. Also, this letter does not address whether the electrical checks were carried out properly and if so, how the power surges could have happened. It is my understanding that RGE Services Ltd were contracted to carry out electrical wiring safety checks for the TMO and had replaced much of the domestic electrical wiring in Lancaster West estate. If they were the company responsible for the pre-power surge electrical checks cited by Zurich then they were the same company responsible for maintaining portable firefighting equipment, testing, servicing and maintenance who were criticised in the November 2012 FRA for leaving the building with out of date fire extinguishers (ED2/170: TMO10001805). As a result of the 2012 FRA the TMO were on notice that there were shortcomings in the services provided by RGE. In these circumstances I do not think it would have been appropriate for the TMO to ask RGE to investigate whether RGE’s own electrical checks and maintenance of electrical wiring was properly done, an independent contractor should have been appointed.

231. I am now aware that in an email of 23 August 2013 Councillor Tony Holt wrote to Quentin Marshall to say: *“If I were responsible I would want to have a chartered electrical engineer with electrical power experience to advise and I would want to have a hand in choosing him (or her). It might be better to get an outside body to help, such as the Institute of Electrical Engineers. I could make some enquiries, if that would be helpful. It is messy, but seems to be the only way to go”* (ED2/171:). I do not know whether this action was taken and if not, why not and I would like the Inquiry to investigate this.

232. On 13 August 2013 GAG wrote a blog: *“No justice for Grenfell Tower power surge victims”* (ED2/172:) attaching the letter from the TMO offering the paltry £200 *“goodwill payment”* but with no admission of liability. Joe Delaney drafted a precedent letter of claim that residents could use to seek compensation which we put on the blog. On the same day I sent a FOIA request for information about the power surges including: Any emails or other correspondence between the TMO/Council and Zurich insurers and the report that was sent to Zurich claim settlers detailing the TMO response to the power surge crisis. I was suspicious that the TMO, RBKC and Zurich had colluded to minimise what happened, it was in all their interests to deny any liability. The RGE Services report I mention at paragraph 207 (ED2/163: ZUR00000025) above was not provided to me in reply to my FOIA request.

233. On 13 August we also sent an email to Quentin Marshall in his capacity as Chair of the HPSC. We asked him to attend a meeting with residents on 15 August 2013 but Councillor Marshall failed to attend. The Minutes say:

“The TMO worked with our contractors and UK Power networks to eliminate possibilities and pinpoint the actual cause of the problem. We also worked with the fire brigade to undertake further checks and ensure residents were safe. The health and safety executive was not contacted as there was no reason for them to be involved”

...

“Are all electrical tests up-to-date and are RGE a competent contractor: all statutory tests have been carried out to the communal supplier Grenfell Tower by the TMO’s appointed contractor RGE who are qualified to carry out all works to current British standards. RGE are managed by the contract management team within the TMO.”

234. GAG emailed Quentin Marshall but we received no reply and so on 27 August 2013 GAG published a blog *“Marshall gets stuck in”* (ED2/173:) where we

published our emails to him. We concluded the blog by referring to the “*inherent hostility on the part of the Council and the TMO towards any complaints or expressions of concern or dissatisfaction coming from Lancaster West residents. To the disinterested reader this may seem a little paranoid, but to Lancaster West residents who have long suffered the neglect, contempt and double standards of both these bureaucracies it will seem anything but paranoid.*”

235. On 30 August 2013 Quentin Marshall finally replied to our emails and blog but only to send us the documents which were now publically available relating to the 16 July 2013 HPSC meeting. I replied the following day.

236. On 4 September 2013 the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee again considered the power surge issue and it was recorded:

“Mr Maddison reported that Zurich Insurance, the company used by the TMO, had reviewed all claims for damage and had confirmed that the TMO had taken appropriate steps to ensure the power supply infrastructure was in a reasonable state and the TMO therefore, had not been negligent and was not liable for loss or damage to tenants’ equipment. TMO officers had met residents and advised them by letter to claim for damage via their own home contents insurance. As a token of goodwill and in compensation for disruption, a payment of £200 had been made to each tenant. Mr Maddison said the TMO recognised this might not cover the cost of lost equipment.”

237. On 10 September 2013 I sent a letter of claim to RBKC (Laura Johnson) regarding the power surges and requested disclosure of relevant documents including “*Copies of any report(s) prepared by RBKC, KCTMO, any electricians, any agents, or any other persons or organisations in relation to the investigation and ultimate resolution of the power surge issue*”. The withheld RGE report I mention above (ED2/163: ZUR00000025) was, again, not provided to me in response. My email of 10 September 2013 was treated as a Freedom of Information Act request by Amanda Johnson in her reply email of 19 September 2013 (ED2/174: RBK00002485). Amanda Johnson said the request would be processed by Robin Yu at RBKC.

238. The same day, 10 September 2013, I received from the TMO a response to my 10 August 2013 FOIA request which I attach as Exhibits ED2/175 () to ED2/176 () and which included a number of documents but, again, the withheld RGE Services Ltd report mentioned above was not provided to me. The documents provided were described as follows:

“Appendix 1 – Email correspondence between RBKC Insurance Department and the TMO. The email requests copies of electrical reports from the TMO which have also been attached. Appendix 2 – List of repairs reported to the TMO from February 2013 to June 2013 as requested in the email correspondence in Appendix 1...Appendix 3 – Electrical Installation Certificate following works carried out by RGE Services on 09/07/2013. Appendix 4 – Periodic Inspection Report dated 04/05/2010. Appendix 5 – Further electrical test completed 05/09/2013 following the recommendation in Appendix 3¹

239. On 10 September 2013 I wrote to Robert Black asking him to substantiate his comment that certain *“claims linked to the incident had been factually inaccurate”* and to confirm who he suggested had been making these false claims. On 12 September 2013 Robert Black responded to say: *“There has been a considerable volume of e-mail correspondence relating to the power surges...KCTMO does not respond to “round robin” e-mails or blogs, however, I disagree with some of the statements and allegations made in that correspondence, and I wanted to put this on record for members of the Scrutiny Committee”*. He did not specify what claims he believed were factually inaccurate (ED2/177: TMO10026874). Despite the failure to provide me with the RGE Services Ltd report Mr Black also assured me: *“We have gone to considerable lengths to keep residents informed throughout and have shared all relevant information with residents, including the recent information sent to you following your Freedom of Information Request”* (emphasis added)

240. I continued to correspond with Robert Black in relation to, amongst other things, *“the TMOs attempt to cover up the seriousness of the fire risks to Grenfell Tower residents”* (ED2/178: TMO10012803_0095). I noted that the TMO had refused to provide us with a copy of its report about the power surges to the HPSC. As a result we had to secure a copy of their report from RBKC. I also asked him to confirm exactly what GAG had blogged or emailed that he believed to be factually inaccurate but he did not substantiate his allegation, I saw all of this as a further effort on the part of the TMO to make unsubstantiated allegations against GAG and other residents in order to defend themselves in relation to residents’ fire safety complaints. On the subject of their refusal to provide a copy of the TMO report I said: *“For a resident led organisation this is another example of how you treat your residents with utter contempt. It is quite something that after nearly being burnt to death by our landlords we can’t even get access to the*

¹ These same documents were later provided to me on 4 November 2013 by Robin Yu at RBKC under the FOIA.

report that details what the TMO claim went on". I subsequently lodged a formal complaint about this which went to Stage 3. I was told that my attendance at the Stage 3 panel meeting was not required and the complaint would be dealt with on the documents. I attach all these emails with Robert Black and those associated with my complaint as Exhibit ED2/179 ().

241. On 20 September 2013 GAG emailed Quentin Marshall requesting an urgent meeting (ED2/180:).

242. Councillor Marshall replied on 22 September to say:

"Members [of the HPSC] were satisfied by the responses received from the TMO following questioning" and that "The Scrutiny Committee exists to question the executive functions of the Council, not to direct policy or the actions of Officers".

243. GAG wrote a blog on 27 September 2013, "It's a dirty job", in which we provided the full text of our letter of 20 September (ED2/181:).

244. I have now seen emails of 2 October 2013 between RBKC Legal Services Department and the following: Peter Maddison (TMO), Joanne Burke (TMO), Amanda Johnson (RBKC) and Angela Bosnjak Szekeres (TMO) where the RGE Services Ltd report is cited so I expect all those copied in to that email had read the full report. (ED2/182: TMO00832850).

245. On 17 October 2013 we wrote a blog citing RBKC's failure to respond to my FOIA made on 10 September 2013 (ED2/183:).

246. On 28 October 2013 we wrote a blog in which we published an open letter to Nick Paget Brown citing the power surges and RBKC and the TMO's suggestion that residents claim for losses from their contents insurance. We wrote that most residents had not claimed because they could not afford contents insurance (ED2/184:). It felt like another slap in the face to residents, a refusal to acknowledge that there were some residents who just didn't have any spare money for insurance as they were struggling to meet their own basic needs.

247. On 31 October 2013 I complained to the Information Commissioner's Office that I had not received a response to my letter of 10 September within 20 working days. The ICO responded on 12 November 2013 to say they had written to RBKC to remind them

of their responsibilities and asking them to respond to me within 10 further working days (ED2/185: RBK00000051).

248. In the meantime, in an email of 4 November 2013 Robin Yu of RBKC had provided me with some documents in response to my 10 September 2013. I produce the email from Mr Yu and all of the attachments which are named by Mr Yu as follows (ED2/186 ; ED2/187:):

- “Appendix 1 - correspondence with insurers”;
- “Appendix 2 – Repairs logged”;
- “Appendix 3 – Electrical Test Certificate”;
- “Appendix 4 – Periodic Inspection Report”;
- “Appendix 5 – Further Electrical Test Certificate”;
- “Appendix 6 – Grenfell Tower – Complaint File – 2013.9.25”
- “Appendix 7 – Grenfell Tower correspondence to residents”;
- “Appendix 8 – Grenfell Tower Update Report to Housing & Property Scrutiny Committee”;
- “Appendix 9 – Minutes Housing & Property Scrutiny Committee 16 July 2013”;
- “Appendix 10 – Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee 4 September Minutes approved by Chairman”;
- “Appendix 11 – Electrical Certificate 134 Grenfell Tower”;
- “File_00400”;
- “Daffarn – Claim Form”;
- “Grenfell Tower170713 (signed)”;
- “Grenfell Road Petition”

249. Importantly, I can now see that Page 19 of Appendix 7 (page 72 of Exhibit ED2/187) comprised page one of the RGE services report of 29 May 2013. However, inexplicably, pages 2-4 of that report were not provided to me, including page 2 which is the page which disclosed the risk of a fire within the electrical riser.

