

IN THE MATTER OF THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

**SUPPLEMENTAL WITNESS
STATEMENT OF MR SHAHID
AHMED, CORE PARTICIPANT**

1. This is my third statement to the Inquiry, further to one made in Phase 1 (IWS00000388) and one in Phase 2 (IWS00001335).
2. I make this statement in response to a letter from the Inquiry dated 26 February 2021 seeking further information relating to Module 3.
3. I make this statement intending that it form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and will be published on the Inquiry's website in due course. I make this statement from my own knowledge, except where the context indicates otherwise.
4. As set out in my previous statements, I was the leaseholder of Flat 156 Grenfell Tower together with my wife Sayeda Ahmed. I was also the Chair and founder of Grenfell Tower Leaseholders Association (GTLA).

Complaints Policy

1. **At paragraph 16 of your statement you said you “*did not have any faith in the complaints procedure and preferred to email directly*”. You explain at paragraph**

25 that you felt that *“the complaints procedure was a way for the TMO to be judge, jury and executioner. It essentially let them judge themselves.”*

a. **Were you ever provided a copy of the TMO Complaints Policy {TMO00879692}?**

5. This is the first time I have seen the TMO Complaints Policy [TMO00879692] during my twenty-five years at Grenfell Tower.

b. **What caused you to have a lack of confidence in the TMO’s complaints process?**

6. Firstly, the length of time the complaints process took. When KCTMO and LWEMB existed under a tripartite agreement with RBKC, I/GTLA initially tried using the “T-complaint” complaint procedure by sending our complaints via their generic email address. I refer to the three-stage complaints process as “T-complaint” because the generic email address was tcomplaints@kctmo.org.uk and the name was displayed as “(T) Complaints” [TMO10026785_0001]. Most of the time I got an autoreply referring to a 10-day reply policy, but we found that the TMO often did not adhere to their own policy and we had to chase them for a response. For example, GTLA emailed Robert Black on 6 July 2011 to report problems with the heating and hot water system [TMOH00012406_0004]. We received an acknowledgement, but we had to email again on 25 July because we had not received a full response [TMOH00012406_0003].

7. Secondly, the time limit for making a complaint. Section 4.1 – 4.2 of the Policy states:

“4.1 A complaint which has not been brought to KCTMO’s attention for more than 12 months from the first time the complainant became aware of the problem will not normally be accepted.”

4.2 However, each case will need to be decided on its merits, and discretion may need to be exercised if, for example, it is a serious matter, or the person has only just found out that he or she has been affected by something that happened or was decided some time ago; or if illness or personal circumstances have prevented him or her from complaining sooner.”

8. When we contacted the Housing Ombudsman in 2017 about the gas pipes, they had a similar view to KCTMO in relation to the 12-month time limit regarding any dispute between tenant and landlord. I never got a proper response to my concerns about the 2010 fire, and continued to ask for a copy of the report for years afterwards. The KCTMO should have dealt with my concerns about the failure of the AOV system during the fire on 30 April 2010 within 12 months, but they did not. When I continued to raise those concerns, for example, in 2013 I asked for a copy of the LFB report, I was told that I was out of time [RBK00033169_0006]. I have set this out in my Phase 2 witness statement at paragraphs 30 -31 [TWS00001335_12]. Although the policy states that serious matters can be dealt with outside the 12 months at the discretion of the TMO, they never considered the 2010 fire to be serious.
9. Thirdly, I found my/GTLA’s complaints would always be dismissed despite our genuine and grave concerns. I never thought the TMO investigated properly. In relation to Health and Safety or equipment issues, we always used photographic evidence to justify GTLA’s complaints. For example, Lee Chapman on behalf of GTLA sent a photo (taken by me) of the exposed gas pipes [RBK00003690], and I sent a photo of a “cable fault” lift notice on 26 March 2017 [photo at IWS00001362, email at TMO10017810_0009]. Instead of taking me/GTLA seriously, the TMO just rejected our legitimate and grave concerns.
10. Despite repeated requests from me/GTLA under T-complaints and members complaints the KCTMO never provided/ dealt with:

- a. LFB reports in relation to the 30 April 2010 fire (which records three people as injured, poor maintenance of the building and non-functional smoke vent system) and minutes of the relevant Health and Safety Committee meetings.
- b. No FRAs were provided to us by Janice Wray or Carl Stokes (the 2012 FRA incorrectly states that *"You do not have to give a copy of your risk assessment to anybody"* [CST00000728_0002]).
- c. Misleading information in the 2010 and 2012 FRAs. The 2010 FRA states *"As far as it is known having asked the person named above, apart from the arson incident in July of this year 2010 there have been no other fires in this building within the last 2 years"* [CST00000709_0005]. This is of course misrepresenting the fire on 30 April 2010. The 2012 FRA states *"As far as is known...there have been no fires in this building within the last 2 years, there was a minor arson incident in July 2010, nobody was hurt"* [CST00000728_0006]. The LFB report records that three people were injured [IWS00001463_0003], including my wife.
- d. Health and Safety certificate in relation to the AOV system. On 2 January 2015 I asked for a statement of work for the refurbishment because I was concerned that no work on the smoke ventilation system had been carried out, and asked for confirmation that Rydon would carry out this work [RBK00033163_0003].
- e. Health and Safety certificate in relation to gas pipes (which we requested on 7 March 2017 [RBK00003505_0001] and repeatedly after that).
- f. Health and Safety certificate/ report of inspection in relation to structural defects in the building on account of the loud banging noise I started to hear in March 2017. I could hear loud and continuous banging on the east side of the building, and I thought there might be a structural defect in the building

[RBK00003771_0013]. Lee Chapman also heard this and he mentioned it in an email to Victoria Borwick MP [RBK00003264_0003]. This was one of the reasons I wanted the building to be inspected or audited by the LFB; had this happened, the inspector might have identified the combustible cladding [TMO10017419_0007].

- g. Refused to deal with anti-social behaviour including in relation to concerns about newly installed gas pipes in the stairwell being vandalised under T-complaints or members complaints [RBK00003505_0001], and rubbish being dumped in the communal areas.
 - h. Refused to deal with a security breach in Grenfell Tower (boiler and electricity room basement) under T-complaints and members complaints [RBK00014619].
 - i. Refused to deal with lifts malfunctioning at Grenfell Tower under T-complaints and members complaints [for example TMO10017810].
11. Fourthly, the TMO tried to exhaust us through their complaint procedures. Their policy seemed to be to try to demonstrate or appear as though they were doing something about it, but instead to give a very diplomatic, out of touch response, or to reply just for the sake of it. The Stage one/ two/ three responses were often very similar, for example the 2013 complaint about power surges and the refurbishment [RBK00033169, TMO00832070, TMO10024955]. This was also true of the letters that I/ GTLA received from Sacha Jevans and Laura Johnson in relation to the gas pipes [TMO10016490, RBK00033161].
12. In fact I found the process frustrating, exhausting, never ending, a vicious circle; sometimes I had to give up my family and social life to deal with it. So as time went on, I continued to copy my/GTLA emails to T-complaints but without having any

faith in it. It made me feel very angry, so I therefore pressed ahead with trying to explore other avenues, because Grenfell was my sweet home.

13. Fifthly, I didn't think the complaints procedure would make any difference. Even when a complaint was upheld it made no difference. GTLA's Stage One complaint regarding lifts was upheld in March 2017; however, a few weeks later the lifts were out of order again [RBK00002075]. See my Phase 2 witness statement at paragraph 29 [IWS00001335_0012].
14. Sixthly I felt that the TMO were the judge, jury and executioner. There was no sense that the complaints procedure was independent.
15. The way the complaints procedure was set up echoed what was said in my Lease at paragraph 18 of the Fourth Schedule [IWS00001415_0023]:

“Any dispute that may arise between the Lessees and the owners lessees tenants or occupiers of any of the other flats in the Building or other premises forming part of the Estate shall be referred to the Lessors' Tenant Management Organisation whose decision on the dispute shall be accepted as final and binding.”

16. The mentality was to close off any complaints from me/GTLA about Grenfell Tower.
17. I quote from my email to Laura Johnson on 22 March 2017:

“Who is going to pay the ultimate price for the anticipated negligence of the KCTMO, the RBKC or National Grid or the residents of Grenfell Tower” [RBK00003771_0003].

c. Who did you expect to investigate any complaints that were raised?

