GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SIOBHAN RUMBLE

I, SIOBHAN RUMBLE WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:-

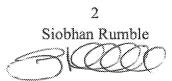
- 1. I make this statement voluntarily to assist the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.
- I understand that I may be called to give evidence at the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry. I hope to be able to assist the Inquiry team in its task of understanding how the fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017 began and how it spread in the manner it did, leading to such devastating loss of life.
- 3. The matters in this statement cover the four years during which I worked for the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organization ("TMO"). While some of the matters discussed are within my direct recollection, I have been provided with documents which I have used to prompt my memory in respect of other matters. I have also not had access to my original documents given the passage of time however I have done my very best to provide a meaningful statement to the Inquiry.
- 4. I would like to start by giving my most sincere condolences to all those affected by the fire. I worked at the Lancaster West Estate for four years and knew many of the residents personally. The loss of life and the impact on the area is completely devastating.

Background and role

- I was the Area Housing Manager for Lancaster West Estate for the TMO from 19
 November 2012 to February 2016.
- 6. I have worked in the housing management industry for thirty years. I began my career at the London Borough of Southwark and then moved to the Sanctuary

I Siobhan Rumble Housing Association where I worked for six years. I then joined Hyde Housing where I was the Head of Income for London and Kent for a further six years. Immediately prior to joining the TMO I worked for the Crawley Borough Council in the Antisocial Behaviour Team.

- 7. In November 2012 I joined the TMO as the Area Housing Manager for Lancaster West Estate. The Lancaster West Estate included Grenfell Tower and what were known as the "finger blocks," being Barandon Walk, Hurstway Walk and Tersterton Walk, in addition to Camelford Walk and Court and Verity Close. Initially I reported to Alastair Manson, however following his departure I reported to Kiran Singh.
- 8. I was based on site at Lancaster West Estate in an office that I shared with Paul Steadman, Robert Regan, Seamus Dunlea, Victoria Marcos, Fumi Gisanran, Janice Jones and Deon Wilks. Victoria was the receptionist/administrative officer and worked at the front desk, Janice and Deon were Estate Officers who assisted me with housing and income, and Robert and Paul were Estate Service Assistants ("ESAs"). Specifically Paul looked after Grenfell Tower and the finger blocks and Robert looked after Verity Close. Seamus Dunlea was the Handyman and assisted with all the odd jobs, in addition to carrying out minor repairs for residents and checking on vulnerable residents. Fumi was an administrative assistant.
- My responsibilities included the day-to-day running of the estate and ensuring that anti-social behaviour was addressed. I was also in charge of the Income Team for the whole of the TMO which meant that I was responsible for ensuring that the TMO received income from rent. The Income Officers were responsible for making sure tenants paid their rent, supporting them if there were rent issues and escalating cases to court where tenants refused to engage and arrears had escalated.
- 10. My role fell below the Board, the Executive Team and the Senior Management Team and it follows that I never attended any of these meetings. I did however attend Lancaster West Estate Management Board open meetings in which we discussed repairs, customer service, properties, rent collection, grounds maintenance, anti-social behaviour and complaints.



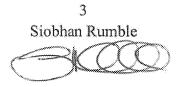
- I was not a member of the Health and Safety Committee. My involvement in health and safety within the TMO was limited to overseeing the health and safety checks carried out by ESAs and dealing with any complaints raised by residents, which could have had a health and safety element to them. If minor issues emerged from these channels I would liaise with the ESAs and the Repairs Direct team to progress them. Occasionally bigger issues emerged which required me to liaise with Janice Wray, the TMO's Health and Safety Advisor. In addition to this, as a manager, I was also responsible for the day-to-day health and safety of my staff.
- 12. During my time at the TMO I would say that for the most part I had a good relationship with the residents of Lancaster West. I cared about them and was very proactive in my approach to managing the Estate. I recall requesting 360 degree feedback from my colleagues which suggested that I was 80% for the tenants as opposed to the organisation.

Grenfell Tower's original design, construction and composition

13. My background is in housing management and I have no technical training or knowledge. I was not employed by the TMO at the time that Grenfell Tower was constructed in 1974. For these reasons I have no knowledge of the design, construction and composition of Grenfell Tower on its completion in 1974 and whether it complied with the relevant building regulations, fire regulations, other legislation, guidance and industry practice.