250. Having reviewed Inquiry disclosure (ED2/188: RBK00002196) I can see that Amanda Johnson and Laura Johnson were involved in responding to my 10 September

2013 letter. I can also see that on 31 October 2013 Peter Maddison sent on to Clare Lees an attachment “Appendix 7 – Grenfell Tower Correspondence to Residents” with a direction that “I think this needs to go out under RBKC’s name rather than KCTMOs. Can you please [sic] discuss this with Robin and agree who’s name this should go in?” It therefore appears that Peter Maddison provided the partial copy of the RGE Services Ltd report that was in turn provided to me by Robin Yu. I consider it important for the Inquiry to obtain the attachment sent by Peter Maddison and also to investigate who was responsible for the fact that I only received the first page of the RGE Services Ltd report, and why the rest of the report, which disclosed a fire risk, was withheld. This is relevant to how the TMO and RBKC dealt with fire safety complaints. I note that all of this happened at around the same time that my complaint against Peter Maddison was upheld for failure to disclose the Rand Report, mentioned at paragraphs 96-97 of this statement.

251. I have now seen an email from Janice Wray to Peter Maddison of 22 November 2013 where she says “*clearly there was an elevated level of potential fire risk during this period, as it was swiftly investigated and resolved I had concluded that the status of the block with regard to fire safety had returned to the medium risk outlined in the Fire Risk Assessment – is this also your view?*” (ED2/189: TMO10040193). I cannot recall the TMO ever communicating to residents any acceptance that there was an elevated fire risk during this period even though it was obvious to residents. Rather, they chose to minimise the level of any such risk as detailed earlier in this statement.

252. I have now seen an email from LeVerne Parker at RBKC to the Leader of the Council Cllr Nicholas Paget Brown dated 22 November 2013 where she states “*I found no evidence that officers were trying to be obstructive in responding to the request*” (ED2/190: RBK00030332).

253. We wrote another blog on the power surges on 1 March 2014
(ED2/191:).

254. I was notified by letter dated 4 March 2014, sent to me by email dated 6 March 2014, that my Stage 3 complaint regarding the power surges was not upheld by the TMO Panel. There are different versions of this letter, with different dates, disclosed by the Inquiry but the email and letter I received are exhibited as ED2/192 (TMOH00004634) and

ED2/193 (TMO10049927). In dismissing my complaint the letter said: *“the panel considers that you have received all the reports that you requested in your email of 10th September”*. I have now seen the minutes of that panel meeting which took place on 18 and 24 February 2014 and there is reference made to a RGE Services report (ED2/194: TMO10005286; ED2/195: TMO10049952). However, it is not clear whether the Panel were given the full RGE Services report in the bundle they considered as the bundle has not been disclosed to me, so far, in the course of this Inquiry. It is also not clear if the Panel were aware that I had not been given that full report, by either the TMO or RBKC in response to my request and whether they took that into account when considering whether the TMO had complied with its obligations to disclose information.

255. On 17 March 2014 I emailed Ben Dewis, Fire Safety Inspecting Officer of the London Fire Brigade, Kensington Fire Station regarding fire safety at Grenfell Tower including reference to power surges and also the stay put policy. I have referred to this email later in this statement when exhibiting all my communications with Mr Dewis.

256. I believe that the manner in which the power surges issue was dealt with is important as to TMO and RBKC culture. As residents, it felt like we and our complaints were treated as an inconvenience. We were marginalised even where we were complaining about breaches of health and safety arising from a fire risk.

RBKC Councillors and the local political context

257. It will be clear from the exhibits to this statement and what I have said above that local Councillors were often contacted to raise issues relating to residents welfare and fire safety. Councillors were also supposed to oversee the TMO. However, in my experience Councillors, from across the political spectrum were ineffective both in addressing our complaints and overseeing the TMO more generally.

258. For my own part, I am not a member of any political party; my motivation for challenging the status quo concerning our housing issues was not influenced by any party political affiliation.

RBKC Council Officers and Conservative Councillors

259. In other Local Authorities, one way constituents can seek to ensure they are properly represented is to vote Councillors who control the Council out of office if they do not perform that function. However, that has never been an option for the residents of North Kensington. RBKC has always had a Conservative controlled council and it is difficult for me, and probably for the Councillors, to ever see that changing given the demographic of the Borough as a whole.

260. There was a very basic problem at play. Those who controlled the RBKC Council were not motivated to serve the interests of North Kensington residents because they did not need our votes. Also, in my view, a section of senior Conservative Councillors were politically predisposed to selling off or leasing public assets (for example the North Kensington Library, the Isaac Newton Centre and the Westway Information Centre) and public land including land on which there was social housing.

261. Merrick Cockell became Leader of the Council from 2000 to 2013. In my view he moved away from the old “paternalistic” attitude of the Tory leadership in RBKC which did in some ways take steps in support of those living in social housing. For example, a lot of the housing Estates that were formed in North Kensington came in the late 1960s and early 1970s as a result of RBKC compulsorily purchasing slum-like properties from rogue landlords. I believe the formation of Lancaster West and Swinbrook Estate are two examples of this policy. There was probably a generation of Conservative councillors who were proud of the efforts they had made to improve housing conditions in North Kensington.

262. Cockell and his cohort of Councillors introduced a notion of property development into the Council’s social housing policy. As everyone knows, the land in Kensington and Chelsea is worth an absolute fortune. We have some of the most valuable properties in the world; North Kensington is a stone’s throw away from Sloane Square and Knightsbridge. I believe the Council recognised that the land we were living on was a goldmine and they didn’t even have to dig for the gold. All they had to do was marginalise and displace the people that were living on that land. In

doing so, they could “regenerate” those areas by disposing of or leasing those assets to the private sector, replace the social housing with “mixed communities”, make a fortune from property development and sales and change the electorate in those wards. Councillors may even possibly have benefitted personally from these activities, although that is something for others to investigate.

263. I believe that Merrick Cockell started this transfer of public assets into the private sector and that as part of this process he groomed Councillor Rock Feilding-Mellen, to become his trigger man for these policies in North Kensington resulting in Feilding-Mellen being promoted to Cabinet Member for “Housing, Property and Regeneration”. This direction of travel continued under Cllr Nicholas Paget-Brown when he became leader of the Council in 2013. The Councillors’ intention to regenerate North Kensington was reflected in part by the fact that when Councillor Feilding-Mellen took over the property portfolio for the Cabinet, the name of the position actually changed from Cabinet Member for “Housing and Property” to Cabinet Member for “Housing, Property and Regeneration”. The ruling party in RBKC were not hiding what they were doing, they were now focusing on regeneration. GAG wrote blogs about Councillor Rock Feilding Mellen’s involvement in the sale and leasing of public assets. In my view Merrick Cockell’s era of leadership changed the focus of the Council from being a functioning Local Authority, which should concentrate on keeping people safe, to one which was focussed on asset stripping and handing public land to private developers.

264. In my view the first rule of government is to keep the people safe and Councillors and their officers should have been concentrating time, energy and focus, on that duty. Instead, I believe they were concentrating their time and their energy on trying to sell off and lease to the private sector all the public assets that they could. The new Chief Executive of RBKC Barry Quirk has said as much at a Grenfell United committee meeting after the fire. He said that prior to the fire RBKC had been a “*property developer masquerading as a Local Authority*”. I gave evidence of his comment to the Housing Communities and Local Government Parliamentary Select Committee on 15 June 2018 and in response the Guardian reported that the Council said it accepted my remarks and agreed. I exhibit the Guardian article at ED2/196

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265. On 26 October 2016 Councillor Nicholas Paget-Brown published a blog on his website in his capacity as Leader of RBKC where he boasted at the steps the Council had taken to enforce fire safety measures against landlords in the Borough, in particular in relation to fire doors. He wrote:

“We have prosecuted when we found properties with inadequate fire precautions such as faulty alarms, smoke detectors and a lack of fire doors. We have taken action over unsafe boilers and flues that posed a real threat to people living in the property.

In one case, after tenants escaped a property following a fire, we discovered that the flat had no fire doors or proper alarm system. This is completely unacceptable.

Tenants should not have to put up with such poor conditions. And if we have anything to do with it they won't.

...

It's very important that we continue to work hard to make sure bad landlords are brought to book. We need to do this on behalf of tenants, sometimes quite vulnerable people who cannot always fight their own corner. I also want us to do it because it's not right that, when so many landlords work hard to do the right thing a few think they can make money while cutting corners”

(ED2/196a:).

266. It is clear that this purportedly zealous approach to maintaining fire safety standards did not apply to the Council's own responsibility to scrutinise the fire safety obligations of their long-armed landlord the KCTMO.

267. The individuals in the Council who I believe were involved in selling off and leasing public assets in the Borough were some of those who should also have been overseeing the TMO and ensuring we were kept safe. Amongst RBKC Council Officers they included Laura Johnson, Tony Redpath and Jonathon Bore. It felt as if the Council's priorities were led by the Corporate Property department.

268. Amongst the Councillors who I believe were involved in selling off and leasing public assets in the Borough who also had a duty to oversee the TMO, I would include, Rock Feilding-Mellen, Nick Paget Brown and Quentin Marshall.

269. There were others in this group who to my knowledge did not have a formal role in overseeing the TMO and its fire safety obligations but I am able to name them if requested by the Inquiry.

Rock Feilding-Mellen's purchase of a property on Bramley Road

270. Before the fire I raised a complaint about the fact that he stood to gain financially from any regeneration of the Lancaster West and Silchester Estates. This is because of the likely appreciation in the value of his home on Bramley Road if the social housing in those housing estates (which were on his doorstep) was replaced by so called "affordable housing". Such "affordable housing" was, in reality, still only affordable for those on relatively good incomes.

271. Since the fire I have become aware that Rock Feilding-Mellen took a keen interest in the appearance of Grenfell Tower including the type of cladding to use. I do not know why Councillor Feilding-Mellen became directly involved in the choice of cladding but believe this was partly because he lived in such close proximity to the Tower that the appearance of the Tower, and the Lancaster West area as a whole, impacted on him and the value of his property.