18. Before the TMO existed, I expected the area manager of Lancaster West Estate Management Board to investigate. When the TMO was formed and there was a tripartite agreement with RBKC I expected the T-complaint manager of the TMO to respond but with the involvement of the Area Manager or Housing Officer of the EMB who had local knowledge first-hand.
19. When the EMB no longer existed, I expected the T-complaint manager of the TMO to investigate.
20. My complaints always had a named addressee and I tried to address them to the person I thought would be most appropriate. For example, when GTLA was first formed we would address letters to the Head of Leaseholder Services, Geoff Payne [IWS00001497]. We received a letter from Daniel Wood who stated *"Many of the points that you rightly raised could have been addressed earlier through greater communication. With this in mind I would like to encourage your association to develop more direct links with the Home Ownership Team."* [TMO10000790_0003].
21. However, in practice I had the most faith in Judith Blakeman as someone who would chase up a response from the TMO or RBKC. For example, she chased up RBKC/TMO to resolve the power surges and compensate residents [IWS00001356].
22. I knew there was a three-stage process moving up to a senior manager of the TMO and at the third stage an adjudicator, who was a TMO Board Member, would get involved. Although I never had a copy of the complaints policy, I knew this because whenever I made a complaint, in the TMO's reply they would say *"if you are not satisfied with the outcome of this complaint, you have the option of taking it to stage two/ three of the complaints procedure."*
23. What I wasn't aware of was that the T-complaint procedure was designed to close off my/GTLA's complaints about Grenfell Tower. I refer to an email from Peter Maddison to Joanne Burke in which he says *"I have agreed with RBKC that we will*

channel these issues into the KCTMO Complaints Procedure and resolve the matters and close them off" [TMO10026789_0001]. The TMO wanted to channel complaints through the complaints procedure to keep it away from elected members.

d. You said that you emailed RBKC, TMO Officers and Councillors directly – was there any difference in the response you received when others were copied in?

24. Section 2.7 of the Complaints Policy states that, "*Councillors, MP and other elected representatives can use the complaints procedure to make complaints on behalf of their constituents.*" I did not know this at the time.

25. I/ GTLA felt we got a faster response when we copied in councillors, particularly Councillor Blakeman. However she did not reply to every email.

26. There were often delays in the response when we emailed individuals directly, which is one reason why I started copying others in. For example, GTLA emailed Daniel Wood, copying in Judith Blakeman, on 27 June 2011 with a query regarding the QLTA for lift maintenance. Aside from an acknowledgement email, we did not receive a response. We therefore emailed again on 14 November, this time addressing our query to Laura Johnson and copying in several councillors and TMO officers, and received a response the same day [TMO00839644]. Daniel Wood's strategy was that if any complaint came in from me or GTLA to just ignore it. I also noticed that I had to chase or follow up with his boss Robert Black to get his attention.

27. As for Judith Blakeman, the email chain at TMO10016426, for example, shows that she was efficient at sending our complaints to the TMO, letting us know what she had done and following up with other people. Other councillors sometimes also responded quickly. An example of this is an email I sent to Councillor Coleridge on 26 February 2012 [IWS00001464]. I sent the email that evening and received a response at 9:25 the next morning.

28. I felt that the responses from RBKC and the TMO were designed to protect themselves, not to investigate. This is now confirmed by internal correspondence I have seen. For example, when I emailed the TMO on 7 March 2017 to raise concerns about the gas pipes installed in the staircase and the only evacuation route, Sacha Jevans asked Janice Wray *“are you comfortable that this is a National Grid liability”* [CST00001242_0002]. Her concern was to ensure that the TMO and RBKC were protected and this was somebody else’s problem; she did not think of the safety of residents.

29. The TMO were supposed to be a ‘tenant-led’ organisation, but I always said they were a tenant-mislead organisation. They were supposed to put residents at the heart of their policies but in reality they always put protecting themselves first.

e. You explain that your policy was always *“to start by emailing our local ward councillors and often addressed my emails to Judith Blakeman.”* Why did you address emails to Judith Blakeman in particular?

30. The simple answer to this question is that Councillor Blakeman lived locally and she is a ward councillor for Notting Dale ward. She has local experience and she held a surgery two days a week for the residents of Lancaster West Estate. Councillor Blakeman is part of the Labour Group at RBKC and she was a member of the TMO Board on behalf of RBKC. She has been a councillor since 1978 with local knowledge and pays attention to detail. Councillor Blakeman always came forward to help the residents of Lancaster West and Grenfell Tower.

f. Was there any difference in the TMO’s response to a complaint that you reported to Councillor Blakeman as opposed to one that you reported directly? If so, please explain further.

31. As set out above, when I originally started GTLA we would just send correspondence to the relevant person at the TMO and would often get a slow response or no response at all without chasing. We were more likely to get a fast response if we reported the complaint to Councillor Blakeman.
32. However, although I did not know it at the time, this meant that complaints reported to Councillor Blakeman could be treated as a Member's Enquiry rather than as a complaint and so did not go through the three-stage process and was not recorded in their KPIs [e.g. RBK00000096]. Laura Johnson referred in an internal email to Grenfell Tower being a "*bad-tempered place*" with problems going back twenty years; this should have been reflected in the KPIs [RBK00000149_0001].
33. When I addressed complaints to Councillor Blakeman I also copied in an array of other recipients as I felt this put her under pressure to look into our grave issues and concerns. That was a much more effective way of getting attention.
34. Although others in Grenfell Tower may not agree, I always had the utmost respect for Councillor Blakeman for the reasons I have set out. From my observations and experience, Councillor Blakeman always used to take any complaints from me/ GTLA seriously because she knew that my/GTLA's complaints had validity and authenticity. I always used to provide her with evidence that she could not ignore as a local ward councillor. I also felt that as a councillor since 1978 with vast local knowledge, she deserved our utmost respect.

2. Were you aware of RBKC's complaints procedure and policy?

35. Yes, but I can't remember ever using it. From 1996 onwards RBKC appointed KCTMO as their managing agent to take care of thousands of social housing tenants and leaseholders in RBKC under the MMA. On several occasions I/ GTLA were told by individuals in RBKC to use the TMO's complaints procedure [e.g. TMO10026785, RBK00050403].

36. In practice I would complain to RBKC and the TMO by copying individuals from both organisations into my emails. I knew RBKC had their own complaints policy or something similar on their website, but I do not remember using it.

3. Did you ever make a complaint to RBKC under that procedure?

37. Not specifically by reference to their complaints procedure, but RBKC were fully engaged and informed about the complaints that I/GTLA were raising with their managing agent KCTMO at all times. We would sometimes address a complaint to an individual in the TMO, copy it to others, and would actually get a response from somebody in RBKC. For example, we complained to Millicent Williams (KCTMO) about the gas pipes and received a response from Laura Johnson [RBK00003771_0004].

38. I was frustrated that RBKC was not properly regulating the TMO. I was fully aware that RBKC and KCTMO were separate entities, and in my mind RBKC's role was to regulate the TMO via the MMA. I had no contractual relationship with the TMO – my lease was with RBKC.

39. It is clear from Laura Johnson's witness statement at paragraphs 92, 93, 102, 109,115, 130 and 131 that RBKC handed over responsibility for fire safety to the TMO [RBK00034943]. When I was living at Grenfell Tower, RBKC passed responsibility for complaints to the TMO, and now they are trying to pass the blame for what happened. In fact, RBKC are also to blame for failing to provide oversight of the TMO.

4. Did GTLA collaborate with LWRA, Grenfell Compact and Grenfell Action Group?

a. If the answer to the preceding question is yes, please provide further details including how you reported these concerns to the TMO.

40. During my 25 years in Grenfell Tower I knew that LWRA existed but never saw them in action on anything, apart from getting funding for an annual funfair at Lancaster Green from the EMB/ RBKC. I understand LWRA received funding from the EMB, although not directly from RBKC. As far as I was aware, no one from Grenfell Tower itself was involved in LWRA, it was people from other parts of the estate.
41. I tried to get LWRA's attention during the power surges and the installation of gas pipes but to no avail. I copied LWRA into various emails to the TMO/RBKC using the address lancwestra@gmail.com. They never offered help, which I found unacceptable and unreasonable. Eddie Daffarn comments in his Phase 2 witness statement that LWRA were not capable of properly representing the interests of local residents and I agree with his comments [IWS00002109_0049].
42. GTLA did collaborate with Grenfell Action Group. I particularly want to give my heartfelt thanks to Francis O'Connor, co-author of the GAG blog. Even though he wasn't living in Grenfell Tower, he has contributed a tremendous amount of time and energy for the betterment of Lancaster West Estate. Another co-author of GAG was Edward Daffarn, he is extremely passionate in whatever he does and is a down to earth individual. I wish him long life and good health. I knew them both as my good friends. I remember I asked Tunde Awoderu, the vice chair of GTLA, to take Eddie Daffarn for a dinner so they could discuss the grave issues and concerns we were facing in Grenfell Tower. I cannot remember the precise date of this.
43. We collaborated over the KALC project when both GTLA and GAG felt that Grenfell Tower needed investment, and that residents should be consulted over the plans for KALC. Eddie Daffarn would copy me/ GTLA into emails about this [IWS00001423] and even wrote emails to RBKC on behalf of GAG and GTLA, which I was happy

for him to do [IWS00001453]. GAG and GTLA both wanted resident groups to be able to attend stakeholder meetings to discuss the KALC project. For example, Eddie contacted the TMO with a list of residents' groups including GTLA [IWS00001359]. Sometimes Tunde Awoderu would attend these meetings as vice chair of GTLA, for example the Lancaster West Stakeholders Meeting on 29 November 2011 [TMO10001346]. We eventually helped to produce comments on the KALC Planning application [IWS00001316].

44. We also worked together before the refurbishment on getting improvements to Grenfell Tower. For example, see IWS00001488 which is an email chain about the windows at Grenfell Tower and setting up a meeting between GAG and GTLA to discuss KALC and Grenfell Tower.
45. GAG and GTLA were both very concerned by the delay to the refurbishment. I remember distributing leaflets to the residents of Grenfell Tower on behalf of GTLA and GAG. For example, GTLA and Grenfell Action Group jointly prepared a leaflet to be distributed in Grenfell Tower about the refurbishment project – the leaflet is attributed to both organisations at the bottom of the page [IWS00001331]. In a Grenfell Action Group blog post, "*The Grenfell Tower Project What's Going On?*" dated 15 June 2013, GTLA are mentioned in conjunction with GAG in urging residents to attend a consultation meeting [IWS00002278].
46. We also collaborated during the power surges – see my answers to questions 5 and 6.
47. With regards to the Grenfell Compact I wasn't living in Grenfell Tower for the period April 2015 to April 2016 when the Grenfell Compact was founded. Despite that I replied to an email from David Collins when I heard about Compact group. This is exhibited as SA2/1. In that email I told them I didn't live in the building but that I wanted to be involved. I have seen a petition organised by the Compact, which I didn't sign because I wasn't living in Grenfell Tower, but if I had been, I would definitely have signed their petition.

b. If the answer is no, please explain why it was not appropriate or necessary to collaborate with other resident bodies.

48. I have explained that I was away when the Compact was active. LWRA existed before GTLA and in parallel with the LWEMB. I did try to contact them after GTLA was founded.

49. I would now like to explain how I felt about the Lancaster West Estate Management Board. When I moved to Grenfell Tower, the LWEMB existed with RBKC. During that time there was a lack of resident involvement and proper services provided by the EMB. I started making complaints about the EMB in relation to maintenance and repairs. The EMB would send threatening letters and legal notices if I was ever a week late with rent or questioned the service charges. Even though the EMB was managed by the residents of Lancaster West, I felt that they did not serve our interests.

50. After 1996, when there was a tripartite agreement between RBKC, the EMB and the TMO, the EMB and the TMO would blame each other for any issues I raised. For example, if I complained to the EMB about disrepair, they would pass the buck to the TMO. It was very confusing. The EMB did not advocate on behalf of residents, for example when I complained to them during the power surges. The tripartite agreement eventually ended, although this did not improve the responses I received to complaints.

5. Did you share your concerns about fire safety with any other residents' group?

51. Yes, with Grenfell Action Group. I often copied my/ GTLA's correspondence with RBKC and the TMO about fire safety to Eddie Daffarn and Francis O'Connor. We also communicated by email and text. I also copied emails to a generic LWRA email address and, once the Compact had been set up, to them or to David Collins.

52. Grenfell Action Group and GTLA were both very concerned by the fire safety implications of the power surges and wanted transparency from the TMO. To that end, Eddie Daffarn requested an emergency Residents' Meeting on behalf of GTLA and other residents' groups [TWS00001366]. Eventually on 19 July 2013 the TMO arranged a meeting which was attended by Eddie Daffarn, Tunde Awoderu (GTLA), Christine Richer (LWRA) Councillor Blakeman, Councillor Feilding-Mellen, Laura Johnson and Peter Maddison [minutes at RBK00000034]. I had also organised a petition relating to the power surges, the delay in compensation and the delay to the refurbishment project which was signed by Eddie Daffarn [RBK00002270_0008].

53. Eddie Daffarn also forwarded my complaint about the exposed gas pipes to Ben Dewis of the LFB on 20 March 2017 [LFB00032100_0004].

6. If the answer to the preceding question is yes, please provide further details including how you reported these concerns to the TMO.

54. This is set out in question 5. GAG was a blog, but most of my correspondence with RBKC/ TMO was via email. As I have said, I copied the authors of GAG into many of those emails. RBKC and the TMO were also informed of our concerns about the power surges via the petition.

7. Was GTLA invited to participate in the Tenants' Consultative Committee?

55. No, never. I think I had maybe heard something about the Committee, but I did not know what they did and I was not invited to participate. I did not have any reason to believe that it was anything more than a PR exercise. My focus was on advocating through GTLA.

56. This tells me a lot about KCTMO. This is yet another example of the TMO treating GTLA as a liability when I hoped and asked that they would treat us as an asset.

8. If yes, was GTLA able to use this forum to put forward concerns about fire safety in Grenfell Tower?

57. N/A

9. If GTLA was aware of, but did not participate in, the Tenants' Consultative Committee, please explain the reason for this stance?

58. See above.

Consultation During the Refurbishment

10. You raise concerns about consultation at paragraph 59 to 60 of your phase 2 statement. You said you were "frustrated that there was not more resident consultation."

a. Were you, or GTLA, ever invited to join a residents' group or committee to represent residents' interests during the refurbishment?

59. I was not invited to join such a group or committee during the refurbishment either in a personal capacity or as the Chair of GTLA. From the witness statements and documents that have been disclosed by the TMO, it is clear to me now that I was deliberately excluded from the consultation process.

60. Paul Dunkerton's Handover Notes, dated 2 August 2013, has a list of stakeholders including:

- *Grenfell Tower Leaseholder Associations Group*
grenfellleaseholdersassociation@hotmail.co.uk

- *Grenfell Tower Tenants Action Group, Edward Daffarn, (The above groups are not recognised as registered associations but they are very vocal and can email various Councillors about issues which can quickly spiral out of control)*” [TMO00879790_0001].

61. This was of course incorrect; GTLA was a recognised association and had been since 2011 [RBK00000011]. This goes to show that the TMO did not take GTLA and other resident groups seriously. Because we were “vocal” in holding the TMO to account, they saw us as a liability rather than as an asset. As stakeholders, the TMO should have been updating and consulting GTLA. Instead we had to chase the TMO for stakeholder meetings, as I set out below.

62. In the KCTMO Board Meeting Minutes dated 21 November 2013, it is stated “*It had been agreed to hold no more public meetings because of the stand being made by the Grenfell Tower leaseholder group.*” [TMO10028444_0007]. I do not know what is meant by this. GTLA were not opposed to the refurbishment, in fact we welcomed it. It is clear to me that the TMO excluded anyone who wanted more active scrutiny of the TMO. This meeting was attended by Robert Black, Yvonne Birch, Sacha Jevans and Anthony Parkes, and questions about this statement should be put to those witnesses.

63. In the notes provided by Claire Williams regarding finding residents for the contractor interviews, I am listed as “*156 Mr Ahmed did not contact*” [TMO0087981]. I am the only resident leaseholder she did not contact. When asked about this in oral evidence, Claire Williams said she did not know that I was chair of GTLA, but that she probably would have contacted me if she had [Day 56 Page 163 line 12f.] I find it hard to believe that she did not know that I was chair of GTLA, as this was known to the TMO and Claire Williams was copied into emails sent by me in this capacity.

64. Instead of reaching out to GTLA, Claire Williams has stated that she persuaded two leaseholders, Pily Burton and Mr Barakat, *“to provide a view on behalf of residents and they assisted us when no-one else came forward.”* [TMO00840364_0008]. I cannot understand how Claire Williams can have thought that no residents wanted to participate in the consultation process, seeing as GTLA had been actively sending emails about the refurbishment project for years [e.g. RBK00014597 Claire Williams is included in the addressees]. Furthermore Mr Barakat was a recent and non-resident leaseholder, and I do not understand why Claire Williams chose to contact him rather than a resident leaseholder with decades of experience in the building.
65. I cannot remember a single occasion when RBKC/ TMO invited GTLA to participate as an organisation in a residents’ forum about the refurbishment. However, when Eddie Daffarn would organise stakeholder meetings with RBKC/ TMO either I or Tunde would attend. It was always either GAG or GTLA who were seeking stakeholder meetings with RBKC/TMO, and they sometimes declined. For example, I sought a meeting with Councillor Feilding-Mellen and Laura Johnson in March 2017 to discuss the gas pipes, and she declined on their behalf [RBK00003771_0004].
66. These meetings were organised by Eddie, not by the TMO. After I attended a stakeholder meeting on 18 July 2011 [RBK00030102], I decided to write an email to Councillor Coleridge setting out my vision for the refurbishment, putting fire safety at the heart of it. I wanted to attend that meeting in person, because I was hoping to get their attention about the 2010 fire. The meeting was about the KALC project, and it was clear to me that they could not leave a derelict building next door, there had to be investment in Grenfell Tower.
67. I sent Councillor Coleridge an email to that effect on 26 February 2012 with the subject line *“Grenfell Tower in Dire Need of Modernisation”* [IWS00001464_0002]. It took me several months to prepare and write the email because I went to neighbouring estates and took photos and did my research. I wanted to draw Councillor Coleridge’s attention to the Edward Woods Estate. It was about ten

minutes away and it was being refurbished with cladding, Rockwool insulation and solar panels. It looked very nice by the end. I included a lot of detail about the thermal efficiency because, as I said in the email, Grenfell Tower's heating system was very old and outdated [IWS00001464_0003]. In the email, I also quoted from the minutes of a stakeholder meeting on 29 November 2011 that Tunde Awoderu attended on behalf of GTLA [TMO10001346].

68. I received a response from Councillor Coleridge the next day, who said "*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 very 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.*" [IWS00001464_0001].

69. This email shows that GTLA did try to tell RBKC/ TMO our priorities for the refurbishment, despite being excluded. In an email dated 14 November 2012, we stated that there was need for improvement in the following areas: "*1. Fire exit doors 2. Unsafe building 3. Smoke vent and smoke alarms 4. Internal decoration and repairs*" [TMO10024763_0003]. My email dated 26 February 2012 was the result of decades of despair, neglect and bitter personal experiences with the TMO, RBKC and the EMB, as I have highlighted in my Phase 2 witness statement. I took KALC as the opportunity to make them take GTLA seriously.

b. If the answer to the preceding question is yes, please set out your understanding of the role you were invited to play in any such group and the purpose of the group.

70. N/A

- c. **Aside from the issue which you raise at paragraph 68 of your phase 2 statement, did you as an individual resident or GTLA raise any other concerns with the TMO about improving consultation on the refurbishment project?**

71. GTLA sent an email to Mark Anderson on 5 August 2012 to raise concerns about consultation. We stated:

“You may have engaged with a number of leaseholders on an individual basis and these individuals attended your drop-in session, but as residents NOT in the collective leaseholder’s interest. We have our own regular GTLA meeting concerning Grenfell Tower and in fact held one on Sunday 29th July 2012.”

“We have repeatedly said that for the meeting to be more constructive, we need to have an answer to our issues and concerns. In the newsletter you claim that you are willing to engage with the leaseholders, but in reality, much more needs to be done. You have not given us a clear explanation to our straightforward yes or no question [about charges to leaseholders].” [RBK00000010_0001]

“Your chief executive Mr Robert Black wanted to have strong working relationship with the Grenfell Tower Leaseholder’s Association. Yet in reality the opposite seems to be taking place. You as an Assets and Regeneration Director are struggling to recognise us as an association and this has proved to be a setback in our ongoing engagement and we found this slightly offensive.” [RBK00000010_0002]

72. We also emailed repeatedly about delays to the refurbishment project. For example, I emailed Paul Dunkerton on 28 February 2013 to ask why the project had not started yet [RBK00003901], Councillor Coleridge on 10 March 2013 to ask again for an explanation [TMO10002293], and Councillor Feilding-Mellen on 8 June 2014 to request a breakdown of the budget and to ask that work begin urgently [RBK00014597]. The email to Councillor Coleridge had the subject line *“The*

Grenfell Tower Regeneration Project must start NOW in tandem with the Kensington Academy Leisure Centre as promised", because RBKC/ TMO's intention was for the projects to run together. Residents thought that the two projects would not be separate – there was no consultation about separating the two. These emails clearly show that residents were being kept in the dark about the project's progress.

d. What would your preferred method(s) of consultation have been?

73. I would have preferred stakeholder meetings and consultation via email. I never received invitations from RBKC/TMO for such meetings, we always had to request them. We also never received emails from RBKC/TMO inviting comments from GTLA. The exception was that Mark Anderson wrote in an email dated 27 July 2012 *"The group called the Grenfell Leaseholders Association is not presently formally constituted as an association, however KCTMO has agreed to engage with the group as a collective of leaseholders and has made various offers to meet since the consultation and engagement process started in February"* [RBK00000010_0003]. He was of course wrong, and we had been given formal recognition [RBK00000011]. This exchange made it clear that he considered any consultation would be a favour to residents, not a right of a recognised residents' organisation.

74. On 18 July 2011, I attended a residents' meeting about the KALC project. At that meeting, Eddie Daffarn stated that residents would like a Resident Forum to talk to and engage with the Council and key stakeholders [RBK00030102_0001]. Peter Martindale made the point that RBKC were particularly poor at tenant and resident consultation, and Laura Johnson committed to seeking representatives from local groups such as EMB and GTLA to join the Resident Forum [RBK00030102_0002-3]. She never contacted GTLA, but I would have welcomed an invitation for GTLA to participate as a residents' group.

11. In 2012, the TMO consulted residents as set out in the consultation strategy {TMO10001401}. This process included two questionnaires, road shows, estate meetings and evening consultations.

a. Did you attend or respond to any of these initiatives?

75. I remember the questionnaires from the TMO. I think I received a questionnaire in 2012 from a newsletter and answered it. In my email to Paul Dunkerton dated 14 November 2012, I quote from the questionnaire and point out that the questions did not cover important fire safety issues [TMO10024763_0003].

76. I attended at least one meeting, Tunde at least one other.

77. As set out above, I attended a meeting on 18 July 2011 regarding the KALC project and investment on the Lancaster West Estate [RBK00030102]. Tunde attended a Lancaster West Stakeholders Meeting on 29 November 2011 [TMO10001346].

78. I also attended a meeting at the EMB room on 15 August 2013 organised by Peter Maddison of the TMO and Bruce Sounes of Studio E [TMO10049910]. There was a power point presentation including cladding. I clearly remember that ‘zinc cladding’ was written in the presentation. I have no idea how and why it afterwards changed to ACM cladding. This was never made clear to me/ GTLA.

79. I remember one newsletter from the TMO in particular dated 22 July 2012 [IBI00000344]. This newsletter summarised feedback from residents following a consultation. It stated that residents preferred an upgrade of the central heating system, to be located on the roof serving all flats. Eventually we had HIUs installed in the flats and many residents, including myself, were unhappy with their placement. I don’t believe we were ever consulted about the change from a heating system located on the roof to a system that took up space in our flats and on the lobby. The old pipework stayed in place and I believed it was a health and safety issue.

80. I would like to extend my answer further by saying that I did not understand why leaseholders were not being consulted under Section 20 Landlord & Tenant Act 1985. Leaseholders have a statutory right to be consulted where they may have to pay substantial service charges, for example because of major works. I understand now that RBKC/ TMO received legal advice that they would not be able to recharge leaseholders, but I only know this because I have seen internal correspondence disclosed on Relativity. At the time it was very difficult to get a straight answer out of the TMO, despite me and Councillor Blakeman chasing them for a response and extensive correspondence between GTLA and Mark Anderson [TMO00837086]. There was no transparency as to why leaseholders were not charged or consulted. It is also clear to me that the TMO intended to charge the leaseholders until they received legal advice that this was not possible. This is demonstrated by the fact that Studio E conducted a survey of the leaseholders' windows to determine whether changes would be classed as improvements or maintenance and therefore whether the cost could be recovered from leaseholders. This was a very important issue to GTLA as a group formed to protect leaseholders' interests.

b. If yes, please provide details including whether:

i. You were able to provide feedback on design proposals and materials during the estate meetings and/or the evening consultations?

81. No. I/ GTLA felt that RBKC/ TMO and Studio E had already decided the design proposals and materials. Although I was hopeful that the regeneration project would bring much-needed investment to Grenfell Tower, I had a long history of complaining to the TMO and my trust in them was broken long before the refurbishment.

82. Consulting residents was a PR exercise and we felt that our feedback had little meaning or value. For example, the TMO, Studio E, Artelia, Harley and Rydon managed to change the cladding from non-combustible zinc to combustible ACM

without informing the residents of Grenfell Tower or the stakeholders such as GTLA and GAG. What happened with the HIUs is another good example of this. As set out above, residents preferred to have the central heating system located on the roof, but it ended up being moved to our flats without consultation [IBI00000344]. Similarly, large windows were a priority for residents, but they ended up being smaller to suit the needs of the companies involved in the refurbishment. They ignored my email of 14 November 2012 asking them to make fire safety improvements to: “1. Fire exit doors 2. Unsafe building 3. Smoke vent and smoke alarms 4. Internal decoration and repairs” [TMO10024763_0003].

ii. You were shown samples of the cladding (including whether you were given any explanation of the properties of any cladding samples) during the estate meetings and/or the evening consultations?