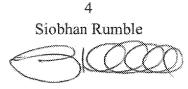
Subsequent modifications prior to the 2012-2016 refurbishment

- 14. Other than the fire door replacement programme, which I discuss below, I am not aware of any other modifications made to Grenfell Tower prior to the 2012-2016 refurbishment.
- 15. The fire door replacement programme took place before I joined the TMO. The only reason I became aware that it had occurred was because I recall the TMO having a lock up unit which stored a significant number of extra doors. I am aware that this programme occurred across the whole RBKC stock and was not specific to Grenfell.



Modifications to the interior of the building between 2012 and 2016

- 16. Between 2012 and 2016 a significant refurbishment project took place at Grenfell Tower. I would describe my involvement in this project as acting as a liaison between the Asset Management and Regeneration Team, who were managing the refurbishment for the TMO, Rydon, who were the contractor undertaking the refurbishment, and the residents.
- 17. As stated earlier, my background is in housing management and I have no training in or knowledge of design or construction. I did not have any technical input into the regeneration works and I did not attend Programme Board meetings or Grenfell Tower Refurbishment Meetings. I did attend the evening consultation meetings for residents which were arranged by the project team. I also attended regular residents meetings and some project meetings in which I offered my opinion on operational matters relating to the works. Despite my attendance at these meetings I was never involved in the technical decision making.
- 18. I understand that the Inquiry has a list of issues which it wishes to be addressed in this statement. However I have limited knowledge of the modifications made to Grenfell Tower and the reasons behind these modifications. I have no knowledge of the relevant regulations, legislation, British Standards, guidance and industry practice that applied to these modifications through the period from initial design to completion and approval or the modifications were compliant with them.
- 19. I have no knowledge of what advice or information was available, and what assessments were made, about the components that comprise the interior of Grenfell Tower, its fire safety, fire resistance and compliance with safety standards. I also have no knowledge of whether specific consideration was given to the combination of the interior components and the fire safety, fire retardancy and compliance with safety standards of the same.
- 20. I also have no knowledge of what factors or motives influenced decisions about the interior of Grenfell Tower or whether any assessments were carried out to balance such factors or motives with the safety of the residents. As stated above, my

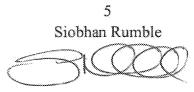


involvement in the project was limited to facilitating communication between Rydon, residents and TMO staff.

- 21. The information I learnt about the refurbishment project would have been from Claire Williams and Paul Dunkerton. Claire and Paul typically only consulted me when they required my assistance in liaising with residents, such as if Rydon needed access to residents' flats. Additionally I occasionally found a meeting taking place in our meeting room at Lancaster West attended by Claire Williams, Rydons and others and so I would ask to sit in despite not initially being invited.
- 22. I do recall being invited to and attending Grenfell Tower evening meetings early on in the project, alongside Mark Anderson, Paul Dunkerton and Bruce Sounes of Studio E. Essentially I was there as a familiar face for the residents and to be the liaison between the residents and those directly involved in the refurbishment.
- 23. I also recall attending communication meetings during the project with Rydon and TMO staff for the purpose of discussing the various methods by which the TMO and Rydon communicated with each other and residents.

Modifications to the exterior of Grenfell Tower between 2012 and 2016 (including cladding and insulation)

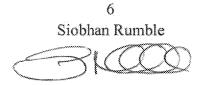
- 24. As stated earlier, my background is in housing management and I have no training or knowledge of design or construction. My involvement in the Grenfell Tower refurbishment was limited to facilitating communications between Rydon, residents and the TMO. I had no involvement in the design or construction aspects of the project.
- 25. It follows that I had no involvement in decisions about modifications to the exterior of Grenfell Tower or what motivated them. I have no knowledge of the design, manufacture, composition and method of fixing the cladding to Grenfell Tower. I also have no knowledge of the extent that the design and construction of the modifications to the exterior took into account the design and construction of the interior of the building.