272. I recall issuing a formal complaint to the Council about Rock Feilding-Mellen in relation to his purchase of the property on Bramley Road. I have now looked back over my emails and can see that I issued that formal complaint on 23 March 2016. My complaint was that Cllr Rock Feilding-Mellen had purchased his property on Bramley Road in 2010 with a view to its value increasing following planned regeneration works in that part of the borough.

273. I received a response from LeVerne Parker, Chief Solicitor for the Tri-Borough, who said she understood this to mean an allegation in respect of a breach of the members' code of conduct. She responded substantively to the complaint on 25 April 2016, dismissing my complaint on the basis that: "*The property was purchased*

on 7 May 2010 some years before the Council had started its estate regeneration programme either in the Latimer area or in other areas of the Borough"; and Feilding-Mellen was not a Councillor at the time of the purchase on 7 May 2010 and *"therefore had no knowledge of any future position with the Council which he might occupy"*. I exhibit this as ED2/197 ().

274. Again I think this was a superficial investigation determined to exonerate a Councillor at the expense of those subject to his power. I am aware that RBKC proposals to regenerate North Kensington were underway, albeit at a preliminary stage, by May 2010. The first phase of a report by a company called 'Tribal' into Housing Stock Options, considering the impact of regeneration on the Housing Revenue Account, was completed in October 2008, and both this and the second phase was submitted to the KCTMO board on 3 September 2009. The 'Notting Hill Barns Masterplan' (referred to at paragraph 17) (ED2/4:) was submitted to the Housing Stock Options Working Group on 13 July 2009. The Masterplan was the subject of a debate at Full Council on 21 January 2009, at which Feilding-Mellen is recorded as being present.

275. The Masterplan was also the subject of a petition, submitted alongside 123 signatures, to Full Council on 2 December 2009, for which Feilding-Mellen is recorded as being present (ED2/198:).

276. Feilding-Mellen was a Councillor on 7 May 2010. While it is plausible to argue *'he would not have had knowledge of any future position...he might occupy'*, it is very likely that, due to his positions within the Council until that point, he should have at the very least known of proposals to regenerate North Kensington for the following reasons. First, he was still a Councillor when he purchased the property. He had lost his seat following the elections held on 6 May 2010. Under the Local Government Act 1972, Councillors officially retire four days after an election is held. Feilding-Mellen therefore only ceased to be a Councillor on 10 May 2010, three days after the property was purchased on 7 May.

277. More significantly, immediately prior to this, Feilding-Mellen had been a backbench Councillor and had been a member of the Public Realm Scrutiny Committee since May 2006. During his tenure on the Committee the Council's Draft

Core Strategy was discussed at a Committee hearing on 12 May 2009, for which Feilding-Mellen was recorded as present, the Officer report accompanying the Strategy notes ‘Latimer’ as ‘an area of regeneration’ (ED2/199: ; ED2/200:). Also, the proposed Local Development Plan was discussed at a Committee hearing on 8 March 2010, for which Feilding-Mellen was recorded as present. The document refers to a ‘Latimer Area Action Plan’ and accompanying map, and is described as ‘set[ting] out how the Council intends to implement the Council’s vision for the ‘Latimer area’ of the Borough’ (ED2/201: ; ED2/202:). The Local Development Scheme is referred to in a report submitted by Cllr Moylan, then Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Planning Policy and Housing Policy. Finally, Cllr Rock Feilding-Mellen was also a member of the Full Council, in which the Latimer Area Masterplan was discussed on two separate occasions.

278. Therefore, on the basis of what is publicly available and a matter of official record alone, LeVerne Parker’s response to my complaint is not accurate. Feilding-Mellen should have known about the proposals to regenerate the Lancaster West Estate by virtue of his membership of Full Council and the Public Realm Scrutiny, and his attendance at specific meetings in which these matters were discussed.

279. These matters would have been discussed amongst Councillors outside of formal Council business, such as at Conservative Group meetings, and in informal conversations between Councillors. People might be comfortable to dismiss residents who push back in the way that myself and Francis O’Connor did as ‘trouble makers’ and ‘radicals’ etc. But the purchase of Bramley Road by a person with inside knowledge on the future of that planned future for the area, with a business and political interest in regeneration projects in any event, is hardly someone who could be regarded as a straightforward and trustworthy public servant of the people of Lancaster West Estate.

RBKC Labour Councillors

280. Residents of Grenfell Tower would often raise safety complaints through our local Labour Councillors, in particular Cllr. Robert Atkinson and Cllr. Judith Blakeman.

However, they seemed ineffective at addressing the TMO's failures; and I believe that they would ultimately not suggest otherwise.

281. Councillor Blakeman was our longstanding local Labour ward Councillor for Notting Barns. She held regular ward surgeries on Lancaster West Estate. Councillor Blakeman became the elected representative who residents were most likely to approach with our concerns. On a micro level she was good at, and valued by residents for dealing with minor issues that residents came to her to complain about. For example, if you had something wrong like a broken boiler in your flat, or mould, an ongoing need for repairs, she would deal with it. She would always advocate well on residents behalf, write a good letter and she would always be professional in doing that. However, if residents went to complain to her about how we were being treated by the TMO or RBKC Conservatives on a macro level, it is my opinion that she wouldn't effectively hold them to account which was very frustrating. Councillor Blakeman would have to deal with the fallout and consequences resulting from this macro level mistreatment of our community, but she did not effectively advocate on our behalf in relation to those macro issues.

282. Councillor Blakeman and I started off having a reasonable working relationship with each other but this deteriorated once a number of residents groups including GAG came together to oppose the KALC project. I have looked through the blogs we wrote and can see there were almost twenty we wrote about Cllr Blakeman, a few of which referenced Cllrs Atkinson and Foreman. The vast majority of the blogs were critical. See, for example, the above referred to blog of 16 December 2015, which described the problem that Cllr Blakeman sat on both the TMO Board and on the RBKC Scrutiny Committee, and was subsequently compromised by both.

283. There was a blog that we wrote called 'The Gloves Come Off' which highlights just how bad the relationship between us became following our KALC opposition (ED2/203:). Councillor Blakeman would often claim that GAG did not truly represent local residents and would seek to undermine us. This was one of the reasons why we awarded Cllr Blakeman GAG's first "Pants on fire" award on 17 March 2013. I exhibit the blog as ED2/204 ().

284. In our blog entitled “Vote RBKC Labour – Get RBKC Tory” of 15 April 2014 we criticised not just Judith Blakeman but also her Labour colleagues Robert Atkinson and Todd Foreman. I exhibit this blog as ED2/205 ().
285. On a number of occasions between about 2011 and 2016 I went directly to Councillor Blakeman at her Ward Surgeries and pleaded with her to do something about the poor service residents were receiving at the hands of the KCTMO. A number of residents used to attend her surgery and tell her exactly what was going on, and how they were being treated by their landlord. On a number of occasions when I visited her I begged her to do something about the KCTMO. After she became a Director of the KCTMO I continued to raise these concerns with her. Ultimately I begged her to resign from the Board of Directors and go to the press, expose the story, to let people know what was happening. I implored her to just do something. All she used to do was hold her hands up and say, “*What can I do? I can’t do anything*”.
286. I often felt that Councillor Blakeman was working against GAG rather than with us and that she tried to target us in response to our public criticism of her. We were residents trying to voice legitimate concerns about our loss of residential amenities and poor treatment at the hands of the TMO. At one time Cllr Blakeman questioned the GAG's legitimacy to raise issues that impacted on our community by opposing our right to free speech by suggesting that as we had not been "elected" we had no right to speak on behalf of residents. I felt that Cllr Blakeman did not understand that she was a public servant and that residents had a right to criticise the policies that she was supporting. Instead of respecting my right to lampoon the failings of the Labour Group and oppose their policies Cllr Blakeman took my views as a personal attack and, in response, she began to nurture a deep dislike and antagonism towards me.
287. It is also right to identify that Councillor Blakeman, Councillor Coleridge and Councillor Feilding-Mellen all worked against us to stop us forming a Residents Association around 2013. During a meeting which I believe was the one which took place on 19 July 2013 Councillor Feilding-Mellen, backed up by Councillor Blakeman, said that they did not want to give us a collective voice. Blakeman said this was because some people would be heard over others. I believe she was referring to me, but Grenfell wasn't that sort of building. There were some very strong characters in Grenfell Tower, as I have

no doubt this Inquiry would now know itself, having heard and read the evidence of many of those people.

288. It was only after residents of Grenfell Tower enlisted the help of Unite Community in March 2015 and then Victoria Borwick in July 2015 that we were able to form a ‘Compact’ and that Councillor Blakeman’s attitude towards me – at least openly - changed a little.

289. Had Councillor Blakeman supported Grenfell Tower residents more effectively from the beginning of our fight with the TMO we might have had more of a chance. However, in some instances not only did she not support us but actually opposed our efforts. In May 2015, at a time when there had already been a number of resident meetings opposing aspects of the refurbishment works, Councillor Blakeman wrote a report to the Kensington Labour Group that said only 12 households in the Tower were opposed to the new HIUs and that “*other residents of the Tower are furious because it will mean a delay in completing the project*”. This was not true and fed into the Council and TMO’s false narrative. I exhibit that report as ED2/206 () and our associated blog dated 25 June 2015 entitled “Grenfell Tower – propaganda, lies and fact” as ED2/207 ().

290. Earlier in this statement I have referred to an audio recording of certain meetings that has been given to me by Constantine Gras. The first meeting he recorded was not one that I attended. It was a meeting at Judith Blakeman’s Council Surgery on 27 June 2015 attended by David Collins, Cllr Blakeman, Cllr Atkinson, Lorraine Beadle, Willie Thompson and Mariem Elgwhary (deceased). Judith Blakeman can be heard to say that the TMO were refusing to meet with residents “*because of one of your colleagues, he doesn’t help to facilitate an ongoing exchange of views*”... “*That’s why the TMO won’t consult with you as a group and why a lot of people said they would prefer to have newsletters*”. Her view is supported by Cllr Atkinson.

