

**GRENFELL TOWER  
PUBLIC INQUIRY**

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**Further Witness Statement of  
ROCK FEILDING-MELLEN**

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**I, ROCK FEILDING-MELLEN, WILL SAY:**

1. I make this Witness Statement further to receipt of the Rule 9 letter from the Public Inquiry dated 30 July 2019. This statement is supplemental to the Witness Statement dated 18 October 2018 (my original statement). I have been asked to address a number of questions from the Public Inquiry arising from my original statement.
2. The matters contained in this statement are either known to me or are ones which I believe (in which case I have specifically said so) or are derived from records including computer records maintained by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea ('the Borough', 'RBKC', 'the Council,') and to which I have access and with which I am familiar and which I believe to be accurate.
3. I will be referring to documents exhibited in my original statement. These will be labelled RFM/1 etc. Any documents I exhibit for the first time to this statement will be labelled RFM2/1 etc and detailed in an index at the end of my statement.

## QUESTION 1

4. I have been asked what my understanding was of the objectives of the Grenfell Tower refurbishment project. The report, dated May 2012 by the Director of Housing, (exhibited as RFM/9 in my original statement), set out the objectives for the refurbishment. My understanding of the objectives of the project derived from this report, as I explained at paragraph 46 of my original statement.
  
5. I have also been asked whether I had any knowledge of the project or the budget prior to the report presented by Laura Johnson, Director of Housing, in May 2012, or had any discussions about the project with anyone from the TMO or council officers prior to the report being presented by Laura Johnson. I became aware of the potential refurbishment at Grenfell Tower through an informal discussion with Councillor Coleridge in March 2012. Because of my interest in regeneration generally and because I was aware the Council had previously commissioned a study on potential regeneration of the Lancaster West estate, of which Grenfell Tower formed a part, by Urban Initiatives, I remember asking Councillor Coleridge whether the refurbishment would hinder or obstruct any future potential regeneration of the whole Lancaster West estate. He suggested that we meet with Laura Johnson to discuss this question. In an email to Laura Johnson dated 26 March 2012 (exhibited as RFM2/1), Councillor Coleridge said, 'I would appreciate a meeting for say 1 hour, with yourself, myself and Cllr Feilding-Mellen to discuss the longer term prospects for Lancaster West, and the prospects of redevelopment generally of our housing stock. He is particularly interested in the sense of refurbishing Grenfell Tower and whether this would in any way impact on future redevelopment of LW.' This meeting took place on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2012. My recollection is that Laura Johnson explained the pressing need for the Grenfell Tower refurbishment project. She also assured me the project would not necessarily stop a future regeneration of the wider Lancaster West estate. I do not remember discussing the project budget at this meeting. In an email the same day, I said to Laura Johnson, 'I acknowledge all the points you make and am glad to hear you are keeping the bigger, longer-term potential in mind,' (RFM2/2).
  
6. Together with the rest of the Cabinet, I was then sent the Cabinet report proposing the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower a week or so before the Cabinet meeting in May 2012,

which indicated the budget for the project, but prior to this I do not remember having any specific knowledge of the project details or its budget. I do not remember having any discussions about the project with anyone from the TMO before the Cabinet meeting in May 2012.

7. I have also been asked whether I had any specific role in relation to the approval of the budget for the project and about my contribution to the discussion regarding the proposed budget. At that time, my role as the Cabinet Member for Civil Society meant I was part of the Cabinet collectively deciding whether or not to approve the budget recommended for this project in Laura Johnson's report. Beyond that, I had no other specific role in relation to the approval of the budget, nor do I remember making any contribution to the discussion regarding the proposed budget.
8. I have also been asked whether I recall any views expressed by other members of the Cabinet in relation to the budget. I believe that the decision in relation to approving the project (including the recommended budget) was unanimous amongst the Cabinet members and cannot recall anyone raising any differing views in relation to the budget at the time.