83. The only sample visible to me before the refurbishment was a display piece of cladding on the sign board in the Lancaster Green area. The sign board had information about the refurbishment and mentioned Rydon’s name and had a piece of cladding hanging there. Whether it was zinc or ACM cladding is anyone’s guess.

84. Other residents may have a different answer and may have seen samples of the cladding. There was a show flat (Flat 145) but I don’t think the cladding was visible there. I cannot remember whether I visited the show flat. I was not told anything about viewing samples of cladding.

85. GTLA were concerned about the HIU placement. Generally people weren’t bothered about the cladding, but GTLA were. However we could never have dreamed that it was combustible.

12. On 17 April 2015, in an email to David Collins and Edward Daffarn {IWS00002262}, Claire Williams set out the various communication channels

being used by the TMO and Rydon to consult with residents during the ongoing refurbishment. She said “*This includes:*

- *Face to face communication*
- *Emails*
- *Individual letters hand delivered.*
- *Monthly newsletters*
- *Posters placed near lifts and noticeboards.*
- *Formal meetings held in the early evening.*
- *Drop-in sessions (Morning, afternoon and early evening) at 145 Grenfell Tower and the walkway entrance*
- *Door knocking to notify of specific event(s)*
- *Home visits and surveys*
- *Individual consultation with residents prior to works beginning in their flats.*
- *Bulk text messaging*
- *The TMO are also due to offer resident surgeries by appointment starting in May”.*

a. Did you use any of these channels to provide feedback to the TMO about the refurbishment?

86. First, I would like to say that RBKC/ TMO should have been updating and consulting GTLA by default. We were a bona fide and recognised organisation. Instead, I/GTLA had to chase the TMO for answers and updates. As I mentioned in my answer to Question 10(a), GTLA were listed as stakeholders and should have been consulted and kept informed as such. [TMO00879790_0001].

87. My primary method of communication with the TMO about the refurbishment was by email. I have set this out in detail in my Phase 2 witness statement in the section “*Grenfell Tower Regeneration Project*” [IWS00001335_0023]. I did not receive

emails from the TMO updating me about the project, unless it was in response to an email I had sent specifically asking to be told what was going on.

88. I never received any texts from the TMO. I might have sometimes seen posters when I went to pick up my mail from Grenfell Tower. I trusted RBKC as my landlord and the TMO as their managing agent to deliver the project in good faith.

89. Even during the period from April 2015 to April 2016 when I was not living in the tower, I was in contact with my tenant and with Tunde Awoderu, and I managed GTLA through emails. I sometimes visited the tower, particularly if my tenant told me something was happening with the works in my flat, and I gave a key to Flora Neda. I continued to be concerned about what was happening in the tower; for example, on 20 January 2016 I emailed Councillor Blakeman about rubbish bags that had been dropped next to the rubbish chute by my front door [TMOH00012417_0002]. I received a reply from Robert Black the following day.

b. If yes, please provide further details of which of these channels you used and why?

90. Please see my answer to part a.

c. Did you find that these routes of communication with the TMO and Rydon provided an adequate means of giving feedback to the TMO and Rydon about the refurbishment?

91. No. I felt that they were a PR exercise and the TMO and Rydon had already decided the outcome.

92. I gave Lynda Prentice my contact number so that Rydon could text me or phone me when they needed to do some internal work in my flat. I had Lynda Prentice's number from the newsletters.

Fire Safety Concerns about the AOV

13. From paragraph 35 onwards, you have set out the concerns that you raised about the smoke ventilation system following a fire in April 2010. You have referred to correspondence from Daniel Wood {TMO100000790} and Anthony Parkes {TMO00838631}. At paragraph 52 you say, “not only did it take them more than five years to replace the smoke vent system but similar failures in operation, testing and maintenance of the system existed at the time of the fire in June 2017”. From the information provided to you in 2010, what was your understanding of the state of the AOV at that time?

93. I obtained the LFB Report of Attendance for the fire through my wife’s solicitor [IWS00001463]. This contained the following information:

“Type of active system: Smoke ventilation.

Location of system in relation to the fire: On same floor as fire

Did the system operate? No

Impact of the system on the fire: Did not contain/ control.

Reason the system did not function as intended: Fault in system.”

94. From this I understood that the AOV system was faulty. However, when I contacted them direct, the TMO told me repeatedly that they did not have this information. For example, in the Stage 1 response to my complaint in 2013, the TMO said “KCTMO has not received a report from the Fire Brigade in relation to this matter, and cannot confirm whether such a report was written” [RBK00033169_0006]. As late as 28 March 2017 Laura Johnson wrote in an email to GTLA “We have no record of three people being injured and again we have no report which links this to poor maintenance and finally we have no record or letter from the Fire Brigade mentioning this or providing any formal notification about this” [TMO10016499_0001]. Whether or not RBKC/ TMO had a copy of the LFB report,

they ought to have known the facts of the fire on 30 April 2010 from my wife's claim and from internal investigations.

95. Because I had this report, I did not trust the information that the TMO provided to me, whether in 2010 or afterwards. Daniel Wood said in a letter dated 20 August 2010 that there was a minor fault with the smoke vents and that the seals on the vents did not close tightly, allowing smoke to seep out on higher floors above the fire [TMO10000790_0004]. This made it sound like a short-term problem. However, I did not understand how a minor fault could result in heavy smoke travelling from the sixth floor to the fifteenth. I thought that a defect such as this should be considered a major fault, and I said as much in a letter addressed to Daniel Wood and Robert Black dated 3 September 2011 [TMO10037439_0005]. I have now seen an email from Spencer Sutcliff (Kensington and Chelsea Fire Safety Team Leader) to Janice Wray in which he describes the incident as a "*catastrophic failure of the system*" [TMO10048221].
96. In a letter to GTLA dated 21 September 2010, Anthony Parkes admitted that the defective smoke vent seals "*would not have been so serious if the fire brigade turned on the manual smoke vent fan which would have drawn smoke away. Regrettably, this did not happen as officers who attended did not know how it worked*" [TMO00838631]. GTLA were so alarmed by this that we wrote to Collette O'Hara of the LFB. Our correspondence with her is exhibited at IWS00001351 and IWS00001430.
97. In a letter to my wife's solicitors dated 14 April 2011, RBKC admitted "*on the date of the fire for which we are concerned the fire detection system which was in place at Grenfell Tower was defective.*" [RBK00013665] I knew from this that the system was faulty and I was never told that it was working again.
98. I have now seen emails which confirm that the TMO knew the smoke vent system was not fit for purpose. On 11 September 2012, Janice Wray emailed Paul Dunkerton

about the fire in April 2010. She stated, *“Unfortunately, as I have outlined the vents did not operate as required during this fire which led to pressure on us from the LFB. Subsequent to this correspondence Keith Fifield, our then Building Services Manager, and I met with the LFB at Grenfell Tower. However, as commonly happens none of this was put in writing by the LFB. I believe that this and further investigations undertaken by RGE, our Planned Maintenance contractor, led to Keith & his team concluding that this system needed to be replaced/ refurbished”* [MAX00003154_0002]. This email was forwarded to Bruce Sounes.

99. The Inquiry should put questions about the AOV system to the following individuals:

- Janice Wray
- Daniel Wood
- Peter Maddison
- Robert Black
- Mark Anderson
- Siobhan Rumble
- Carl Stokes
- Collette O’Hara
- Amanda Johnson
- Laura Johnson
- Councillor Paget-Brown
- Councillor Blakeman
- Councillor Feilding-Mellen.

100. I would also like to say that from the Phase 1 evidence, it seems to me that there were similar failings in relation to the operation, testing and maintenance of the AOV system in the fire on 14 June 2017. This is my conclusion as a long-standing resident of Grenfell Tower and I strongly expect the Inquiry to examine this with the aid of expert evidence.

14. In January 2015, GTLA complained that the AOV system had not been replaced {RBK00033163}. Peter Maddison responded that the fire alarm and ventilation system was beyond economic repair {RBK00003486}:

a. What did you understand Peter Maddison to mean when he said the system was “*beyond economic repair*”?

101. I understood this to mean that the system needed immediate replacement. My experience was that it was very rare for Peter Maddison to admit that anything was wrong or was the TMO’s fault, so if he admitted this, it must be serious.