26. I have no knowledge of whether the exterior of Grenfell Tower was compliant with relevant building regulations, fire regulations, other legislation, British Standards. This is something I would expect the designers of the building and Building Control to have knowledge of.

The fire and safety measures within Grenfell Tower at 14 June 2017

- 27. I cannot comment on the fire safety measures in place at Grenfell Tower at the time of the fire as I left the organisation in February 2016.
- 28. My knowledge of the fire safety measures at Grenfell Tower was derived mostly from my oversight of the health and safety inspections carried out by the Estate Service Assistants, which I discuss in more detail later in this statement.
- 29. Specifically, I am aware that prior to the refurbishment, Grenfell Tower had fire alarms, fire extinguishers, a ventilation system, communal fire doors, lifts and emergency lighting. I am also aware that there was a Fire Brigade drop key which could be used by the ESA's or the fire brigade to open the lift doors. There used to be a concierge at Grenfell Tower, however, a cost benefit discussion took place with residents about this service and it was agreed that the service would be removed and the service charges lowered.
- 30. I do not have a technical or fire safety background and therefore I am unable to comment on whether the fire safety measures in Grenfell Tower were compliant with relevant building regulations, fire regulations, British Standards and other legislation, guidance and industry practice.
- There was an independent Fire Risk Assessor for the TMO called Carl Stokes. While I would occasionally see Carl Stokes on the Estate carrying out his inspections, I rarely spoke to him. My impression was that Carl was very thorough in his inspections as his FRA's generated a lot of work for us. Janice Wray would generate spreadsheets of actions arising from the FRAs which she would send to me and I would assign out to the ESAs.



- 32. I recall that the actions arising from the FRAs which we were asked to complete typically related to matters such as furniture being left in communal areas. ESA's were required to check communal self door closers as part of their inspections and I recall there were a few times where a closer was broken or took too long to close. These would have been picked up by the ESA's and we would have dealt with it immediately.
- 33. As soon as the ESA's reported back to me that an action had been completed, I would advise Janice Wray and she would mark the action as complete in her database. My impression was that Janice took this work very seriously and was in regular contact with us about FRA actions as she would have to report to a corporate group.
- 34. I did not review the FRAs completed by Carl Stokes, only those specific actions that were allocated to me by Janice Wray.
- 35. I have been asked for the purpose of this statement whether I had any specific knowledge of the ways in which Grenfell Tower was intended to be resistant to fire spread, I do not have a technical background and therefore I would have no knowledge of this. I also have no knowledge of what was assumed about the resistance of Grenfell Tower in relation to fire spread.
- 36. I have no knowledge of what decisions were made about fire safety measures at Grenfell Tower or who made them and when. Other than the system of fire risk assessments and actions I have described above, I have no further knowledge of the chain of decision making in respect of fire safety.
- 37. I am aware that Grenfell Tower had a "Stay Put" strategy. I am also aware that there was a spreadsheet recording information about vulnerable residents. I knew this because one time when the lift was being refurbished, we visited the vulnerable persons list to see if they needed any assistance. The vulnerable persons list was already in existence when I joined the TMO and could be found electronically on our internal system. Janice Jones or Deon Wilkes would add residents to this list if needed.

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Inspections

- The ESAs were always out on the Estate carrying out inspections. They were required to carry out weekly health and safety checks, the results of which were recorded manually on inspection sheets until handheld devices were issued. Matters that had to be checked on a weekly basis included, but were not limited to:
 - a. Whether the lift was operating correctly;
 - b. Whether the lift car lights were working;
 - c. Whether the staircase lights were working;
 - d. Whether the internal areas were free of obstructions and combustible materials;
 - e. Whether the communal fire doors and chute room doors were functioning correctly; and
 - Whether the Fire Brigade drop key was working correctly.
- 39. I am aware that there were fire alarms in the Tower because the Estate Service Assistants were required to check these alarms as part of their weekly inspections. This was not recorded in the inspection checklists as there was a separate blue book which was kept in this office and recorded this information. I would check this book frequently and chase up the ESA's if they had not done it. However this was not an issue as the ESAs would regularly check the fire alarms and make a record of the date.
- 40. The ESAs were also required to carry out monthly health and safety checks of the Estate. Matters that had to checked on a monthly basis included:
 - Whether the lift alarm system was working;
 - Whether any known detection/extraction or ventilation systems was good working order;
 - c. Whether the emergency lighting had been tested and was in working order;