291. It is clear that Cllr Blakeman is referring to me in this meeting and other residents certainly took it that way. As I have said elsewhere in this statement, I am well aware that the TMO had a problem with me and sought to marginalise and discredit me. If what Judith Blakeman said was true I expect the TMO did not want to attend any meetings with me because I was asking them legitimate but difficult questions which they found

difficult to answer and to which they had no proper response. I dispute that residents had requested newsletters instead of meetings because of my conduct or the conduct of any other individual resident at public meetings. I also dispute that the mere fact of my involvement in such meetings would have been any reasonable justification for the TMO to refuse to meet anyone in the Tower.

292. If the TMO, or Judith Blakeman, had openly said to me that the TMO or RBKC wanted to meet Grenfell residents without me then I would have spoken to other residents and happily stood aside so they could, if that's what the residents wanted, or if I thought it would help Grenfell residents secure our aims. Since the fire I have been involved in work to support fellow Grenfell victims but always aim to be respectful of my fellow residents' wishes and aims and think carefully about whether I should or need to be involved. I am concerned that by repeating the TMO's purported justification for not meeting residents Judith Blakeman was seeking to legitimise it and, in doing so, betrayed her deep personal dislike and animosity towards me.

293. It may be that Cllr Blakeman and Cllr Atkinson were not expressing the TMO view but were instead expressing their own view that they did not wish for me to be involved in public meetings, seeking to turn other residents against me.

294. I have now seen emails from Judith Blakeman to Cllr Rock Feilding Mellen and Cllr Nicholas Paget Brown dated 11 December 2013 where Cllr Blakeman made a number of false accusations against me (ED2/208: RBK00003386). She asserted that GAG did not represent the views of Lancaster West Estate's residents and said "*At the moment Mr Daffarn is on one of his long holidays, but he has been so disruptive during the Grenfell Tower consultations that Peter Maddison has suggested and I have agreed that we do not hold any more open meetings.*" I was never told of this decision at the time and save for in the meeting with some residents and Constantine Gras which took place around 17 months later on 27 June 2015 I am not aware of any residents being asked if they agreed with Peter Maddison and Judith Blakeman's decision and reasons. I note that Councillor Blakeman said in her email that my fear that the Lancaster West Estate Walkways would be demolished, something I raised in meetings with the TMO and Councillors, was a "*conspiracy*". However, I have now seen internal TMO minutes from a meeting on 19 December 2013 which confirm that the TMO was actively considering demolishing the Walkways at that time, just as I had suspected (ED2/209: TMO10040874_003).

295. Ultimately, whilst Judith Blakeman did a lot for Grenfell residents on the micro level, she and some of her Labour colleagues were also involved in seeking to marginalise me and the Grenfell Action Group because we had expressed opposition to their stance on KALC and then repeatedly challenged them for not doing more about how the TMO was treating us. Perhaps she and her colleagues saw me as an electoral threat; concerned I might stand against her in a Council election, or support another independent candidate against her. Whatever Councillor Blakeman and her Labour colleagues' motivations, I believe they could and should have done more to serve the interests of Grenfell residents as our local elected representatives and in Councillor Blakeman's case as a TMO Board Member. In Judith Blakeman's words to me at the time, she felt she was doing all that she could. In my view she and her Labour colleagues were not doing enough.

PART VII: SPECIFIC TYPES OF FIRE SAFETY CONCERNS, COMPLAINTS AND WARNINGS

296. In my first Inquiry witness statement I addressed a number of fire safety issues arising before the fire. Since providing that statement I have had more time to go through my emails and GAG blogs to identify any that are relevant to those matters. I exhibit those documents to this current statement as follows.

Emergency access and escape routes

297. We wrote a blog on 14 July 2014 after the Tower refurbishment works had begun. The ground floor of Grenfell Tower was closed off and the only exit from the Tower was on to the raised walkway at Grenfell Walk to the South of the Tower. Once on the walkway, the sole exit to the ground floor immediately outside Grenfell Tower was down four flights of very narrow stairs. There is a photograph of these stairs on the 26 August 2014 blog referred to later in this statement. There was also a ramp from the walkway which led to Bramley Road by Latimer Road station. I believe the stairs leading down to the area at the base of the Tower were more narrow than the ordinary escape route, maybe two thirds of the width of the stairs available to us on the night of the fire. Before the works had started there had been a circular ramp which ran down to where the playground was, but that was knocked down. Therefore, the only ramp for disabled

access that could take you down to street level now led from Grenfell Walk to Bramley Road by Latimer Road Tube Station.

298. If there had been a fire at that time it would have been difficult for firefighters with equipment to enter Grenfell Tower via those narrow stairs. It would also have meant that anyone with a disability evacuating the building, who could not use the stairs in an emergency, would not be able to assemble at the base of the Tower. They would, instead, have needed to take the lift in Grenfell Tower on to the walkway level, go across Grenfell Walk and then use the ramp which connected Grenfell Walk to Bramley Road.

299. Another consequence of the works was that there were hoardings blocking off our rights of way through Lancaster Green and Station Walk. This meant that we had to take a very circuitous and much longer route to, for example, Notting Hill Methodist Church, on the other side of the KALC development. I was at the time most concerned that these restrictions had a disproportionately negative impact on those with disabilities, it seemed their needs had not been taken into account. We questioned if this broke any disability laws.

300. I shudder to think what would have happened if the fire had occurred when the only entrance and exit at the base of Grenfell Tower was through this narrow set of stairs leading up to Grenfell Walk. Fire engines would have parked around the base of Grenfell Tower, as they did on the night of the fire. The TMO told us they were in regular contact with the LFB about their access to the Tower but it did not feel safe. I would like the Inquiry to examine what assessments there were to ensure that there was adequate access into and out of Grenfell Tower in the event that a fire had occurred during the construction process.

301. GAG wrote blogs on this subject as follows. The first three blogs refer to the impact of the closure of the right of way, which would impact the disabled most of all. The fourth blog was specifically about the impact on LFB access into Grenfell Tower as a result of the narrow staircase being the only way into Grenfell Tower from its base where we said: “A number of residents of Grenfell Tower are very concerned at the fact that the new improvement works to Grenfell Tower have turned our building into a fire trap”:

a. 14 July 2014: “Welcome to Hell” (ED2/210:);

- b. 21 July 2014: “Edward George and the great RBKC planning department fob off” (ED2/211:);
- c. 13 August 2014: “Stairs of shame and other abuses...” (ED2/212:);
- d. 26 August 2014: “Is Grenfell Tower a firetrap” (ED2/213: TMO00831259).

302. The 26 August 2014 blog reproduced an email I sent on 20 August 2014 to Ben Dewis, the LFB Fire Safety Inspecting Officer for Hammersmith & Fulham and Kensington & Chelsea Fire Safety Regulation Team which I exhibit as ED2/214 (). I can’t find any email in reply from Ben Dewis.

Accumulation of bulk refuse in the foyer of Grenfell Tower

303. On 24 January 2016 GAG wrote a blog called “Grenfell Tower Still a Fire Risk?” I exhibit the blog as ED2/215 (). In the blog we pointed out that during the refurbishment works the only exit to and from Grenfell Tower was cluttered with rubbish, mattresses, cardboard, bits of wood, and we highlighted the fact that TMO staff had failed to act on our request to have the area cleared.

304. We published a photograph on the blog which was taken outside the lift area, the front door to the walkway can be seen in the top right hand corner. This was the only exit from the building. The contractors had put some hoardings up in that area, and in the photograph, you can see the communal space is filled up with mattresses, an old heater, other items which had accumulated over a period of time.

305. Before the works started residents could take bulky refuse items down in the lift to the caretaker’s office and he would remove them. However, during the refurbishment works the ground floor exit was not accessible via the lift, the lift only took residents to the walkway level. From the walkway level residents would have to walk down four narrow flights of stairs to get to street level at the base of the Tower. I imagine that the residents who left those bulky refuse items in the communal area had done so because they didn’t have the strength or the ability to carry them down to the base of the Tower.

306. We were trying to get those bulky refuse items removed because it did not feel safe to have all those items impeding the one and only exit from Grenfell Tower. Instead of

responding to our legitimate concerns the TMO gave us the feeling that the accumulated rubbish was the fault of residents. The TMO did this by blaming the residents for leaving their items in the communal area. However, it was the TMOs duty to keep all their residents safe and that included ensuring there was a system for removing bulky refuse items from the Tower which would inevitably require removal in any densely populated tower block. I believe the TMO's inability to keep the one and only entrance/exit of a busy Tower block clear and safe speaks volumes about their incompetence and the lack of care shown towards residents. The blog summarises the issue and our communications with Siobhan Rumble and so I do not say more about it in this statement. This was not the only occasion when residents had to complain about a build-up of rubbish and materials in the communal areas of Grenfell Tower. There was a separate occasion when a heavy door had been placed in the communal area on the Walkway level and fell onto a resident.

Fire safety advice, signage, stay put

307. This is dealt with at paragraphs 31 to 36 of my phase one witness statement which I do not repeat here (IWS00000169_0010-0012). I also exhibited the following documents to that statement:

- a. Email to Ben Dewis 14 July 2014 (IWS00000169_0039);
- b. GAG blog 20 November 2016 (IWS00000169_0040-0042);
- c. TMO Newsletter May 2016 (IWS00000169_0043-047);
- d. GAG blog 14 March 2017 (IWS00000169_0048-0050).

308. I now attach the following exhibits:

- a. All emails between me and Ben Dewis between 17 March 2014 and 14 July 2014 (ED2/216:);
- b. Emails from Judith Blakeman to me and William Thompson 20 March 2017 attaching email from Janice Wray of 24 November 2016 (ED2/217:);
- c. Emails between me and Ben Dewis 15 February 2017 (ED2/218:).