102. The smoke vents were situated only metres from my front door and, after the fire in 2010, I was constantly worried about it and it gave me many sleepless nights. The AOV system was part of the Health and Safety equipment. I cannot understand how anyone with a sense of responsibility and with a duty of care could possibly leave it unattended or in disrepair for a period of five years.

b. Between 2010 and January 2015, what was your understanding of the state of the AOV?

103. It was my understanding that the AOV system was not functioning and was out of order, despite what the TMO said. On every floor the vents were covered by a steel mesh. There were always cigarette butts and litter that people would poke through the holes in the net. From this it appeared to me that no one ever touched the vents for regular maintenance. I used to have a photo of this on my old phone, which I lost in the fire. I don’t think I ever heard the AOV system make a noise.

104. I can demonstrate from the emails I sent to the TMO that I was worried about the AOV system. On 14 November 2012, I emailed RBKC/ TMO to request copies of reports in relation to the fire on 30 April 2010. I also stated that improvements were needed to: “1. Fire exit doors 2. Unsafe building 3. Smoke vent and smoke alarms 4.

Internal decorations and repairs” [TMO10024763_0003]. This email was signed by nine members of GTLA.

105. On 14 December 2012 GTLA received a letter from Paul Dunkerton stating:

“With reference to the fire at Grenfell Tower which occurred on 30th April 2010 I am advised that we investigated the incident and liaised closely with the Fire Brigade and the details are as follows

...

The communal extraction system removed the smoke from the lift lobby, however, imminent remedial works to this system (scheduled to start on the 4th of May 2010) did mean that the system did not perform as effectively as it should have. However, all remedial works were completed and system continues to operate effectively.)

A subsequent on-site meeting between officers of the TMO and the London Fire Brigade (LFB) clarified the manual operation of the mechanical fan and agreed there was a need for improved fire safety signage.” [TMO10024922_0002]

106. As I have said, I did not trust the TMO that this was just a short-term problem. Therefore I continued to email the TMO about this. On 2 January 2015, I emailed Councillor Dent Coad with the subject line *“Improvement work on existing smoke extraction and ventilation system which links to the fire alarm, under the Grenfell Regeneration Project”* [RBK00033163_0003]. In this email, I pointed out that Rydon had been on site since June 2014 but did not appear to have carried out the replacement of the smoke ventilation system. In response to this email I received the information that it was *“beyond economic repair”*. As I have explained in question 13, the TMO were aware of this since at least 2012.

c. Were you informed or otherwise made aware that the AOV could not be guaranteed to work in the event of an emergency?

107. No, never. The AOV system was Health and Safety equipment and should have been guaranteed to work in the event of an emergency. The fact that this was not the case is a sign of how reckless the TMO were with regards to resident safety. In fact, as set out above, on 14 December 2012 Paul Dunkerton asserted that the system “*continues to operate effectively*” [TMO10024922_0002] despite Janice Wray emailing him to the contrary on 11 September 2012 [MAX00003154_0002].

Independent Fire Risk Assessment

15. In GTLA’s letter to Robert Black dated 3 September 2010 {TMO10037439} you requested “an independent investigation and enquiry into the safety of the building.”

- a. Were you informed or otherwise made aware that the TMO had contracted fire risk assessors, Salvus Consultancy, to carry out independent fire risk assessments of the Tower? If so, please give further details.**

108. I was never informed that the TMO were taking action in response to my/GTLA’s letter dated 3 September 2010. The TMO did not make me/ GTLA aware that they had approached Salvus Consultancy to carry out independent fire risk assessments of the Tower. The only things I did receive were an email from Collette O’Hara on 19 November 2010, in which she said “*The TMO conducted a Fire Risk Assessment, which following an assessment of the building detailed the Evacuation Strategy. This strategy is appropriate for the building*” [IWS00001430_0001] and a letter from Paul Dunkerton saying “*Fire Risk Assessments were completed on the communal areas of all RBKC blocks by a specialist Fire Consultant following extensive consultation between the TMO, RBKC and the London Fire Brigade*” [TMO10024922_0001].

109. During the installation of the gas pipes the TMO talked about their own “Fire Safety Advisor”. For example, Laura Johnson sent a letter to GTLA on 22 March 2017 stating “*KCTMO’s Fire Safety Advisor has reviewed National Grid’s proposals and has followed up with a fire safety inspection and report*” [RBK00033161_0001]. I now know from disclosure that the “report” was just a letter to Janice Wray. I would like to express my shock and outrage that we were raising these grave concerns and the TMO were not able to reassure us by providing health and safety certificates for the installation, as requested. The TMO/ RBKC refused to take any responsibility and I felt that I was abandoned.

b. Were you aware that fire risk assessors carried out Fire Risk Assessments of the Tower at regular intervals?

110. I did not know that this was a regular assessment. Despite all the emails I sent over the years about fire safety the TMO did not think to tell me that there were regular Fire Risk Assessments at Grenfell Tower.

c. Were you aware that, as a resident, you could request a copy of the fire risk assessments for the Building?

111. I was not aware that I had a right to request an FRA and no-one ever told me this. The 2012 FRA that I did obtain stated exactly the opposite: “*You do not have to give a copy of your risk assessment to anybody, not even the fire authority, if you do give them a copy this could be used against you at a later date*” [CST00000728_0002].

d. How did GTLA obtain a copy of the 2012 Fire Risk Assessment referred to at paragraph 136 of your Phase 2 statement {IWS00001335/46}?

112. Francis O’Connor sent me a copy of this FRA by email [SA2/2]. I don’t know how Francis obtained it but possibly it was by an FOI request; he was very good at that sort of thing. I met Francis in the street at some point before this and we had a

long conversation about the wellbeing of Grenfell Tower, and I probably found out that he had a copy and asked him to send it to me in that context.

113. I would like to clarify what I said in my Phase 2 witness statement at paragraph 297, where I said that I found a copy of the 2012 FRA from the KCTMO website. In fact it was the Capita Symonds report on emergency lighting that I found this way.

114. We never trusted the 2012 Carl Stokes FRA because there was a discrepancy between the FRA and the LFB report of the 2010 fire. The 2012 FRA states "*As far as is known... there have been no fires in this building within the last 2 years, there was a minor arson incident in July 2010, nobody was hurt*" [CST00000728_0006]. The LFB report records that three people were injured and the incident was in April 2010. [TWS00001463_0003].

e. Apart from the 2012 Fire Risk Assessment did you receive any other copies of the fire risk assessment for Grenfell Tower?

115. No, as I said TMO/RBKC never provided me/GTLA with any other copies of the fire risk assessment for Grenfell Tower.

16. {IWS00001335/67} You have explained at paragraphs 195 of your Phase 2 statement that in 2017 GTLA requested an independent fire risk assessor of the Tower following concerns that had been raised about the installation of a gas pipe. At paragraph 199, you refer to Lee Chapman's request for copies of the reports related to the installation of the gas pipe. Were you provided any copies of the report by Carl Stokes on the installation of the gas pipes or any copies of his post-2012 fire risk assessments?

116. No, I was not provided with any reports from Carl Stokes or any copies of his post-2012 fire risk assessments. Rather than copies of reports all we received were emails from the TMO with vague assurances. This was despite me and other

members of GTLA repeatedly requesting health and safety certificates. I emailed Peter Maddison on 7 March 2017 to ask, “*Could you please kindly provide us the health and safety certificate authorised that the KCTMO or the National Grid that they obtained permission before installing the gas pipe going through the entire staircases of the Building?*” [RBK00003505_0001].

117. I have now seen that Eddie Daffarn forwarded this email to Ben Dewis at the LFB with a request that the LFB come and inspect the new pipework [LFB00032100_0004]. Ben Dewis informed Eddie that he could not comment as the LFB were not the enforcing authority.

118. Four days before the fire, Ben Katz from the LFB visited Grenfell Tower. I took him up to the 20th floor and showed him the layout of the new gas pipes and how the pipes penetrated through the walls of the individual flats. I met my neighbour’s daughter from Flat 182 and told her to tell her father to think about the gas pipes. Sadly the whole family died in the fire. Ben Katz mentions that he met me in his witness statement:

“From this particular visit, I only remember one of the residents I spoke with. This was a gentleman of Asian appearance at home with his wife that I spent a considerable amount of time speaking with. I don’t recall his name or flat number but he did introduce himself as a member of the Leaseholders Association for Grenfell Tower and that he had been in contact with Kensington & Chelsea council regarding a gas pipe that was installed within the tower. There was lots of correspondence covering this problem and took he me (sic) to see the pipe for my opinion, again I don’t remember exactly where it was within the tower. I did explain that I wasn’t an expert in gas installations so couldn’t be of any help to him. I did advise him to continue raising this with the council. He was very knowledgeable in the area of fire safety, telling me he checked his smoke alarm weekly.” [MET00070841_0002].

