

WITNESS STATEMENT

Criminal Procedure Rules, r27.2; Criminal Justice Act 1967, s.9; Magistrates' Courts Act 1980, s.5b

Statement of: BLAKEMAN, JUDITH

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18')

Occupation: COUNSELLOR

This statement (consisting of 2 page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature:

Date: 07/07/2017

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (supply witness details on rear)

I am one of three Labour Councillors for Notting Dale Ward and have been a council member of Kensington and Chelsea Council since 1978 with a break between 1990 and 1994. I am a member of the following committees within the council: The Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee, Administration Committee, Appeals Panel, Licensing Committee (Vice-Chairman) and the Public Art Panel.

I have been a Council-nominated board member of the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO) for the last 3+ years.

I am writing this statement about the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower. The tower block falls within my ward constituency and I have grown to know many of the constituents who reside within the flats over the years. Sadly many of these people perished in the fire.

I live in close proximity to the site and the fire has affected me enormously. I have regularly championed the residents' cause and supported numerous complaints made directly to KCTMO about Grenfell Tower since about 2006 onwards. I am willing to assist police and their subsequent criminal investigation into the fire in any way possible.

Amongst many other concerns, I can think of three major safety problems with the tower block in recent memory: The first was a series of power surges in 2013 that caused immense concern amongst the residents. The power surges not only caused serious damage to electrical equipment belonging to residents, but also in their view presented a fire risk.

Signature:
2018

Signature witnessed by:

The second was the refurbishment works on the block conducted and commissioned by the KCTMO in 2014 and completed by Rydon Construction. I was critical of the internal report completed by KCTMO on how the refurbishments were carried out and I circulated my commentary and concerns on that report directly to all board members. I also sent comments to the RBKC Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee, although The Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee accepted the KCTMO report and did not instruct an independent review of how the refurbishment had been carried out.

The third major problem, as identified by the residents of the block, related to National Grid who installed pipe-work inside the only stairwell and fire escape of Grenfell Tower commencing around November 2016. This was begun without consultation with KCTMO and residents were very concerned to see exposed pipework running along the stairwell and in the hallways within the block.

Grenfell Tower has a leaseholders' association that represents the interests of the leaseholders within the block and this group is called the Grenfell Leaseholders Association (GLA). The GLA consist of approximately nine (9) members and are chaired by a man named Tunde Awoderu. Mr Awoderu owns a flat within the block but doesn't reside. The Vice Chairman is a man named Shahid Ahmed, who resided within the block itself and escaped from the fire.

The GLA requested funding for an independent fire safety review of the block in 2016 via the KCTMO. KCTMO replied in March of this year to confirm their own review of the block, conducted by a fire safety consultant, had deemed it revealed no problems and therefore no independent review would be funded or required.

I have a wealth of e-mails and correspondence relating to Grenfell Tower, which I have provided to police today. This includes contact from residents of the block, notes of various meetings I have attended, contact with other council members and board members of KCTMO, plus a wide range of other topics all relating to Grenfell Tower. I have provided all relevant e-mails and electronically stored documents dating back to 2012 and these have been downloaded onto a USB from my personal computer. I produce this exhibit as JMB/1 and the master USB is sealed in bag reference MPSA6466856.

I have also provided two (2) paper files containing correspondence relating to the Lancaster West Estate Management Board, which includes Grenfell Tower as one of the blocks it used to cover. I produce these as JMB/2 sealed with reference MPSE53172697 and JMB/3 sealed with reference MPSE53172698.

This statement is a concise summary of the chronology of the tower block and the major safety problems the residents identified to me since 2013. It includes the wealth of detailed e-mails and correspondence I have willingly provided to police. I am content to provide a further, more detailed, statement in due

Signature:
2018

Signature witnessed by:

course if required. I am also content to attend court or any subsequent public enquiry if I am required to give evidence.

Signature:
2018

Signature witnessed by: