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**Sent:** 18 October 2015 14:40  
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**Subject:** Grenfell Tower

Dear Mr. Black

I am writing to let you know that the Notting Dale ward councillors are coming under great pressure to ask for a full report on the refurbishment process at Grenfell Tower to be written up for an in-depth discussion by the Council's Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee.

We are very sorry about this because we had hoped that, after recent meetings attended by the ward councillors, things had calmed down and we were now making progress. But we certainly agree with some of the outstanding matters that continue to be raised with us. These include the following.

Mr. Lawrence of Rydon gave a firm undertaking at the meeting attended by Cllr. Atkinson and me at the show flat that he would fully investigate all the complaints residents had about alleged bullying and intimidation by some Rydon operatives. This has not happened, indeed it has since been refused. Instead, residents have been told to take those complaints through the TMO complaints procedure. They ask, quite reasonably since the complaints are with Rydon operatives, why is this mechanism being proposed? In the meantime, we are told that residents continue to report instances of what they describe as "Rydon bullying and pressurising".

The underlying question still relates to where the HIU units were to be installed. Here both ward councillors and residents continue to be misled.

At the start of the refurbishment process, both residents and ward councillors were told that the units could be either in the kitchen or in the hallway. At some stage thereafter, however, it was decided that the units could only be installed in the hallway.

Neither the residents nor the ward councillors were told of this change of plan. It was implemented without consultation. In the meantime we were still telling residents that they had the option of a kitchen installation and it is most unfortunate that we gave out information as fact that by then was wrong.

We must identify the background to this change of plan, why it took place, who instigated the change, when it was decided, by whom and why it was not first subject to consultation with residents.

Our suspicion (councillors and residents) is that it was at the behest of Rydon, who may have found the process more complicated and hence more expensive once they came on site. This does not provide a good reason for the sudden change, which has caused immense distress to many residents as well as the prolonged campaign of "civil disobedience".

Furthermore, although residents are now being told that they have the choice, the residents who co-operated with the refurbishment - much against their will in a number of cases - are now disadvantaged. Certainly there are some residents who will refuse to have the boilers connected to the new heating system until they are moved into their kitchens, even if this means they will have no hot water or heating for some time yet.

Residents in this position have been told that the situation will be reviewed once the project is over. We are all quite certain that this will only mean them hearing that as the project is over, nothing more can be done. This is quite unacceptable. I have reported a number of these cases to Mr. Maddison and I look forward to receiving a favourable response.

Less serious, but also of great concern, is the numbering the floors. For a long time both residents and ward councillors were told that this was under instruction from the Royal Mail. However, residents used the Freedom of Information procedures to obtain a categorical denial from Royal Mail that they had insisted on this. Residents were then told that this was an instruction from the Planning Department.

I am very concerned that both councillors and residents were misled. I have also checked the planning applications and can find no reference to floor numbering. There are always alternative mechanisms for floor numbers when new ones are installed that do not need to disrupt a whole block, certainly not one of the size of Grenfell Tower.

Although we received a report at the last Scrutiny Committee that the project is expected to be complete by Christmas, with only one or two of the new flats outstanding until the New Year, residents have not been told. Instead, they are getting conflicting views only from Rydon operatives, who may or may not have a better idea of when the works will be complete. Why have residents not been kept up to date?

There are still no functional security CCTV cameras operating at the entrance to the building. There are still breaches of security that are worrying residents.

A lot of damage has been done inside some flats as a result of the refurbishment works. Residents have been offered £50 for paint so that they can finish of the internal works themselves. However, blinds also no longer fit the new windows, other damage has been done, some flats have water damage that also needs redecoration. It is clear that £50 is insufficient to address many of the problems residents have inside their flats.

When residents are decanted to facilitate regeneration, they receive a disturbance allowance of £4,500. It seems to me that the TMO - but more specifically the Council - have a duty to ensure that residents who remain *in situ* while refurbishment and regeneration goes on around them also qualify for some form of disturbance allowance. The Council's decision to refurbish rather than demolish Grenfell Tower, despite costing £10+ million, will work out far less expensive in the long run, with only the residents suffering. This is an issue that we would include in any report that we may ask the Scrutiny Committee to discuss.



As you know, the Council is currently undertaking an "options appraisal" for regeneration of the whole of the Silchester area. This area includes four tower blocks and at least one, Frinstead House, is situated so closely to the new More West development that demolition is most unlikely. However, given the state of all the towers at Silchester, some refurbishment along the lines of that at Grenfell will ultimately be necessary and inevitable.

It is therefore imperative that the TMO learns hard lessons from the Grenfell "experiment". It should also seek to put right all the outstanding matters, so that the Council is able to point to a job well done. This will be vital should the TMO wish to project manage any refurbishment of other towers, including those at Treverton/Burleigh and on the Silchester Estate.

I apologise for the length of this e-mail, but I am afraid that both residents and ward councillors are at the end of our tethers. Residents fear that direct action is again becoming the only option for them. We would not like to encourage this, but we can see their point.

We get regular deputations now to all our surgeries. We can only provide residents with the information that we have available. This puts us under pressure if we are given misleading information and also if we are seen to be aware of matters - such as completion dates - that have not been provided to residents.

Please can you ensure that all outstanding issues are now addressed as a matter of urgency.

Many thanks.

Cllr. Judith Blakeman