

## **GRENFELL TOWER; 2 DECEMBER 2015 COUNCIL MEETING**

Mr Mayor

The purpose of this motion is to plug the gap in one of the many gaps that are appearing in the Council's regeneration strategy which I am afraid your amendment does not get near to meeting.

As is acknowledged, the residents of Grenfell Tower have put up with one hell of a lot during the last two and a half years, without relief other than the Summer Funday which they organised themselves. Residents who have to move on account of regeneration are entitled to a statutory payment to ease the problem. Residents who remain while regeneration goes on around them are entitled to nothing.

At Grenfell Tower the problem is not that they are entitled to nothing but that many of the residents are now seriously out of pocket owing to the refurbishment works. The response from the TMO - blandly to say that at the end of the programme they will have many improvements to their homes - shows an unimaginable lack of empathy for their own tenants and leaseholders.

I have visited a number of homes in the Tower. Let me give you some examples:

- A lone parent whose sound system was completely destroyed owing to a flood from the flat above when the new heating unit was connected
- A new baby whose day to day life was made a complete misery by hammering and pounding that was way above any known health and safety level. The respite arrangements put in place took no account of the needs of very young babies, so his mother had to flee their home whenever possible and overstayed her welcome in the homes of friends.

- The resident who had to redo the boxing in of radiator pipes owing to a very poor job by the contractors, paying for all his own materials and having to take time off work
- Many residents point out that the proposed £50 compensation they have been offered does not even cover the cost of the paint and materials they have to buy themselves to make good the works around the new windows and radiators; some have had to re-do the silicone around the windows; others have had to buy strong solvents to remove paint splashes from their floors
- Every resident had to buy new blinds or curtains; is the £50 supposed to cover the cost of these very expensive items as well as materials for making good work as well as the hire of handymen when some residents have not been able to do their job themselves - of course not; this sum is both derisory and insulting.

The decision to refurbish Grenfell Tower with residents in occupation, rather than demolishing the building, has saved the Council a huge sum of money indeed. Even without the massive costs of demolition, to reimburse 120 households the statutory disturbance allowance of £4,900 per flat plus the costs of constructing 120 replacement homes, calculated on the cost of the hidden homes already achieved, is in the area of £25 million - and this becomes far more when demolition costs are added. So the residents of Grenfell Tower have saved the Council at the very least £15 million.

Your amendment offering only “to re-hang curtains or blinds or find a solution to help them put up new window fittings” just rubs salt into an open wound. Do you seriously view this helping, rather than just further insulting our

constituents?

As Cabinet Member for Housing you have the discretion but also the duty to look at all the problems already emerging from the Council's regeneration programme and to address them. One issue is that you must ensure that when residents are not moved out but have to endure lengthy and often inadequate building works around outside and inside their homes, they should receive some appropriate and acceptable compensation. And given your contacts at government, you should be lobbying for statutory disturbance allowances to be extended to residents who save councils £millions who live through regeneration in their homes for longer than a set period of time. This is only the first tower block that you will be regenerating. If you do not wish residents of other tower blocks to come out in open revolt, you must deal with this matter.

Mr Mayor, this Council has exploited the residents of Grenfell Tower for too long. It is time appropriately to compensate them. No one can restore to them the quiet enjoyment of their homes that was lost when the first sod was turned for the Academy and Leisure Centre development well over two years ago and which will continue until well into the New Year.