## QUESTION 2

9. I have been asked to detail any discussions I had with representatives of the TMO or any council officers prior to the decision in July 2013 to increase the budget from £6.9m up to £9.7m, and what my contribution was to those discussions. Having only just been appointed as the new Cabinet Member for Housing, Property and Regeneration in May 2013, this was one of my first tasks in that role. As far as I can recall, the first time I was made aware of the need to increase the budget for the Grenfell Tower refurbishment was at a Housing Policy Board meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013 (the minutes of which are exhibited as RFM2/3). We discussed the Quarterly Budget Monitoring report (exhibited as RFM2/4) being taken to the July Cabinet meeting, asking for an increase to the Grenfell Tower refurbishment budget. Faye Edwards and Yvonne Birch were present at the meeting, as representatives of the TMO, along with council officers Laura Johnson, Roger Keane, Amanda Johnson, Steve Mellor and Asha Gupta. The minutes also note that Ella Duggan and John Parkes were present, but I do not recall which



organisation they worked for. As the minutes show, I asked Laura Johnson for an explanation as to why this increase in budget was being sought. “Cllr Feilding-Mellen queried increasing the budget provision for improving Grenfell Tower to £9.7m. Laura Johnson said the Council has not spent any money on maintaining the building in over 30 years and the capital receipt from Elm Park Gardens has been set aside to undertake the works.” It then went to Cabinet and based on the feedback I had received from Laura Johnson, I supported her recommendation, which the Cabinet then approved.

10. I have also been asked whether I recall any views expressed by other members of Cabinet in relation to the proposed increase in the budget. I do not recall any dissenting voices. I believe it was a unanimous decision by members of the Cabinet.

### QUESTION 3

11. I have been asked what my view was of the proposed increase in the overall budget to £10.1m and then to £10.3m and whether I expressed these views in Cabinet or to any other individuals. After the increase in the project budget up to £9.7m in July 2013, council officers then brought a draft Cabinet report to a Housing Policy Board meeting on 5 June 2014 asking for another increase in the project budget up to £10.1m (see para 8.3 of the draft Cabinet report at RFM/11 as exhibited in my original statement). We were told that the TMO had negotiated a tender price of £9.7m with Rydon, but that would leave the project without any contingency budget, and so they were asking for an increase in the budget to ensure there was at least £400,000 contingency for the project. During the discussion, I remember being given the impression that £400,000 was a relatively tight contingency for a project of this scale and complexity, and so when it was suggested that a more generous contingency would be £600,000 (bringing the total project budget up to £10.3m), I agreed that the final report to Cabinet should recommend a bigger increase up to that amount. It was my view that it made sense to ask for a larger contingency at that stage, especially given the scale and complexities of this project. The minutes from this Housing Policy Board (exhibited as RFM/12 in my original statement) show, “Policy Board discussed the draft report. Cllr Feilding-Mellen stated that the report needed to explain the increased budget allocation and justify the difference. Policy Board discussed the contingency, not currently provided for – increasing the budget from £9.7m to £10.3m.” When the report was brought to the

Cabinet on 19 June 2014, the higher figure of £10.3m was recommended, thereby giving the project a contingency of £600,000, which I had been advised was reasonable for a project like this. I supported the increase at the Cabinet meeting and the final figure of £10.3m was approved.

12. I have also been asked what my understanding was of the “reduction in the specification” if the additional funding was not approved. At the Housing Policy Board on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2014, I had asked officers to ensure that the final report to Cabinet should make clear to my colleagues the options in front of them and the repercussions of not approving the increase in budget up to £10.3m. As stated in the minutes of that Housing Policy Board (RFM/12), “Cllr Feilding-Mellen also asked that officers outline the list of items that would be lost from the scheme should approval to award the increased budget be not given by Cabinet.” The final version of the report to Cabinet (RFM/13) therefore set out specifically at paragraph 3.2 that, if needed, the reduction in specification would consist of a reduction in the number of planned new flats at Grenfell Tower, or “if the scope of works [was] reduced significantly,” that the scheme would need to be retendered. Therefore, it was my understanding that if Cabinet refused to increase the budget up to £10.3m thereby leaving the project with no contingency, and if there was then an over-run against the budget in one area, which required savings to be found elsewhere within the budget due to the lack of contingency, there could be a reduction in the number of additional social housing units being delivered as part of the project or, worst case scenario, the whole project could potentially need to be retendered. At no point was I or the wider Cabinet warned that the safety of the tower might be put at risk if the increase in budget was not approved. In any case, the Cabinet supported and approved the increase in budget, so I believed the project was then fully funded with a better than originally asked for contingency available.
13. I have also been asked to detail any discussions I had with representatives of the TMO or any council officers regarding the increase in the budget to £10.3m. The minutes of the Housing Policy Board meeting in June 2014 record that the following housing officers were present: Laura Johnson, Steve Mellor, Kitty Mortimer, Ruth Angel and Gillian Tobin. They do not specifically record any TMO officers but I recall that there was also someone from the TMO present, who I think was Peter Maddison, who

explained the issue of contingencies on large scale and complex projects like this. I do not recall any further discussions with any council officers or TMO representatives before approving the increase at Cabinet two weeks later.

