

WITNESS STATEMENT

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

Statement of: DEWIS, BEN

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

Occupation: FIRE SAFETY TEAM LEADER

This statement (consisting of 6 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: B DEWIS

Date: 05/10/2020

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

This statement is further to statements I have already provided, in relation to the Grenfell Tower investigation, to the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry and to the Police dated, 20/08/2019 and 22/05/2018.

I am happy with the contents of those statements and I am aware that information and excerpts from those statements will be referred to and incorporated within this statement.

In this statement I will mention the following people, Rebecca BURTON, Nicholas COMERY, Matthew RAMSEY, Michelle McHUGH, Brett LOFT, Ben KING, Jim FLIN, Malcolm PARKER, Spencer SUTCLIFF and Robert McTAGUE from the London Fire Brigade. I will also mention Edward DAFFARN who was a resident at Grenfell Tower and Janice WRAY from Kensington & Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO).

On Monday 21st September I met with PC Richard GREENGRASS and CIV David BRATHWAITE at Paddington Fire Station.

I joined the London Fire Brigade (LFB) on 11th November 2013 as a Fire Inspecting Officer posted to the Kensington & Chelsea and Hammersmith & Fulham (KCHF) Fire Safety Team. The team was based at Kensington Fire Station until 5 October 2015 when we moved to Paddington Station. I had a brief period when I was detached out to Camden Fire Safety as Acting Team Leader in 2016.

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I am currently the Fire Safety Team Leader for KCHF, having successfully applied for that role, effective as of July 2018. I had been Acting Team Leader from 4th July 2017. I replaced Rebecca BURTON, who had been my line manager and who had transferred to be the Fire Safety Team Leader within the Central Regulatory Enforcement Group. She was my line manager at the time of the Grenfell fire. Rebecca BURTON has since become my line manager again as the Area Fire Safety Manager. Nick COMERY was my first line manager within the LFB until he retired from the role on 1st April 2014 and was replaced by Rebecca BURTON.

The role of the fire safety team involves the following. Carrying out programmed and reactive fire safety inspections to check for compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 ("RRO"). Carrying out building consultations in accordance with current regulations. Where necessary, advising responsible persons about their obligations under the RRO and agreeing the steps necessary to achieve compliance with the legislation. Carrying out specialist functions and roles as required. For example, the role of Brigade Duty Officer (BDO) will include Responding to Alleged Fire Risks (AFRs) raised by members of the public directly with the LFB or responding to concerns raised by other LFB personnel, providing technical advice and support on fire safety regulations and guidance documents to Fire Safety Advisors, Fire Safety Regulation staff and other internal and external stakeholders as required. Supporting Operational crews to develop their knowledge in Fire Safety Regulation in order for them to understand risk in the built environment.

My duties now as a team leader include but are not limited to: Leading a team of Fire Safety Inspecting Officers. Assigning workloads to Officers. Vetting their inspection reports and reviewing their Enforcement Notices. Oversight of development of fire safety inspecting officers/advisors who are on development. Maintaining relationships with internal and external stakeholders, including the local authority, managing the team budget and approving expenses, identifying areas for the team to target through 'Active Risk Targeting' and assisting with prosecution case files.

When I first joined the KCHF team in November 2013, I underwent a period of development, which involves training, shadowing more senior officers and completing assessments in order to gain

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competence to fulfil the tasks of an Inspecting Officer. There is no fixed timescale for this process, although it is generally completed in about 18 months.

In terms of how work is assigned to individual inspecting officers, jobs (fire inspections/ building control consultations etc.) come in from the administration department. These include programmed inspections of particular premises, which come up on a cycle as per the risk database. Jobs are also identified when there has been a fire at a premises, usually where Sleeping risk is involved. Jobs are also raised by Inspecting Officers when complaints or reports are received by members of the public or external or internal stakeholders, including operational fire crews. This may include AFRs (Alleged Fire Risks), which is a notification from an individual reporting their concerns about the fire safety arrangements at a particular premises. Where that report indicates that there are persons at risk, then a response must be made by fire safety within three (3) hours. If there are no persons at risk to warrant immediate attendance or no attendance is required, then the incident should no longer be considered an AFR.

Tasks/jobs are assigned by the line manager at his/her discretion by uploading them onto an individual inspecting officer's workload system called FARYNOR, Inspecting Officers are not designated particular premises or a particular geographic area. So, for example, I might have been assigned 20 different jobs at a time, including audits, site visits etc. I would then decide how I would manage that workload. On occasions, officers may be proactive and actually take jobs from the line manager's workload or, if necessary, raise their own jobs. The team works in an open-plan work environment in which we can easily speak with each other and share information.