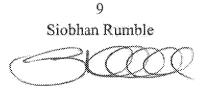
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- d. Whether fire extinguishers had been tested in the last 12 months and were free from tampering/discharge (ESAs were also required to record the next date for servicing of the fire extinguishers); and
- e. Whether the block had passed the inspection.
- 41. In addition to the independent inspections carried out by Carl Stokes, I also recall the London Fire Brigade being on site and carrying out familiarisation visits at Grenfell Tower. However, I did not oversee these visits and I did not liaise with the LFB at all.

Governance/Management

- 42. If a health and safety issue ever came to my attention I would refer it to Janice Wray, who was the TMO's Health and Safety Advisor. I recall Janice was always very helpful.
- 43. I have been asked for the purposes of this statement to set out my knowledge and understanding of any other fires that occurred at Grenfell Tower or other buildings under the authority of the RBKC.
- 44. While I cannot recall any fires at Grenfell Tower or any other buildings under the authority of the RBKC, I do recall that in 2013 there were a series of power surges at the Tower which meant that some residents were temporarily out of power or suffered damage to electrical appliances.
- 45. I have been shown a document recording that on 17 June 2013 I attended a Grenfell Tower evening meeting with Peter Maddison, Paul Dunkerton, Bruce Sounes, Philip Booth and residents in which Peter provided an update to residents on the power surges (SR/I, '17 June 2013 Notes from Grenfell Tower evening meeting':

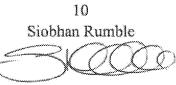
 (a) Specifically, Peter advised that the TMO's understanding was that the surges were linked to a damaged cable in the mains supply which had been rectified. He further advised that the TMO was continuing to monitor the situation and investigate whether other factors had contributed.



46. I recall that TMO staff also visited all of the flats affected by the power surges and recorded any reported damage. These affected residents were contacted by a Lancaster West Estate Officer with details about how to make an insurance claim and given monetary compensation from the TMO for the inconvenience caused by the surges.

Communication with residents

- 47. In my view, during the 2012-2016 refurbishment project at Grenfell Tower there was a significant amount of resident consultation. I have endeavoured to outline specific examples of this below, however, I am confident that more consultation took place than what I can recall.
- Throughout the project, the TMO regularly produced newsletters to residents which contained information on upcoming events, the background to and progress of the project and the findings of recent resident feedback exercises. I did not draft these newsletters, however, I recall that they contained the contact details for Paul Dunkerton, the Project Manager, Mark Anderson as the Director of Assets and Regeneration and myself as the Area Manager for Lancaster West (for example, SR/2, '15 July 2012 Grenfell Tower Regeneration Project newsletter': TMO10001394). These newsletters were initially produced by the TMO, however, when Rydon was appointed the newsletter became a joint venture and a Rydon Liaison Officer called Christina Stephanou drafted them. To the best of my knowledge, each newsletter was hand delivered.
- We also held resident meetings on a regular basis throughout the regeneration project. I have been shown a document which records that on 29 May 2012 I attended a Grenfell Tower evening meeting with Mark Anderson, Paul Dunkerton, Bruce Sounes and residents of Grenfell Tower (SR/3, '29 May 2012 Notes from Grenfell Tower evening meeting: TMO10001401). In this meeting Mark provided residents with a brief on how the regeneration project was to be developed and funded. He then introduced Bruce as being from Studio E architects and a question and answer session followed. The minutes show that this meeting concluded with Mark assuring residents that the questionnaire they had been given



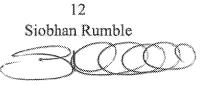
sought information on how residents wanted to be involved and how they would like to move forward with future consultation.