#### QUESTION 4

14. I have been asked to detail any meetings I had arising from the email exchanges, which I had previously exhibited in my original statement as RFM/14-38. I met with Peter Maddison and Claire Williams from the TMO and Bruce Sounes from Studio E, on the morning of 15<sup>th</sup> July 2014 at Grenfell Tower to discuss the outstanding planning issues and to view samples of the cladding. The TMO then met with Sarah Scannell from RBKC Planning on the morning of the 17<sup>th</sup> July, but I was unable to attend. As far as I can recall, the meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2014 was the only meeting I attended that arose from the email exchanges I had about the cladding at the time.
15. I have been asked to detail any discussions I had with any person regarding the fixing method for the cladding. I do not recall having any discussions about the fixing method beyond what was discussed in the emails RFM/14-38.
16. I have been asked whether I expressed any views regarding the budget for the cladding as it related to the choice of material or colour. I do not recall expressing any views regarding the budget for the cladding as it related to choice of material or colour.

#### QUESTION 5

17. I have been asked whether I personally drafted the report to the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee (“HPSC”) dated 6<sup>th</sup> November 2014, and who assisted in preparing the report. As explained in paragraph 64 of my original statement, this report was written by council officers but checked and presented to the HPSC by me. I believe the section on Grenfell in the report was drafted by a Housing officer, but I do not know which specific officer drafted it.
18. I have also been asked whether I continued to liaise with planners regarding Grenfell Tower following the emails exhibited as RFM/14-38. I don’t recall having any further



conversations or email exchanges with Planners about the Grenfell Tower refurbishment project after those already exhibited.

19. I have also been asked whether the comment, “The project is on budget and there are no variances to report at present,” was from my own knowledge of the project. As with the rest of the report, this was written by an officer within the Housing team based on their knowledge of the project.
20. I have also been asked whether I continued to have oversight of the budget following the initial approval in 2012. The Cabinet had ultimate control over how funding within the HRA was to be allocated and therefore over the total size of the budget for this project. As the Cabinet member for Housing, Property and Regeneration, I oversaw the total budget increases in 2013 and 2014 and had a role in discussions relating to those budget increases as already described above. Beyond those budget increases, I was kept informed by officers in reports to the HPSC as to how the project was progressing and whether or not it remained “on budget”, but I did not oversee how those total budget figures were broken down, or the detail of how those total budgets were spent.

#### QUESTION 6

21. I have been asked whether I recall any discussions regarding the reports prepared for the HPSC described in paragraphs 68-73 of my original statement, and whether I ever made any further enquiries arising from these reports. These reports, TMO Performance Reviews and TMO Performance Agreements, covering the periods between 2013 and 2017, provided councillors with reassurances that the TMO was being monitored and was meeting specific Key Performance Indicators. Along with other councillors, I may have asked specific questions arising from these reports at the relevant meetings, but I cannot now remember any specific enquiries or discussions arising from these reports.

Statement of Truth

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

I am willing for my statement to the Public Inquiry to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and for it to be published on the Inquiry's web site.

Full name: Rock Feilding-Mellen

Position or office held: Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Housing, Property & Regeneration

Signed: 

Date: 26 SEPTEMBER 2019



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<b>Exhibit Number</b>	<b>Date of Exhibit</b>	<b>Brief details of Exhibit</b>	<b>FORT number</b>	<b>URN number</b>
RFM2/1	26 March 2012	Email from Councillor Coleridge to Laura Johnson and Rock Feilding-Mellen, with subject: 'Lancaster West estate & regeneration.'	FORT01213812	Uploaded via Egress
RFM2/2	25 April 2012	Email from Rock Feilding-Mellen to Laura Johnson, with subject: 'RE: Thank you.'	FORT01059851	RBK00028392
RFM2/3	4 July 2013	Housing Policy Board minutes	FORT01041962	RBK00003316
RFM2/4	4 July 2013	Quarterly Budget Monitoring report	FORT00418638	RBK00013783