This shows how not being provided with copies of reports and fire risk assessments meant that my very great concerns about the gas pipes continued right up to the date of the fire.

119. I would now like to quote the email I sent to Laura Johnson and Sacha Jevans on 21 April 2017 in its entirety. The reason for this is that it shows that not only was GTLA asking for health and safety certificates, we were also concerned about the banging noise I and Lee Chapman could hear (from the cladding). We were asking for an independent inspection, and we had obtained signatures from many residents in support of this. The email chain is available at RBK00033165.

“Dear Ms Laura Johnson and Sacha Jevans,

Thank you for your email dated 30th March 2017.

90% of the residents in Grenfell Tower signed the letter for KCTMO the tenant led organisation regulated and appointed by our Landlord RBKC to implement the following urgent issues and concerns raised by us.

It will be over 95% by the end of this weekend, NOT taking into account vacant properties and residents away on holiday. We also intend to take legal advice on the following issues and concerns and we will be in touch soon.

The KCTMO, the tenant led organisation regulated and appointed by our Landlord RBKC, need to implement the following urgent issues and concerns raised by us:

- 1. Need an independent advisor to investigate the root cause of the major gas leakages in Grenfell Tower.*
- 2. Need to stop further extension of the gas pipe work on the North and East side of the building with immediate effect until all the investigation is completed. Need an*

explanation as to why the National Grid knocking on individual flat to gain access to carry out their work on 20th April 2017?

3. Independent investigation by independent adjudicator, health and safety inspector and fire brigade inspectors funded by the RBKC and KCTMO on following areas:

- 1. To carry out full health & safety inspection of physical aspect of the premises including structural problem as well as onsite documentation*
- 2. Observation made and hazards identified.*
- 3. Level of risk to gas pipe at stairwells now extending to north east side in Grenfell tower taking into account level of vandalisms and anti-social elements at stairwells*

Any recommendation necessary to ensure ongoing legal compliance.

e. Introducing permanent concierge in Grenfell Tower and residents of Grenfell Tower also signed by the residents for the urgent implementation of concierge in Grenfell Tower preventing non-residents from entering the building, including installation of CCTV to cover the stairwells in Grenfell Tower.

f. Why there is no consultation with the residents of Grenfell Tower in relation to major gas pipe installations (it's not a day-to-day repair or maintenance)

g. Involving the building insurance company and their opinions in relation to newly installation of gas pipe and taking into consideration the regular anti-social elements and vandalisms in and around Grenfell tower especially in the staircases.

*h. If found unsafe the national grid **MUST** remove the gas pipe and install by replacing the old gas pipe in the cupboard*

4. To investigate constant every minute noises noticeable at night and coming from north east side of the roof of the building experienced by top floor residents of this side

and we suspect it is recent structural malfunction, or from the heating system or loose cladding.

5. Refurbishment and reconditions of two Lifts in Grenfell Tower- reason for the regular Breakdown and Malfunction.

6. Email from Laura Johnson dated 28th March 2017. This is a serious allegation which I have reviewed with the KCTMO and I can confirm RBKC and KCTMO do not have any record or report of this and neither does the Fire Brigade. We have no record of three people being injured and again we have no report which links this to poor maintenance and finally we have no record or letter from the Fire Brigade mentioning this or providing any formal notification about this. We are taking legal advice that it's NOT a serious allegation BUT fact of the matter with proof and we will be in touch in due course.

It is of paramount importance that we request the scrutiny community of RBKC and the Board members of KCTMO to look into our genuine issues and concern to be investigated by the independent expert before we consider legal proceeding, with a view to save costs and undue stress to us.

Best Wishes

Lee Chapman and Tunde Awoderu

The Secretary and the Vice Chair of Grenfell Tower Leaseholders' association"

Fire Safety Advice

17. Have you, or any other tenant (to your knowledge) ever received any of the following letters from Janice Wray which contained fire safety advice: {TMO00870665}; {TMO00865707} or {TMO00865991}.

120. I cannot recall receiving these.

18. At paragraph 155-156 of your Phase 2 statement, you refer to your request of October 2016 to Millicent Williams for a copy of the Tenant's Handbook. Prior to this request, whether as a tenant or leaseholder, were you provided with any resident's, tenant's or homeowner's handbook? Such provision may have included but is not limited to the following:

- i. A Tenancy Handbook dated from 2004 {IWS00001762}**
- ii. The TMO Health and Safety Handbook dated from 2006 {TMO00870143}**
- iii. A Resident's Handbook {TMO0880514}?**

121. I do not remember receiving these. When I first moved to Grenfell Tower in 1992, I received a green folder which was the resident's handbook, but I never received anything else. I had to chase Millicent Williams for a handbook on 6 October 2016, less than a year before the fire, but I never received anything, and in fact I was told that no such handbook was available [TWS00001343].

122. I would like to extend my answer and say that I do not think a handbook is the best way to communicate fire safety information to residents. On the night of the fire, how many residents do you think planned their escape route by going through the Link magazine or their tenant handbook? There used to be a fire safety notice board telling residents to leave the building in the event of a fire which was taken down after the fire on 30 April 2010 [IWS00000500]. Replacement signs communicating the stay put policy did not appear until late 2016.

123. It is completely unacceptable that for nearly seven years there was no fire safety signage in Grenfell Tower whatsoever. My firm belief is that there should have been proper signage throughout the building and in visible places. A handbook or magazine is not a replacement. Even I, who had engaged with the TMO on fire safety information for years, was confused about what to do in the event of a fire. Residents

who had never considered the evacuation policy before the night of the fire must have been even more bewildered.

19. Did you ever receive copies of Link Magazine and Homeowner newsletters?

124. Yes, I used to read through Link Magazine. There was some information tucked away in the corner about health and safety, but it wasn't very visible or properly placed. You would have to look through the whole magazine very carefully to find any useful information. I did use to look for information about who to contact in the management structures and their contact numbers, which was useful.

125. I am not sure why there is such a focus on the Link Magazine. I saw it as being like a tabloid newspaper, full of gossip. I used to keep a copy of the Link, not for health and safety, but for the KPIs and statistics which were published there. The magazine was essentially a PR exercise by the TMO. I thought they must be making up the statistics because the positive KPIs were the opposite of what I was experiencing. It wasn't a true reflection of the TMO and what was going on in Grenfell Tower.

126. As I have said in Question 18, I do not think the Link was the best way of communicating fire safety information. It is fine to have it there, but it should not be the main way of communicating this to residents. The same is true for letters and the handbook. The most important thing is fire safety signage, and there was no fire safety signage in Grenfell Tower between 2010 and late 2016.

127. I have now seen an email from Councillor Blakeman to Robert Black dated 23 November 2016 raising concerns about the lack of fire safety signage [TMO10045912_0004]. She received a response from Janice Wray highlighting that fire safety articles were published in the Link and in newsletters. Councillor Blakeman responded *"I think the TMO often puts too much faith in The Link and generic newsletters. Even when read they are then discarded, so residents do not*

have a permanent record of information unless they have the nature of an archivist. This is why personalised letters are sometimes of more value. However I think in this instance that Fire Action Notices on each floor will meet the problem” [TMO10045912_0001]. I see Judith Blakeman also put great importance on signage. The TMO was being warned and ought to have been fully aware that relying on the Link and newsletters was not sufficient.

20. If so, did you read them and note any advice on fire safety contained in them?

For example:

- i. December 2013 issue of Homeowner newsletter {TMO00873466}**
- ii. June 2015 issue of Homeowner newsletter {TMO00873520}**
- iii. Winter 2015 issue of Homeowner newsletter {TMO00873542}**
- iv. Summer 2016 issue of Homeowner newsletter {TMO00873559}**

128. Yes, I did receive the December 2013 issue. I am not sure about the others because I was not living in Grenfell Tower from April 2015 to April 2016.

129. The December 2013 Homeowner Newsletter contained an article on “Fire Safety & Flat Entrance doors.” I/GTLA knew all about this because GTLA had been involved in correspondence with the TMO about flat entrance doors at Grenfell Tower which resulted in the TMO stating that our doors were compliant (see my Phase 2 witness statement section “Leaseholder doors” at paragraphs 90 – 105 [IWS00001335_0033]. In fact, as it turned out during the fire on 14 June 2017, our leaseholder doors which had not been replaced were more fire-resistant than the new doors which had been put in for the tenants.

21. {TMO00846025} in GTLA’s email to Councillor Blakeman dated 29 September 2016, GTLA requested that the TMO organise a fire drill.