309. One reason I raised the lack of an assembly point in my emails with Ben Dewis of 2014 was that I had been part of a fire safety evacuation with my work and it occurred to me that I had never been invited to a similar exercise at Grenfell Tower. I was concerned that having taken away so much green space around the base of the Tower there wasn't now sufficient space for Grenfell Tower residents to assemble in the event of a fire.
310. With regard to the blog written on 20 November 2016, by now I was concerned whether the stay put advice communicated to us in a newsletter was correct given what I had seen of Shepherd's Court, which is why I wrote: *"Anyone who witnessed the recent tower block at Shepherds Court, in nearby Shepherd's Bush, will know that the advice to remain in our properties would have led to certain fatalities and we are calling on our landlord to re-consider the advice that they have so badly circulated"*.
311. In relation to the 20 November 2016 blog, Emma Dent Coad MP had told me that someone had died in a previous fire in Hazelwood Tower, and I understood that fire safety deficiencies that may have caused that fatality had not been addressed elsewhere. It is for these reasons that I included reference to Hazelwood Tower in this blog.
312. By the time GAG wrote the blog of 14 March 2017 many months had passed since I had raised my stay put concerns with both the TMO and LFB. GAG were not fire safety experts. By now I was no longer focused on whether the advice they were giving was correct, I was just glad that after a long period of inaction the TMO had finally given us some advice. I am, of course, now aware of the fact that the advice given by the TMO was wrong, because it dealt with the need to evacuate only if *"fire is in your flat"*, rather than *"if your flat is affected by fire, or smoke/heat"*. I do not know whether the TMO ever asked the LFB to review the content of its Notices to confirm whether they were correct. There is also the issue as to whether stay put advice could ever be appropriate given the specific cladding and insulation that was fixed to our building.
313. Following our blog of 14 March 2017 there was a fire at Trellick Tower in April 2017. I emailed Ben Dewis at the LFB, the email is exhibited as ED2/219 ().
314. I exhibit as ED2/220 () a video interview I gave to Lucy Manning from the BBC at 09.09 am on 14 June 2017. She interviewed me at the Rugby Portobello Trust. I referred to the stay put policy and said as follows: *"If you were to go to any of the Tower Blocks around here like Dixon House or Whitstable, you'd find there were no fire*

instructions". I think it would be important for the Inquiry to investigate exactly when and why the TMO placed fire advice notices in its various tower blocks as that would be relevant to the culture of the organisation as far as it relates to fire safety.

Windows and kitchen extractor fans

315. One of my primary concerns about the windows fitted to the Tower was a lack of consultation. I have dealt with problems involving windows at paragraphs 37- 45 of my first witness statement and exhibited relevant documents (IWS00000169_0012-0015). I have dealt with the lack of consultation in relation to the windows at paragraphs 88-90 and 101 of my first statement (IWS00000169_0024-0025; IWS00000169_0027). In addition to the lack of consultation with residents more generally, in my own case there was an additional issue in that my own window was fitted without my permission prior to others in the Tower.
316. I exhibit as ED2/221 () a series of emails exchanged with Claire Williams on this subject between 9 – 29 April 2015 where I asked for the windows to my flat and others not to be replaced until Rydon had met with residents to discuss the apparent change in size. The TMO response from Claire Williams was that Rydon did not need residents permission to fit our new windows. Claire Williams referred to a consultation on the windows but as indicated in my first statement we were never shown the types of windows they intended to install prior to their installation.
317. As stated at paragraph 101 of my first witness statement, the Grenfell Action Group wrote to Cllr Nick Paget-Brown to appeal for his intervention in relation to lack of consultation on the windows. However, instead of addressing the substance of our legitimate complaint he instructed us to lodge a complaint through the TMO complaints process which we knew, and he probably knew, was deficient. My complaint was not upheld. I exhibit these emails as ED2/222 (TMO10008268) and ED2/223 ().
318. After my own window was installed on the exterior of the building, but my interior window had not yet been removed, I wrote to Siobhan Rumble to complain about its poor quality and also her accusations in relation to residents. My email exchange with her is at ED2/224 () dated 1 June 2015. I am likely to have sent this email soon after the exterior window had been fitted. There was a large scratch on the glass of the larger

middle window in the kitchen so it didn't seem to be a new window, which suggested to me that it was an old sample window. It felt like I was being victimised for complaining about the windows both by having my window installed at a very early stage, I believe before others were installed, that this was done without my permission - and in direct opposition to my request - and that I had been given a damaged window.

319. I have been shown a document disclosed by the Inquiry created by Rydon following a "*door knocking exercise*" on 18 December 2015 (ED2/225: RYD00062696). This records a visit by Sacha Jevans to my flat. I remember it felt like a slightly more productive meeting than I had become used to with the TMO, where she seemed to take on board some of the concerns I was raising not limited to the refurbishment works. The document disclosed on Relativity records "*windows broken but now fixed*", "*fitted three months before anyone else and needs explanation why*" and "*no sealing (to windows?)*".

- a. The reference to "*broken but now fixed*" is probably a reference to the fact that after it was installed one of the windows in the lounge broke, there was a problem with the handle which meant I couldn't open and shut it properly. I remember they did come and fix that eventually after I complained.
- b. "*fitted three months before...*" refers to my belief that my window was fitted before anyone else's either on my side of the building or throughout.
- c. "*no sealing*" probably refers to the fact that the left hand living room window had a gap underneath the lintel from the moment it was fitted. This meant there was a draught and no soundproofing.

320. Following the meeting I e-mailed Sacha Jevans to thank her for visiting my flat and offering to engage in a conversation with the Grenfell Tower Compact. I sent this email despite the fact that Jevans had very recently rejected my Stage 2 complaint in relation to the solicitors letter (referred to earlier in my statement). I exhibit that exchange of emails as ED2/226 (). I sent the email on to other Compact members so we could discuss taking it forward however I don't think the meeting ever happened.

321. I have obtained from Rydon under the DPA ED2/227 () which are emails from 5 January 2015 and include one from Claire Williams to Rydon to say they have had the approval through for the Non-Material Amendment regarding cladding and windows.

There is reference to them having received queries from me and the GTLA about the smoke vent system.

322. I have also obtained disclosure from Rydon of documents associated with complaints about my window. I attach these as Exhibits ED2/228 () and ED2/229 (). I have also now seen a document disclosed to me by the Inquiry. All of these show as follows:

- a. The Inquiry document records that I called Rydon on 25 August 2016 around 10.24am to report a complaint with my windows (ED2/230: TMO10024605).
- b. The email from David Hughes to Claire Williams of 12.48pm on 25 August 2016 suggests I called Lynda Prentice about this issue having been referred to them by the TMO. However, having done that it seems David Hughes complained that I should have called the TMO and not called Rydon at all. ED2/231 (HAR00017455) records that I called the TMO on 1 September 2016 to report 2 window defective handles which needed repair and to ask when that would happen.
- c. There is a further email on 9 September 2016 where Simon Girling describes the problem as “left hand casement cannot be secured” and that the window is “unsecure when windy” (ED2/232: RYD00083957). I believe the window in question was the window on the left hand side of the kitchen as you look out of the flat. There was a problem with the handles. There is reference in the documents to there being a problem with the “seal” in my living room window. It is likely that this related to the gap around the glazing underneath the cill. Ultimately, one of Rydon’s contractors is recorded as visiting my flat on 19 September to fix my window. I recall a Rydon worker visiting my flat to fix the mechanism. I deal with other problems with my windows in my first statement at paragraph 37 (IWS00000169_0012). I don’t recall them coming to fill the gap at the bottom of the window on this or any other occasion. That’s not to say it didn’t happen, however, if it did I am likely to remember seeing them doing it. It’s a shame my diaries were all destroyed in the fire as I may have noted some details in there about this. I knew there was a problem with how the windows had been fitted because a friend of mine who lived in a tower block in Brent showed me his windows which had been replaced where the windows

were fitted into the concrete without needing to have any gaps filled at the sides or underneath. They were soundproof and there were no draughts coming in.

323. Residents, as a group through the Compact, had earlier reported window problems through the Matrix submitted in May 2016 but problems remained. I reported my own window problems as an individual on 25 August 2016. Judith Blakeman raised it again on residents behalf in the email at Exhibit ED/11 to my First Statement which she sent on 22 December 2016 where she said *“Some of the new windows appear not to have been properly sealed and some windowsills are becoming loose. Will this problem be picked up and rectified as part of the forthcoming TMO survey?”* Peter Maddison replied on 6 January 2017 to say *“Residents should report any defective works to KCTMO and we will arrange for Rydon to make-good”* (IWS00000169_0057-0062). By January 2017 I am aware that a number of residents had complained about their windows. I expect some people had lost faith in Rydon’s ability to fix any problems that were reported because the workmanship was so bad throughout and so instead they were voicing complaints through the Compact and Councillor Blakeman. I hoped ongoing problems including those with the windows would be picked up in the residents survey we had been promised by the TMO so all the problems across the Tower could be dealt with properly. Unfortunately the TMO did not fulfil their promise to conduct a residents survey. Had I been asked during the survey I would have said they had installed my window before anyone else’s, one had a scratch, they kept malfunctioning and hadn’t been fitted properly because of the gap between the concrete and the cill. At that stage fire safety concerns did not motivate my window complaints, I did not know there were any fire safety issues arising. My main concern was the lack of soundproofing and draught caused by the gap between the concrete and window. I also expect that had the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee followed up on their initial promise of an independent working group to investigate the works, issues like this could have been identified and remedied.

324. Finally, I have now found the following emails relevant to windows which I now exhibit to this statement as ED2/233 (), an email exchange I was copied in to between David Collins, Councillor Blakeman, Lady Victoria Borwick MP and the TMO from 3 September 2015 to 21 September 2015. It sets out the problems faced by one woman who was disabled and required information to be translated. Also, amongst other things she complained that her newly fitted window did not close.

Smoke control ventilation system

325. This is dealt with at paragraphs 73-78 of my First Witness Statement (IWS00000169_0020-0022).

326. I now attach further documents obtained from Rydon under the DPA relating to this issue ED2/234 ().

327. I would add that I am aware the central smoke ventilation system used to have an audible alarm. I know that by the time of the fire this was removed so there was no central audible alarm. I do not recall residents being told by the TMO/RBKC that the central alarm was no longer audible and am concerned that some residents might have expected to hear such an alarm on the night of the fire.

Flat front doors and communal doors

328. Over the years living in Grenfell Tower I became used to the TMO making false allegations against me to discredit me, I believe a good example of this is in relation to my complaint about the door closer to Flat 136. This topic, as well as flat front doors and communal doors, are addressed at paragraphs 46-54 (IWS00000169_0015-0017) and 83 of my first witness statement (IWS00000169_0023). I have also touched on it at paragraphs 117-118 of this statement.

329. Since signing my first Inquiry statement I have obtained documents relating to me from Rydon under the Data Protection Act and which relate to my complaint about the door to Flat 136. I attach these as Exhibit ED2/235 () and they comprise the following emails.

