

From: Judith Blakeman [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: 20 May 2016 07:14
To: David Collins; Edward Daffarn
Subject: FW: Scrutiny Meeting this Evening

And here is my e-mail to the Scrutiny Committee that led to me being “hijacked” at the start of the meeting!

Judith

From: Judith Blakeman [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: 11 May 2016 11:49
To: 'Cllr.Marshall@rbkc.gov.uk'
Cc: 'Cllr.Allison@rbkc.gov.uk'; 'Cllr.Bakhtiar@rbkc.gov.uk'; 'Cllr.Berrill-Cox@rbkc.gov.uk'; 'Cllr.Blakeman@rbkc.gov.uk'; 'Cllr.Mackover@rbkc.gov.uk'; 'Cllr.Marshall@rbkc.gov.uk'; 'Cllr.Nicholls@rbkc.gov.uk'; 'Cllr.Palmer@rbkc.gov.uk'; 'Cllr.Pascall@rbkc.gov.uk'; 'Cllr.Press@rbkc.gov.uk'; 'Cllr.Rutherford@rbkc.gov.uk'; 'cllr.feilding-mellen@rbkc.com'; Laura.Johnson@rbkc.gov.uk
Subject: Scrutiny Meeting this Evening

Dear Quentin

To save time this evening, please see some advance comments below.

Judith

A4 Grenfell Tower Report

I see no reason why the full report is set out in Part B since it contains nothing relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person and it is the response to a petition from residents. It should therefore be available to them to read in full.

Although this report was submitted to the TMO Board, it was not discussed by the Board. Separately I had a meeting to discuss it with the Chair of the Working Group, Paula Fance, and Sacha Jevans and Yvonne Birch of the TMO. I remain concerned about the following matters.

I submitted a series of suggested recommendations to an earlier meeting of the TMO Board and some following my investigation into the situation of the two families who had to bring new-born babies into what was a building site. I was assured that these would be considered by the Review Group but either they were and were ignored or were not included. I believe that they remain valid. They were:

1. Communications must be clear and if anything changes, this must be communicated immediately and with clarity.
2. Respect residents' issues and deal with them fairly, quickly and suitably.

3. Make sure the TMO knows and understands the personal circumstances of every resident and makes special arrangements where these are needed.
4. Ensure that formal collective consultation arrangements are in place at the start of any project, either through a Residents' Association or through a TMO Compact.
5. Appoint an independent residents' advocate, with direct access to senior TMO management, who can expeditiously collate and progress residents' concerns, especially matters of general concern.
6. Dedicate one complaints officer to matters arising from the project to respond swiftly and effectively.
7. Accept that sometimes the resident may be right and the TMO and/or contractor may have erred. Do not assume residents are not telling the truth when they complain and do not respond in a defensive/aggressive mode. This is counter-productive and leads to mistrust and ill-feeling. Be prepared to acknowledge mistakes and learn from them.

And subsequently, with regard to the problems experienced by the mothers of the two new-born babies:

8. For any future refurbishment programme, all written communications should include a short paragraph along the lines of "if you are expecting a baby or anticipate becoming pregnant during the duration of the works ...", pointing out that bringing a new-born into the home may be difficult when extensive building works are going on and asking the family to get in touch as quickly as possible so that arrangements can be made as needed. This should also be raised at all open meetings and with resident association representatives.
9. Ensure that all resident liaison representatives are properly trained to be alert to this issue.
10. Recognise that a respite flat available to other residents is by definition not suitable in these circumstances. Caring for a new-born is a very physical issue and needs privacy. [The newsletters circulated to Grenfell Tower indicated that the respite flat was open to everyone, so of course when offered, it was naturally rejected.]

There is still a huge amount of ill-feeling against both the TMO and the Council amongst residents of Grenfell Tower and I believe these recommendations should be seriously considered if/when the Council proposes another tower block refurbishment with residents in occupation. The Council has a duty to ensure that these are handled as sensitively as possible. Residents remaining in occupation save the Council a huge sum of money, as they would otherwise have to be decanted.

Finally, the ill-feeling at Grenfell Tower will fester (there are still many matters waiting to be resolved) until residents are able to meet someone they deem to be sufficiently independent of the TMO to discuss their experiences during the refurbishment process.

Part B Paper

There are some errors and omissions in this paper, as follows:

3.3 The resident profiles were not complete. They missed, for example, one elderly and illiterate resident who had raised problems a couple of years earlier concerning a leaking tap, holes in his living room wall, damp and his bathroom being condemned. These issues not identified until the very end of the project by a member of the Grenfell Tower Compact, when they were finally addressed. Letters left by the TMO when the leak was first raised went unread for obvious reasons and the TMO closed the complaint without further investigation. Similarly, the first pregnancy was missed by the Resident Liaison Officers.

4.2 This paragraph skates over the problems arising from the decision to locate the HIU in all the hallways. A number of households refused access to the contractors as they wished the HIU to be located where their boilers had been located. Eventually the TMO agreed, but this was after many residents had reluctantly agreed to have the HIU in the hallway. This continues to cause great resentment, as those who co-operated with the TMO feel disadvantaged compared to those who disrupted the process. In effect, bad behaviour was rewarded. This is not a message that should be communicated on to other projects. Residents are also not convinced that the undertaking to reconsider requests to move the HIU will achieve a positive outcome.

6.2 One resident did not "make four complaints". This refers to four complaints that I raised on behalf of separate households as their ward councillor. I have checked my file (which is incomplete) and find that I raised at least 14 separate complaints. Some of these may have been re-classified as a member's enquiry, but certainly more than four were complaints, i.e. "an expression of dissatisfaction about a KCTMO service".

6.5 There is still no procedure for collective complaints within the TMO's procedure. Reference here is made only to complaints about a communal area – not to complaints on a collective matter (such as the location of the HIU). The TMO gave an undertaking to the Scrutiny Committee to produce a procedure for collective complaints and this remains outstanding.

8.3 The compensation is only a decorations allowance and for issues relating to curtains and blinds. Many residents have also incurred considerable loss through having to take time off work to provide access to their homes, sometimes several times when original appointments were not kept. The mother of one of the new babies spent a lot of money taking her baby to friends and family and this has not been reimbursed either. So the statement in 8.2 that the process "also accounted for individual circumstances" does not seem to be accurate.

10.2 It is not in dispute that one lift was designated for passengers and only one was used for materials. What is disputed by residents (and by Cllr Atkinson and

me where we witnessed incidents) is that this undertaking was not always or indeed often honoured.

10.4 The door knocking exercise sought to identify satisfaction with the completed works and the figures of 90% and 83% respectively are not disputed. However, a survey carried out by the Grenfell Tower Compact at the same time asked questions about satisfaction with the process and satisfaction with the resolution of residents' concerns. The results are significantly different. This will continue to fester until residents have the opportunity to speak freely to someone who is not their immediate landlord.

10.5 This paragraph does not acknowledge that the residents were also partners in this project and that their forbearance contributed significantly to the success of the project. The Council should acknowledge this – and also the significant savings that refurbishment with residents in occupation offers.

Residents would like an independent survey of resident satisfaction with the operation of the whole project to be undertaken as quickly as possible in addition to the survey proposed for six months hence.