Each day, we also check BOSS, which is an electronic incident log to see what fires have been logged and make decisions on whether any action is required by us. If, for example, there has been a fire in a single private dwelling, then we would not need to do anything as the RRO does not apply. But if, by way of further example, there had been a fire in a shop, we might call the premises and ascertain whether there is anything requiring a response or action by us, if a fire occurred in sleeping premises then we make arrangements for a post-fire audit.

The way an audit is conducted is that an FSIO will usually walk the site and its common practice to have the responsible person on site with you. This doesn't always happen for various reasons so we collate the

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records we need such as maintenance records, service histories and anything else after the visit. A check of the premises would include fire doors, means of escape, ventilation, firefighting facilities and general areas of concern you pick up through the role. There isn't a specific checklist but we are looking for compliance within the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order (RRO).

Each inspecting officer will have a mobile device that lists 'Articles', these are worked through during a visit again checking for compliance. An example would be Article 8 is for General Fire Precautions, Article 9 is for the Fire Risk Assessment conducted by the Responsible Person, and our key ones would be Article 15 for Emergency Plans and Article 17 which covers maintenance so FSIOs would know that a fire door problem would be recorded under this Article.

With regards to Fire Risk Assessments (FRA), we will check this for suitability and if we find any faults when we conduct an audit then these will be listed under Article 9. As this is a separate assessment of a building to an LFB audit there would not be an LFB member of staff present for this. I have never attended when an FRA has been scheduled.

In addition, we get calls and emails from the local community. Generally these come into the Brigade Duty Officer (BDO), who is rostered on at the Brigade Headquarters at Union Street, who filters out the calls to the relevant fire safety team. Or we may be contacted directly. Depending on the substance of the communication, they may or may not amount to an AFR, which requires an inspection. For instance, it may be that the calls relate to operational matters or matters within the remit of the Responsible Person for a particular premises or that the information does not indicate that there are persons at risk. Such matters would not trigger the need for an inspection. Rather, the information may be passed on to the relevant operational team or Responsible Person, as appropriate. In contrast, reported concerns about, for example, a locked fire exit, a missing or broken fire door, or a build-up of combustible material, would amount to an AFR which could require an inspection. These decisions are judgment calls to be made by the person dealing with the information.

As Team Leader, I had monthly meetings with the then Kensington and Chelsea Borough Commander – Spencer SUTCLIFF and his two station managers in post at the time – Brett LOFT (Chelsea) and Ben KING (Kensington and North Kensington) – to discuss any fire safety-related concerns. For example, if

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there were premises that I have particular concerns about, I will update them about those concerns and they will share with me any concerns that their crews have raised with them. It is not a formal, minuted meeting but it is just something that we have decided between ourselves would be a useful way of sharing knowledge and building a working relationship between the two teams. I understand that my predecessor, Rebecca BURTON, used to have similar meetings.

My recollection is that I only attended one meeting with the KCTMO, on 5th January 2016. I went to the meeting with Rebecca BURTON. I do not recall why I was asked to attend that meeting on that day and, as can be seen from the minutes of that meeting, I had very little involvement.

I did communicate with Janice WRAY, the KCTMO Health and Safety Facilities Manager, both by telephone and email about various issues regarding Grenfell Tower and other tower blocks managed by the KCTMO, which were raised by Edward DAFFARN of the Grenfell Residents Association.

I only carried out two site visits to Grenfell Tower. The first was on 12th March 2014, about four months into my career and before I gained competency. I went there with Matthew RAMSEY, who had suggested that I come with him to observe and learn. I do not have any recollection as to why that site visit occurred at that time and I may not even have been privy to the reason. I also do not have any clear recollection of the substance of the visit itself as everything was still very new to me and I was developing my understanding of the fire safety regulations, terminology and issues. I recall that Janice WRAY from KCTMO was also on site during this visit.

The second visit was on 17th March 2014. I went to Grenfell with Robert McTAGUE, who was Watch Manager B posted into fire safety. He was my deputy team leader, who would cover Rebecca BURTON in her absence. My recollection is that some concerns had been raised by some firefighters about access to Grenfell Tower detailing the underground covered car access and some other issues concerning the dry rising main that ran under the adjoining blocks so we went along and met with them to discuss the concerns to ensure they were happy with the tactical plan for the building. It was quite an informal meeting and it was not documented as far as I can remember as nothing needed to be actioned by anyone. I cannot recollect who we met on the day, however I have since checked the Watch Calendar on our intranet and I know it was Blue Watch who was on duty. Any issue with the Dry Rising Main would be

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reported back to the responsible person to fix under the service contract they have. The LFB don't fix these firefighting facilities as we would be culpable if that failed during an incident. We can enforce when there is a problem but it's usually a simpler result to make a call and get the contractor down at the site to fix it on the day we need to conduct a test. Any faults noticed by crews attending a site should flag these up through the station notification process that then gets emailed into the fire safety teams where this will get resolved either by the officer of the day or delegated to another member of the team to complete and return the result of our actions accordingly. Once the contractor has been down and looked at or fixed the problem then we ask for visual evidence by way of photographs and a copy of the certification from the responsible person to say that this is now compliant and completed by a competent contractor, there's a grey area within the RRO as they don't have to provide us with these records but do so to show that the firefighting facilities are maintained and it allows them to provide answers to questions we have when asked. A test would then be conducted by the local crew during the next scheduled 72d visit.