- a. Firstly an email from Judith Blakeman to 'complaintsgroup@kctmo.org.uk' on 17 August 2015 copying in the local MP's office (John Sweeney), Lynda Prentice and Simon Lawrence from Rydon,
- b. Secondly an email from Claire Williams to Simon Lawrence of 17 August 2015 asking him to check the door to Flat 136 and report back.

330. The photo in the Blakeman email is one I sent to the TMO and the digital time stamp shows it was taken on 14 August 2015 at 11.43pm. The perko was a little below the lowest point on the photograph.
331. I Exhibit ED2/236 () an email sent by Claire Williams to me of 17 August 2015: *“I confirm receipt of the attached complaint, and in Peter Maddison’s absence I will start the investigation into your complaint. I am aware that Rydon were working in flat 136 on Friday 14 August, and I have asked that the flat door is shut closed at the end of the working day. I am aware there were issues with the property on Friday which will be responded to more fully when I get the contractor’s feedback. A full response will be sent upon completion of the investigation.”*
332. It appears from the above documents that the TMO and/or Rydon purportedly took responsibility for my complaint about the door to Flat 136. However, there remain a number of documents related to this complaint that have not yet been disclosed to me. At the time of writing this second Inquiry statement I have not seen emails between the TMO (Williams/Maddison) and Rydon (Lawrence/Prentice etc.) in relation to this complaint which are associated with the 17 August Williams email to Simon Lawrence. I have also not yet seen on Relativity the emails from Judith Blakeman to Prentice, Lawrence and others, and any follow up. These documents are relevant to what was wrong with that door, who knew about it, and what was done in response by both the TMO and Rydon. I await receipt of full disclosure.
333. I query whether these flat front doors were suitable for Grenfell Tower because so many people had problems with the self-closing devices which appeared to be because they were fitted into concrete. In general and of course relevance to fire safety, it was TMO Repairs Direct Limited – the TMO’s own subsidiary - who were responsible for maintaining self-closing devices on doors which were defective and left unrepaired in many instances before the fire. In our blog of 10 August 2015 “West London Citizens’ and KCTMO” ED2/237 () we questioned whether the TMO was accurately recording resident satisfaction with its repairs service. Whilst we were critical of West London Citizens for reasons set out in the blog, we noted their following “Key Findings” having conducted a “Listening Exercise” for their “North Kensington Housing Inquiry Report”:

*“Of all North Kensington Residents surveyed 38.7% said they had a ‘Repairs/Conditions related housing issue.
71.2% of council housing residents surveyed said they had a ‘Repairs/Conditions’ issue
When asked to give details of the issue, 70.7% had a problem connected to the TMO
43.4% of respondents complained of the slow response time to get repairs done”*

334. If a resident needed to report a repair, they would have to visit the office, or phone up the Hub, previously it was just a telephone number. You would report your concern and they were then supposed to get back to you and the repair was meant to be carried out a week or so afterwards. Often residents would have to call a second or third time, as the first call would rarely get the repair done. It could take quite a significant length of time to get any satisfaction from Repairs Direct Ltd. The service was not good, and I used them as little as possible. I preferred to carry out repairs myself as this was a lot less stressful and saved a lot of time by avoiding dealing directly with the TMO and I am aware other residents took a similar approach.

335. After the fire I attended and spoke at a Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee meeting on 15 January 2018. I exhibit the minutes as ED2/238 (). They record 3,500 outstanding repairs across the Borough, responsibility for which lay with Repairs Direct Ltd. This was in the context of the TMO managing about 9,000 properties. In his evidence before the Inquiry Robert Black said it was 10,000 residents (T74/42/22-44/15). Both the West London Citizens Survey as well as this Scrutiny Committee meeting in my view call into serious question the TMO’s internal governance. It would be helpful if the Inquiry could obtain a statement from Doug Goldring, the new Head of Housing at RBKC who has taken over responsibility for the now defunct KCTMO and will be able to provide insight into what he found when he took over.

Emergency lighting

336. There had previously been a problem with the emergency lighting back in 2004. In 2005 a report by Capita Symonds exposed serious shortcomings at the KCTMO in relation to the maintenance of the Emergency Lighting in Grenfell Tower (ED2/239:).

337. The GAG blog of 21 February 2013 referred to this incident (ED2/64: TMO00835301). Reference to “one of our members” is to Francis O’Connor. The blog records as follows:

“It just so happens that one of our members chaired the EMB Property Management Committee in 2004 when that committee received information that the Grenfell Tower emergency lighting system was in unacceptably poor condition. Two thirds of the battery packs were completely dead, and the entire system would have failed in an emergency. The committee then fought a protracted battle with the TMO for about a year, during which time the TMO repeatedly denied that there was a problem, or any negligence with regard to inspection and testing of the system. Eventually the EMB committee succeeded in pressuring the TMO into ordering an independent investigation. This was conducted by Peter West of Capita Symonds. His report, when it was published in May 2005, was a shocking indictment of TMO mal-administration and failure of oversight, and of the electrical contractors whose duty it had been to inspect and test the Lancaster West emergency lighting system.

The report recommended that all batteries be replaced urgently. This was apparently done immediately. However, other recommendations appear to have been largely ignored, one of which was that the TMO urgently consider options for replacing the whole system, which was obsolete and unfit for purpose. Another crucial recommendation that appears to have been ignored was that the TMO initiate and enforce in future a far more rigorous testing and inspection regime for fire safety equipment at Lancaster West.

The implications of the Capita Symonds report went far beyond Lancaster West and apparently led to a wide ranging review of TMO fire safety procedures throughout the borough, but unfortunately, the lessons of 2004/2005 appear to have soon been forgotten – if indeed they were ever learned at all – and the culture of negligence at the TMO appears to have reverted to type and to have continued unabated to the present”

338. The blog also referred to the 2012 Fire Risk Assessment which said as follows on this subject:

“It is not known if the caretaker is undertaking the monthly occupier’s tests of the installed emergency lighting system, fire extinguishers and structural items as per the caretakers check list this would include the external stairs and lift checks with the results being kept as a record of testing having been undertaken.”

339. In our blog of 29 May 2013 we again raised the issue of emergency lighting following the power surges (ED2/162: TMO00831436). We said as follows:

“A single staircase with no natural light is the only emergency exit route from Grenfell Tower. The emergency lighting system in that stairwell should be thoroughly checked to ensure that neither the system itself, nor any of the individual battery packs, has been damaged by the power surges of recent weeks. If there is damage it should be immediately repaired as a matter of urgency.”

340. I have found a number of emails relating to this issue in 2016 which are exhibited as ED2/240 (). They record that the emergency lighting in the stairwell was not working properly in January 2016 and that David Collins raised this with the KCTMO leading to the KCTMO explaining that the lighting would be replaced.

341. I am aware that the emergency lighting was replaced sometime before the fire. I do not know exactly what prompted the TMO to replace the lighting and whether it was the complaint made by David Collins or any of their own checks, I suspect that had it not been for David Collins' complaint they would not have been replaced, despite the longstanding issues that had been raised by the Grenfell Action Group regarding the emergency lighting.

Asbestos

342. The first emails I can find on this subject were with Mark Anderson from the TMO and are exhibited as ED2/241 ().

343. I attach as ED2/242 () a series of further emails in 2014 - 2015 I sent to and received from the TMO (Siobhan Rumble, Claire Williams and Fola Kafidiya) where I requested whether the TMO had provided Rydon with information about asbestos in our homes.

344. These emails show that the TMO initially refused to provide this information to me. Francis O'Connor and I then researched the point and made a further request citing the Environmental Information Regulations pursuant to which we would be entitled to the information. This time the TMO provided some information but one report seemed to show only two flats had been identified with asbestos at the point of tendering for the works and the other report only dealt with communal areas of the Tower. I attach those reports as ED2/243 (). I am aware that Rydon did ultimately discover asbestos in one of my friend's flats, Danny Griffin. I do not know whether a proper asbestos survey was carried out prior to the work commencing inside our properties. I helped Danny by drafting a letter of claim for him about this which was sent not long before the fire on 14 June 2017 produced as Exhibit ED2/244 ().

345. Francis O'Connor and I wrote three blogs about asbestos as follows:

- a. 'Asbestos Scare at KALC' (ED2/245:);
- b. 'Enough is Enough! Testerton Walk Residents Plead for Urgent TMO Action Now!' (ED2/246:);
- c. 'TMO Freedom of Information Fiasco' (ED2/247:).

Lifts

346. I address lifts at paragraphs 59-64 of my First Witness Statement (IWS00000169_0018). As I explain there, the lifts were a running sore for residents. They constantly broke down over the period of many years and I made numerous complaints about this in writing and verbally over the years. They were replaced sometime in 2005 - 2006 but despite this they continued to break down frequently resulting in complaints, for example those set out at ED2/248 (TMOH00027182). I was copied in to the email of 7.48pm on 11 December 2011 sent from the Leaseholders to Daniel Wood TMO and can provide the attachments if requested. These are photographs taken when one of the lifts was out of order or of rubbish accumulating in a lift. I have found a number of subsequent emails relating to the lifts breaking down just before the fire, from 22 January 2017 to 26 March 2017. I exhibit these as ED2/249 () and ED2/250 ().

347. My main concern was that despite repeated requests over many years the KCTMO failed to properly maintain the lifts in Grenfell Tower. This was further exacerbated after the lifts were used by contractors during the refurbishment process. It was bad enough when one lift broke down but there were occasions when both lifts broke down. When they did break down the TMO were slow to repair them. There were occasions when even after we were told they had been repaired or serviced they would break down again soon afterwards.

348. The emails I have exhibited relating to the lifts refer to a Lancaster West Residents Association meeting on 9 February 2017 which I attended. I exhibit the minutes of this meeting as ED2/251 (RBK00000145). At the meeting Peter Maddison gave a presentation on the TMO's priorities. I don't have a copy of that but it would be useful to see what he said. My first recollection is that he spoke about fire safety and health and

safety being a priority for the TMO. My contribution and exchange with Peter Maddison is briefly summarised in the minutes as follows:

“Eddy Daffarn raised the issue of fire safety following a power surge in 2013 which caused £1000s of damage for which tenants in Grenfell Tower each received £150 compensation. They campaigned for signage to make evacuation safer, Mr Daffarn is concerned similar signage is not in the Silchester tower blocks. Mr Daffarn asked what the maintenance is carried out on the lifts as they break down continually. Peter advised they are maintained every month.

Peter agreed to:

- provide evidence of the monthly servicing.*
- provide details of the recent breakdown history of the Lifts for information.*
- the TMO continuing to work to make sure that the Lifts are working as they should.”*

349. My recollection of the meeting is that after Peter Maddison had spoken about fire safety being a priority for the TMO I had challenged him about this. I criticised him and the TMO for their treatment of residents associated with the power surges in May 2013. I pointed out that GAG had been forced to campaign for fire safety advice before it was provided. I also complained that fire safety signage was still not present in the Silchester tower blocks. I also complained about the lifts breaking down repeatedly and queried the quality of any purported maintenance or servicing of the lifts given that the continually broke down. I said fire safety was clearly not a concern for the TMO given all of these failures. I could have mentioned many more – which I have set out in this statement – but limited myself to these examples.

350. Given how badly the lifts were performing I just didn't believe that the TMO were having them maintained and serviced. Even if they had been, the TMO should have been on notice that whoever was contracted to do this was clearly not doing a good job, and needed to be scrutinised. To the extent that the contractor's job was to check that the lifts met any relevant fire safety standards the TMO should have been on notice that given their poor performance they should be scrutinised in relation to that aspect as well as the repeated breakdowns. As ever, the TMO didn't seem to take any notice of our concerns about the lifts and concerns about the contractors they had paid to service and fix them.

351. I am now aware that the lifts at Grenfell Tower did not operate as they should have done on the night of the fire. This is all the more concerning and upsetting for me bearing

in mind the constant assurances the TMO gave that the lifts were being regularly serviced. It seems that despite all these apparent checks, and all of Peter Maddison's assurances that the TMO cared about fire safety, nobody checked whether the lifts complied with their statutory obligations in relation to fire safety.

Floor numbering

352. Around late Summer 2015 I raised concerns with the TMO about their proposal to change the floor numbers in Grenfell Tower. It was obvious to me that the proposed change would cause significant confusion for visitors to the Tower including the emergency services. It may have been that I made these complaints verbally and not in written form. I have found an email written by the Grenfell Compact to the TMO which sets out my concern which was shared by other residents at paragraph 15 as follows: *"Please could the altered numbering in the lifts be unaltered? It is making no sense to people visiting the tower, people's visitors and delivery drivers are getting lost looking for flats, etc. It is never going to make sense for floor numbers not to match flat numbers. Please can the floor numbers be changed back to reflect the flat numbers, and a new way to number the two new floors be found?"* I exhibit this email and later emails seeking further information on this subject with Robin Yu at RBKC as ED2/252 ().

353. When raising this issue with Peter Maddison I was told by him the reason the numbers had to change was that the TMO had been instructed to do so by the Royal Mail. This didn't make sense to me so I wrote to Robin Yu, the Information Officer at RBKC, requesting relevant correspondence. That correspondence did not show that the Royal Mail had instigated the change in floor numbers but rather it had been instigated by the planning department at RBKC.

354. Having looked back at the disclosure provided to me by Robin Yu it seems the planning department told Royal Mail and the London Fire Brigade (copied in to the email of 5 February 2015) that: *"TMO refurb is inclusive of new signage in lobby and on each floor. Verification of the door numbers and their respective floors is hereby provided."* I exhibit that document as ED2/253 ().

355. I am aware that before the fire Judith Blakeman raised a complaint about the lack of floor signage in her email and its impact on emergency service access which I exhibit as

ED2/254 (). I think this would have been raised having been approached by Grenfell Compact members or Grenfell Residents. Her email followed an email I have now seen she wrote to Peter Maddison and Claire Williams as well as two Councillors on 2 October 2015 where she also made the point Compact members were making, that the new floor numbering “*could prove dangerous in the event of an emergency*” (ED2/255: TMO10010085).

356. I am aware from paragraph 33.27 of the Phase One report that on the night of the fire there was inadequate signage on the landings of each floor Grenfell Tower. I would therefore like the Inquiry to investigate on what basis RBKC told the LFB in their email of 5 February 2015 that signage was part of the refurbishment works; whether they understood this to mean signage in the lobbies or additionally on the landings of each floor.

CCTV

357. Over many years residents made multiple complaints to the TMO about the lack of working CCTV cameras in Grenfell Tower. I feel the TMO didn't take the issue seriously and so it fell to residents raising the issue before it was addressed. I only mention this because I am aware how useful the CCTV has been in investigations following the fire and I dread to think what would have happened if the TMO had not heeded resident warnings about this issue.

PART VIII: AFTERMATH

358. The fire at Grenfell Tower and its aftermath have completely overwhelmed my life. What happened before, during and afterwards feel like three separate tragedies, none of which were dealt with properly by the people who were meant to be looking after us. We were abandoned by the Council on the night of the fire and in the days which followed. No one from the Council or the Government came to help us for many hours later. It makes me very angry and resentful. The lack of care towards us was shocking.

Events on the night

359. At paragraph 16 of my first witness statement I describe the moments after I had escaped from the Tower. I describe a Muslim man I didn't know offering me comfort, putting his arm around me and asking if I wanted to go to his house and that I couldn't stop crying.
360. A short time after the fire I wrote out by hand some of my abiding memories of the immediate aftermath. I was aware if I didn't write it down at that stage I might not remember some of the details I felt were important to record. In preparing this part of my statement I am guided by those notes.
361. I kept my towel with me, I felt a sense that it had helped save my life. I was later given a blanket from an ambulance. As the building was burning, I stood with Willie Thompson and his family, and gradually other people from our building came and stood with us. It was very traumatic, watching the building, and realising that people were still in there, and that they weren't going to get out.
362. From there, around the courtyard of the Sports Centre, we were moved along by the police towards the back of the Leisure Centre and then again down the alleyway to outside Notting Wood House. The police were shouting at us to move back. I approached officers on about three occasions to ask for help but was told to go away. Their priority seemed to be moving the crowd back. It felt like 'public order' superseded caring for the victims. I timed this at about 2.30am-3.30am but they are best guesses as I didn't have my watch on me and wasn't checking the time on my phone. I would say it took about 30-45 minutes for us to be moved from outside the Sports Centre to Notting Wood House.
363. We then had to wait outside Notting Wood House for quite a long time, it felt like hours. This was around the junction of Blenheim Crescent and the alleyway which links Clarendon Road to Walmer Road. I discarded my wet towel that I had when I escaped. I went to an ambulance and asked for a blanket and was given one.

364. I remember speaking to Andrea Newton from the Lancaster West Residents Association. I remember seeing a couple of clergymen, I think one was Mike Long and the other was from St. Clements St James. I told them that they needed to open a local church or centre for refuge because nobody had come to help us all this time. At some point I asked perhaps a policeman what was going to happen to the residents who had escaped and was told some busses would come, that they had been organised to collect us. However, as far as I know those busses didn't arrive. I remember riot police running past us, down the alleyway towards the tower which was distressing. At one point an Ambulance Driver leaned out of the window the ambulance and shouted at us to "go home". We had nowhere to go and had been told busses would come and collect us. We had nowhere to go. A police officer also just told me to "go away" and he may have sworn at me when I was asking where we should go. I remember seeing a neighbour Mariko on the ground, not in her wheelchair. I didn't know Mariko's name at the time. The only real help we received at this time was from local people offering tea, water and comfort. I don't remember anyone from the emergency services or local council coming to see if we were ok. They were obviously busy but the point is that nobody had been tasked with caring for us and as a consequence we were just abandoned by the side of the road, in distress.

365. Eventually - I time it at approximately 3.30am - 4.00am but this might be wrong - members of the Rugby Portobello Trust on Walmar Road, came and collected us and told us that the Rugby Club was open. They led us past Notting Wood house and through a block of flats to get there.

366. When we got to the Rugby Portobello Trust, I remember as dawn broke, some Muslim volunteers arrived in a van bringing water. I think they were from East London. Around this time I also noticed press had started to arrive. This was distressing, there wasn't any cordon imposed to give survivors space away from the press and others who were not survivors.

367. I gave an interview to a journalist, Rags Martel from ITV. I have been told by Rags that the interview took place at about 7am on 14 June outside the Rugby Portobello Trust. I exhibit that interview as ED2/256 (). I spend the first part of the interview describing my escape from the tower and how GAG had been raising fire safety concerns

for many years and how the Council and TMO had covered up the power surge issue. I then describe what was happening at the time of my interview as follows and can confirm what I said was accurate:

“We’ve now been here for five and a half, nearly six hours, and not a single policeman, not a single representative from our landlord or from the council has turned up to speak to us. There are people here who don’t know whether their relatives are alive or dead and we’ve been stuck here for nearly six hours without a single person coming to speak to us. Is that good enough?”

368. There were emergency services people around the area but my point was that none of them took control of the situation, asked all of us survivors and bereaved to gather round and explained what support there was for us or how to access it.

369. I also attach Exhibit ED2/257 (), a second video interview conducted by BBC journalists Camilla Horrix and Lucy Manning. Camilla Horrix has informed me this was filmed at 9.11am on 14 June 2017. The interview took place inside the Rugby Club. I only agreed to do it because I knew Camilla Horrix from her time working as a journalist for the local paper and she had been supportive of us historically. Lucy Manning of the BBC can be seen asking me questions on the footage. In the video I say as follows describing the events around me:

“What we need, what this community needs right now, is that we’ve been here for, like, seven hours at the Rugby Club on Wolmar Road. Not one policeman has turned up, not one member from our landlord has turned up to see if we’re ok. What we need is we need the Council, we need the police, we need those in authority to come up with a proper plan for this community so that we are respected and looked after and placed in proper appropriate local accommodation, and not spread all over London. That we’re given help to rebuild our lives because every single person in that building if they’ve left with their lives have lost everything, everything. So we need real, real material help and if on the evidence of the last seven hours, eight hours, nine hours whatever it’s been, then we need people like you [journalists] to ensure this community is looked after in the future”.