- a. Why did you email Councillor Blakeman on this occasion?**

130. The answer is that I had witnessed the Shepherd's Court fire first hand in August 2016 and my concerns about fire safety in Grenfell Tower came to the surface again. I chose Councillor Blakeman because I always gave her lots of credit because she always took notice and got involved. I had the utmost respect for her and I still do. I also remembered vaguely that Councillor Blakeman communicated to the residents of Grenfell Tower that she had asked the LFB to have a fire drill in the past. She always did her best to keep an eye on her own ward with her local knowledge, so when I witnessed the Shepherd's Court fire she was the person I got in touch with.

131. Shepherd's Court was not far away from Grenfell Tower and I happened to be there at the time. I discuss this further below. When I was watching the fire, it was as if I was re-living the terrifying experiences of the 2010 fire when my wife was stuck in the building and I was outside with my son Zaki calling her to come down. I emailed Councillor Blakeman as a consequence of the Shepherd's Court fire.

b. At that time, what was your understanding of the stay put policy as it applied to Grenfell Tower?

132. Since 2010 I had received many emails and letters from the TMO telling me that there was a stay put policy. On 3 September 2010, I/ GTLA sent a letter to Robert Black which said "*We are certain that out of 120 families living in the block, no-one is aware of the evacuation procedure. We have not had an evacuation procedure booklet sent to us for the past 36 years*" [TMO10037439_0005]. In response, I received a letter from Anthony Parkes dated 27 October 2010 stating:

"The recent Fire Risk Assessment of the communal areas of Grenfell tower confirmed that the evacuation strategy for this block – in common with the overwhelming majority of RBKC's residential blocks – is "stay put" or what the fire brigade would refer to as "defend in place". Specifically, as the block is a purpose-built block of self-contained dwellings the level of compartmentation means that if a fire breaks out elsewhere in the block residents should be safe to stay within their home with their

front door closed. Clearly, this is only advice and residents have discretion to decide whether they prefer to stay in their home or whether they would feel safer evacuating the building." [TMO10040506_0002].

133. On 20 November 2011, I/ GTLA received a letter from Paul Dunkerton saying *"You're concerned that residents have not had access to fire safety training and fire drills. We advise that the evacuation strategy for Grenfell Tower, in common with virtually all TMO blocks, is "stay put". Specifically, if a fire breaks out anywhere other than in your flat you will be safe initially to remain in your home."* [TMO00842276_000].

134. Despite this, I could not really accept or acknowledge this advice. The reason for this was that my wife and I lived through the 2010 fire. My wife saw how smoke filled the lobbies on that occasion. Also, there used to be a fire safety notice board telling residents to leave the building in the event of a fire which was taken down after the fire on 30 April 2010 [IWS00000500]. Replacement signs communicating the stay put policy did not appear until late 2016.

135. I now know that in November 2016 the LFB served a Deficiency Notice on RBKC/ TMO which prompted them to put up fire safety signs. Although I didn't know about the Deficiency Notice at the time, my email of 29 September 2016 also expressed concerns about fire safety, the fact that there had not been any fire drills in Grenfell Tower, and that residents did not know what to do in the event of an emergency.

136. Despite all the email correspondence I had with the TMO about stay put, it stayed in my mind that I must leave the building if there was a fire. I have explained this in my Phase 1 witness statement. On the night of the fire my wife and I alerted neighbours on my floor that they should leave and told people going back up the stairs, for example Virgilio Castro of Flat 146 among others [IWS00001091_0008],

to go back down. It is self-evident that on the night of the fire, those who decided to leave the building and self-evacuate largely survived.

c. Did you consider that there should still be a fire drill where there was a stay put policy in place? If so, please explain further.

137. In my opinion there should have been a fire drill even when a building has a stay put policy. Stay put was interpreted as stay put in all circumstances, but of course it is only stay put if it is safe to do so. If there had been a fire drill then residents would have understood that stay put did not mean stay put in all circumstances. The LFB and Fire Risk Assessors like Carl Stokes may not agree with me but I will explain my reasons.

138. On the night of the fire, the LFB were demanding building information from RBKC/ TMO. We are told that Janice Wray had regular meetings with the LFB, so I don't know why vital safety information was not known to the LFB. In 2010 the LFB didn't know how to operate the AOV system [TMO00838631], and it appears that this also happened in 2017. Clearly things can change on the night of a fire. The stay put policy is only a policy, not an order – it is not set in stone. The LFB may have to order that the building should be evacuated based on the current situation. It is clear to me that there should be a fire drill in case this happens. In his witness statement at paragraph 50, Paul Dunkerton says “*Around July 2012 it became clear that a new fire strategy was needed for Grenfell Tower as it was unclear where the assembly point should be*” [TMO00000885]. If there was an assembly point, there surely should have been a fire drill so that residents knew where it was? I did not know where the assembly point was and I do not think other residents did either.

139. As I have explained in my Phase 2 witness statement, I never received a response to my email dated 29 September 2016. However, I have now seen a response drafted by Laura Johnson that was not sent to me [LJ/25 and LJ/26]. The letter states “*Grenfell Tower, in common with the vast majority of TMO-managed residential*

blocks, has a “stay put” fire strategy. If a fire breaks out in the block and tenants are safely within their flat they are initially safe to stay put. On arrival the I.F.B will make an assessment and determine whether evacuation – either partial or total – is required. If the I.F.B decide that this is necessary they will instigate and assist with an evacuation. Fire drills are not required in blocks with a stay put fire strategy. The purpose of a fire drill is to test the procedure that should be followed in the event of a fire and as the procedure is to stay put this would conflict with the way residents are expected to respond” [LJ/26/ RBK00002728_0002]. As I have said, residents did not understand that they might need to evacuate under some circumstances and that they should only stay put at first. A fire drill could have helped residents fully understand the procedure.

d. In the same email you referred to the fire at Shepherd’s Bush Tower block and said “It is paramount important that, KCTMO/RBKC look into this as a matter urgency and you as our local councillor, could you please kindly find out what went wrong. We also request you to get all the answer and we expect KCTMO/RBKC to take full responsibility for the above mention issues and concerns.” – Please clarify what you were requesting Councillor Blakeman to look into and what outcome you were seeking.

140. I was requesting Councillor Blakeman find out why the fire spread at Shepherd’s Court and to learn the lessons when it came to Grenfell Tower. This was in the context of the subject line of my email which was *“Grenfell Tower refurbishment – mission unaccomplished by the KCTMO and their appointed Contractor Rydon”*. As I set out in my email, I felt the refurbishment had been a failure in that it had not addressed the state of the staircase or the lobby doors or improved fire safety.

141. On 20 August 2016, I witnessed the Shepherd’s Court fire myself along with many others and watched the fire engulf the building for a period of four hours. At the same time I was re-living the terrifying experience of the fire on 30 April 2010.

142. I took lots of pictures of the Shepherd's Court fire on my mobile, which I no longer have. The fire at Shepherd's Court bothered me very much in my day-to-day life for a simple reason: if something similar happened in Grenfell Tower, it would repeat what happened in the 2010 fire. Every time I entered Grenfell Tower, there was one thing I could not stop thinking about, which was, what if another fire breaks out like in 2010? So as usual, I decided that I must do something about it and bring these matters to the attention of the TMO Board members and to the attention of the Cabinet Member for Property and Housing, Councillor Feilding-Mellen, and the Director of Housing Laura Johnson.

143. I also remembered that Councillor Blakeman had previously tried to organise a fire drill. It was also at the back of my mind that Grenfell Tower had a "leave the building", not a stay put policy, because as I have explained I never accepted the stay put policy and it never registered with me because of the lack of signage.

144. I come now to the refurbishment. I had observed that there was no fire signage in the building, there was vandalism and rubbish being dumped in the communal areas. I also noticed the state of the staircase; there was only one exit to the building, with inadequate light. Most of the fire doors leading onto the stairs were not self-closing and had large gaps. As I explained in my Phase 1 statement, when the wind blew the gaps between the door and the frame would get wider. The hinges were also in disrepair. The lift was malfunctioning regularly, and I used to report this with photographic evidence. There was also no clearly visible floor numbering in the stairwell.

145. RBKC/ TMO spent £10m on the regeneration project, and yet when you looked at the communal areas it was as if nothing had been done to the building. I also felt that the space on the landings had been reduced by the HIUs. I thought we wouldn't be able to escape if there was another fire in the building, and it occurs to me now that I was preparing my escape route for 14 June 2017. When I noticed the installation of

the new gas pipes, I became angry and all the thoughts I had had since the Shepherd's Court fire became intensified. No one acknowledged my frustration, either then or when I sent the email on 29 September 2016. Although there was policy in place for the refurbishment and for fire safety, no one was properly regulating it.

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

I, Shahid Ahmed believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed: 

Dated: 17.03.2021

Shahid Ahmed