If we are going to serve an enforcement notice, it will follow the inspection carried out by a fire safety officer where they will complete the report on the mobile tablet device. Once each area is filled in then this generates a score based on the information at the end of the form. A competent inspecting officer will have a good idea of what the score will be as they are conducting the inspection. An example would be if they logged a major deficiency within each article then that would result in 'Enforcement Notice and Possible Prosecution', this would then be checked and vetted by the team leader. If approved then it's sent to the fire safety admin team who draft the enforcement notice and ask the local team leader to review before its served on the responsible person. The initial inspecting officer will then have a date where they will follow up again at the site to review the progress. If a premises has three (3) months to complete the works then usually the officer will call the week before the date of visit for a quick review of how things are progressing. If the work will be completed by the date then the visit will go ahead. If it's already completed then a compliance letter is sent and the records are removed from the public register.

If the work isn't complete then we have two (2) options. Firstly if there has been sufficient works carried out and we can see significant effort has been made but there are still outstanding issues then a letter of partial compliance can be issued or we extend the time on the enforcement by an initial 50% of the

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original deadline to complete the full notice. The second option if prosecution whereby the inspecting officer would liaise with the team leader to attend the site and view the evidence we have and contact the central enforcement group who have specialist staff who look at the case and make that decision. If prosecution is under way and the works are subsequently completed then it's down to the central group to decide if they wish to continue with the judgement as in the first case an enforcement notice hasn't been complied with so an offence has taken place.

I have had no involvement in any of the building consultations relating to Grenfell Tower and have no idea if the LFB still have the plans submitted in regards to layout for this building. The only concern that I was aware of but didn't have any direct involvement with was the smoke system in place at Grenfell Tower and this was looked into by my colleague Matt RAMSEY.

I didn't visit Grenfell Tower again during the refurbishment although since the fire there have been visits to the site involving myself. The last inspection on the tower prior to the fire by a member of my team was conducted by Michelle McHUGH, unfortunately I don't know the date of this and as I wasn't the team leader at this point in time I didn't review that audit. That would have been down to my predecessor Rebecca BURTON.

Between March and August 2014 and then between February and April 2017, I received numerous emails from a man called Edward DAFFARN of the Grenfell Residents Association. He expressed his concerns about fire safety at Grenfell Tower. When dealing with his emails, particularly in 2014 when I had not attained competence, my general practice was to get advice from Rebecca BURTON or another senior colleague as to how best to respond and then respond accordingly. Looking back over the correspondence, Mr DAFFARN's concerns related either to operational issues or matters within the remit of the Responsible Person (the TMO) and were not considered to be AFRs warranting an inspection of the premises. I responded to him as I deemed appropriate but for the most part I viewed myself as a messenger for his concerns – passing on the information either to the relevant operational team or the Responsible Person. As is apparent in some of my emails with my colleagues, I did become somewhat frustrated with the email correspondence at times but I always responded to him as helpfully as I could. I don't recall any other emails chains regarding Grenfell Tower from 2014.

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A building such as Grenfell Tower could have a 'Premises Information Box' (PIB) installed either by the LFB or the Responsible Person can do this where they felt it is necessary although it is good practice for them to consult with us and discuss the contents of the box including the building plans, any Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPS) for specific residents at risk or where there are hazardous risks such as oxygen canisters within a site. I believe these boxes are covered under either Article 37 or 38 of the RRO which is in the scope of firefighting facilities but it's not clear that these are required so it makes it difficult for us to enforce on them when not in place. I don't recall ever seeing PIBs mentioned within an FRA however if would be diligent of a person conducting this to include them where they are present as it supports the fire strategy of that building.

I have never had any training that has covered the combustible materials on the external facades of building both prior to and post the fire at Grenfell tower. My own knowledge of these circumstances and materials isn't the best and the training hasn't been adequate. The information circulated to us isn't detailed or specific enough covering the types of cladding relating to the work that we do. There was definitely no input prior to the fire covering the risks of external fire spread and within our role covered by the RRO we didn't look at the outside of buildings as the order only covers the inside as we are looking for compliance with the order by the responsible person as mentioned above.

After the fire at Grenfell a central high rise task force was put together with fire safety officers involved. I will provide a list of people involved to the police. The work was all out of hours and over weekends. The lead was Jim FLIN and I know that Malcolm PARKER from my team was part of this task force.

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