370. I was imploring the journalist to let people know what was happening to us so that somebody could send us some help but the help we needed didn’t come. I don’t believe my interview was broadcast. The journalists told me that there was too much background noise so wanted to interview us again elsewhere in the Rugby Club. My brother turned up

around this time. Willie Thompson and I gave to Horrix and Manning an interview that was broadcast on the BBC One O'Clock News. I don't have a copy of that interview. I know it was broadcast because people I knew told me they had seen it.

371. I remember there were people outside the Rugby Club, in distress, not knowing if their relatives were alive or dead and asking for help. I asked a police officer where the police liaison officers (PLO) were and was told they were at the Harrow Club. I said that was no good, we couldn't get to the Harrow Club because so many local roads were closed. I asked him to bring them to the Rugby Club but they never came.
372. The only presence from the Council I can remember seeing was Councillor Tim Coleridge at about 10am and later on Councillor Robert Atkinson. However, they were just there, they didn't seem to be controlling or directing operations or taking any responsibility for what was happening. I don't remember whether or not I spoke to them.
373. At around midday on 14th June I saw some TMO staff who had come into the Rugby Club. They were gathering names and flat numbers. Prior to that I had not seen any TMO staff at all. Mark Simms from the Rugby Portobello Trust would be an important person to speak to as he was there and would probably have an overview of what was going on.
374. During the day on the 14th the press began to get hold of my phone number and I was bombarded with calls from journalists all over the world. This was totally debilitating. I just wanted to speak to my friends and family but my phone was overwhelmed. Every time I was on the phone I could hear there was another call coming through on 'call-waiting'. I let my message box fill up and didn't answer my phone unless I recognised the number calling me. To this day I don't answer my phone unless I recognise the number.
375. At some point I saw Conservative Councillor Catherine Faulks in the road. She responded to a comment I made to her by saying "*Don't try and make political capital out of this*". I believe this comment was made within earshot of Councillor Anne Cyron and a journalist from the Daily Mail. I don't know whether she was referring to something I had said to her (i.e that I had lost my friends and community) or if she had

seen my interview with Lucy Manning on the BBC News. It is difficult to convey how upsetting it was to be spoken to in this way at that time by Councillor Faulks.

376. At some point in the afternoon a woman who appeared to be in a senior or management role at RBKC came to the Rugby Club to discuss housing. She had a male assistant with her. I approached her and said that what survivors needed was to be housed together, in a local hotel. Instead of taking my requests on board, she questioned who I was and what authority I had to speak on behalf of other people. She didn't accept what I was saying was legitimate even though what I was asking for should have been obvious. I found her behavior and attitude extremely upsetting and remember having a verbal argument with her male colleague who spoke to me in an unpleasant and confrontational manner. It felt like 'more of the same', treating us as we had been treated even before the fire with the Council just not listening to reasonable cogent requests that would have helped us.

377. At about 6pm I was contacted by a housing worker and told that I had been found a single room in the "Haveli Hotel" in Warwick Road. I looked on the internet and the hotel looked like a fleapit, it reminded me of the time I had been in temporary accommodation waiting to be housed. I had just lost everything and the Council wanted me to stay in emergency accommodation, for who knows how long, taking me back almost two decades. I called the Council and objected but they said that's where I would have to stay. I called Emma Dent Coad MP, my newly elected MP, who advocated on my behalf and secured me a room at the Premier Inn, together with a number of other Grenfell Tower residents. I was finally able to stay with survivors who were my support network. I am aware that another survivor was ultimately placed in the Haveli Hotel and he has described it as a terrible room. I feel bad that I was able to advocate and secure the help of my local MP but people who weren't able to would have been placed in sub-standard accommodation.

Events from 15 June 2017 onwards

378. After being housed in the Premier Inn I returned the following day, and for each of the following days, to the Rugby Portobello Trust (RPT). It was now 15th June. Someone donated a bicycle to me so I could get around. As far as I could see there was nobody in central government, local government or from the emergency services at the RPT taking control of the situation. We were down in the basement. Survivors were walking around in shock. I think the police turned up and started taking names. We realised that we all needed to organise ourselves and look out for ourselves because nobody in authority was doing that. We got a notebook and asked people to sign their names in and to put a star next to their names and contact details on if they wanted to be on the committee of the organisation we were to form and which became Grenfell United. We tried to have a meeting later that day but we couldn't meet for long, there was too much trauma and upset. A volunteer took minutes of the meeting where residents spoke about what their experiences had been and what needs there were.
379. Amanda Gill from RBKC housing came to speak to us on the 15th. I felt she was a little more organised than the first person RBKC had sent the day before.
380. On 16 June I discovered that Andrea Leadsom, then Leader of the House of Commons, was coming to the Rugby Portobello Trust early in the morning. I made sure I was there to meet her. I don't think she had arranged to meet with residents but myself, Sof McVeigh (now a Conservative Councillor, at the time a volunteer at the RPT) and another RPT volunteer called Rupert demanded that she meet with us, which she did. This was the first time I was aware that anyone from Central Government had spoken to anyone at the RPT. At the meeting I explained that the fire was preventable and both Sof and I requested that Central Government needed to send someone with resources and responsibility to the RPT to take control because nobody was taking control from the emergency services, central or local government. There is further detail on what we discussed in emails that followed sent by Sof McVeigh to Andrea on 17 June 2017, with a follow up on 22 June 2017. Leadsom had assured us that she would respond to our requests. However, the emails show that she didn't. I attach those emails as Exhibit ED2/258 ().

381. I hadn't slept for three days and visited my GP on Friday 16th June.
382. I believe the Rugby Club was open again on the Saturday and maybe on the Sunday so bereaved and survivors could congregate and support each other. At some stage around this period social workers attended to assess our individual needs. Also, we could collect some money from the Post Office at the junction of Portobello Road and Goldborne Road.
383. At perhaps the beginning of the following week, Mahad Egal (I think) put some sheets of paper up on the walls of the RPT so we could make a list of all the residents who had survived and those who had passed away. People would come in and sign their names. Nobody from the council or TMO had done this for us so we had to do it ourselves.
384. On Monday 19th June, six days after the fire, we were finally told that support services were being provided at the Westway Sports Centre. On my first visit there I was denied entry which was very upsetting. I signed in with the Red Cross situated outside. I then had to approach the centre staff to be allowed in. They asked who I was. I told them and that I was an ex-resident of the Tower giving my flat number. However, they still wouldn't let me in at first. The staff member said she didn't know who I was. I ultimately gained entry some time later. I think I saw Rock Feilding-Mellen in there and told him he had blood on his hands. He looked petrified but didn't say anything to me.
385. On 20th June I had a conversation with Kim Taylor Smith outside the Westway Sports Centre. I didn't really know who he was, he had only been a Councillor for a short time. I don't remember it being an attritional conversation at all, I remember he seemed to be reaching out to find out what was happening and I told him what had happened from my perspective. I told him about my accommodation and that I had only been moved to the Premier Inn after the intervention of Emma Dent Coad MP.
386. Over the next few days I made use of the Westway facilities which included obtaining a replacement passport. Although it was set up as an emergency centre I didn't base myself there, I based myself at the Rugby Club.
387. At some point around this time I and other residents, including Tiago Alves and Shahin Sadafi, met with members of central government at St Clement St James. The

Central Government attendees included Hillary Patel. I would prefer to leave it to other attendees to describe what happened because it is not at the forefront of my memory. One purpose of that meeting was to introduce us to someone who we were told represented the Sudanese Community and with whom we would be required to work with going forward. We had no idea who he was but discovered he had a string of company directorships. This episode and the formation of Grenfell United were covered in depth in an article written by Robert Booth in the Guardian. This gives an accurate account of what happened and I do not repeat the contents in this statement. I exhibit that article as ED2/259 (). I also contributed to a podcast on this subject which can be found on-line (ED2/260:).

388. In the weeks that followed the fire I was allocated a social worker who was seconded to RBKC from another borough. Overall, I am robust and able to advocate for myself. So, if I had any issues I could deal with them. I think it's more important that the Inquiry focusses on how those less able to advocate for themselves and with more complex needs were treated by the authorities in the aftermath. In the circumstances I don't intend to go into detail in relation to the support I received from the Council in the aftermath save for what I have said already in this statement.

PART IX: CONCLUSION

389. I would describe Grenfell as a tragedy in three parts: how we were treated before the fire, how we were treated on the night and how we were treated subsequently. In the aftermath it was the local community who came to our aid. I am still very angry and upset that we were abandoned, it is difficult to convey in words. In the fifth richest country in the world, in the 21st century, we were just abandoned by central and local government who had a duty to look after us. I would have expected some form of organisation even if it was the army who came to help us, just some form of organisation. I have heard since the fire that at another tower block fire that happened more recently the LFB and the police organised a respite centre on the night. But nobody did anything like that for us on 14 June 2017. However, I was one of the lucky ones; I wasn't running around hospitals looking for deceased family members, not knowing if they were alive or dead.

390. It wasn't just that we were left behind in the aftermath, but I have also been affected by the lies I have heard since the fire. The fear that the people who are responsible for the fire might get away with it really affects me.

391. In the aftermath there was a lot said by government and the media which served to dehumanise Grenfell victims with references to illegal migrants and illegal subletting. The Government made statements about giving amnesty to "illegal immigrants" living in the tower. Even if it was true it wouldn't have mattered to me but the government seemed to bring a disproportionate focus onto this issue which was very unhelpful. Those attitudes seemed to come to the forefront of a lot of media reporting and was very hurtful as it was not an accurate representation of the community we lost in the fire. Statements like that seemed to reflect a culture of victim blaming that was further exacerbated by Nick Paget-Brown in an interview he gave to Newsnight on 16 June. During the interview he blamed Grenfell residents for the fact that sprinklers had not been retrofitted during the refurbishment. This was despite the fact that not a single resident I have spoken to recalls ever being asked if they would like sprinklers to be fitted. I would like to know on what basis Nick Paget Brown made this statement and whether, on reflection, he now accepts it was not correct and apologises to the community. The interview is available on-line (ED2/261:).

392. I dearly miss our community. We came together in the face of adversity before during and after the fire. We were not just neighbours. Since the fire there are people out there who have said terrible things about our community, things that are so far away from the reality of what it was actually like that it has really hurt. We will never have the chance to really show people what that community was like. That thought is truly heartbreaking.

I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and to be published on the Inquiry's web site

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed: ED Daffarn

Dated: 6/5/20