- I have been shown a project newsletter recording that a resident consultation session occurred in October 2012 (SR/4, '14 May 2013 Grenfell Tower Regeneration Project newsletter':), prior to the Planning Application being submitted at the end of 2012. Following this, my understanding is that the Planners asked the designers to review some aspects of the design and submit a new application. We therefore hosted a further drop in session on 17 June 2013 for Grenfell Residents to meet the Project Team and give feedback on a revised design before it was submitted to Planning for approval in the summer of 2013.
- We also scheduled a series of Resident Consultation Meetings in the evenings at the EMB Rooms on 19 September, 31 October and 12 December 2013 and hosted a drop in session on 14 August 2013 for residents to come and look at the revised plans and ask questions of the Project Manager Paul Dunkerton, who was available all day. The details of these meetings were published in the regeneration newsletter, including an agenda of matters to be discussed (SR/5, '30 July 2013 Grenfell Tower Regeneration Project newsletter':
- In Grenfell Tower evening meetings, we provided residents with project updates and listened to resident concerns about the work. We also discussed particular aspects of the refurbishment with residents, such as heating and windows and answered resident concerns about these matters. At some of these meetings Rydon produced samples of cladding materials, design options for the windows and information on the proposed heating system (for example, SR/6, 'October 2013 Grenfell Tower Regeneration Project newsletter':).
- 53. The feedback received from residents meetings was circulated to all households in a meeting report, the key points of which were highlight in the regeneration newsletters.
- I am not aware when the Grenfell Compact was established, however I recall that it arose following an agreement between representatives of the estate and the TMO as to how residents would be involved in decisions affecting their homes.

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- I recall that in around December 2012 we had concern that communications from a select few residents were seeking to represent all residents of Grenfell Tower. We informed residents of this in a Grenfell Tower Regeneration Project newsletter dated 20 December 2012 and encouraged residents to contact us directly with questions and comments (SR/7, '20 December 2012 Grenfell Tower Regeneration Project newsletter':

 (a) We used this newsletter as an opportunity to remind residents that we would continue to communicate with, and listen to, them via individual letters, newsletters, drop-in sessions, evening meetings and one to one meetings should they request one.
- 56. Below I set out my knowledge of what concerns, warnings and other statements were expressed about the fire safety of Grenfell Tower before, during or after the 2012-2016 renovations.
- 57. Resident complaints at Lancaster West made their way to us through various channels. There was a specific email address monitored by the Complaints Team which residents could send their complaints to, a Customer Service Centre, a website, a Freephone telephone number and a noticeboard in the Tower. My recollection is that most of the complaints I was aware of arose when a resident would come into the Lancaster West Estate Office in person and request repairs or report anti-social behaviour.
- I have been asked for the purposes of this statement whether I recall residents complaining of fire safety issues very often. The answer is that complaints of this nature were uncommon. I do recall residents' complaining during the refurbishment project about contractors and residents parking along Grenfell Road and the dumping of bulk rubbish in the communal areas of Grenfell Tower. We appreciated that these two issues did create a potential fire risk and therefore we were very proactive in dealing with them.
- 59. I have also been asked for the purposes of this statement if I was aware that there was a blog written by the Grenfell Action Group that raised concerns about fire safety at Grenfell. I was aware of this blog.



- 60. I do recall several blog posts concerning access to Grenfell Tower in early 2013 because they spoke of me personally in a way that I found offensive and inaccurate. Specifically, the Grenfell Action Group complained that vehicular access to Grenfell Tower was restricted due to obstructions arising from the loss of the Lancaster Road carpark during the KALC project (SR/8: TMO10017466). The author of the post wrote that after several unfruitful attempts to engage with me, I was badgered into inviting the local Station Manager from the LFB to visit the Tower on 20 December 2012. The author also wrote that I had ignored requests for the contact details of the Station Officer who attended that day.
- 61. I remember being very surprised when I read this blog entry because I had gone to great lengths to try and resolve the issue of illegal parking as I understood why residents had concerns. I first tried to discourage people from parking in that location by putting warnings stickers on the windows of their vehicles, however, many of the residents and contractors simply ignored these signs. I then hired a local mechanic to tow the cars whose owners had ignored the warnings, however one of my line managers required that this arrangement cease. After that I felt like I had done everything I could to address this issue.
- 62. Another blog entry I have been shown was published by the Grenfell Action Group on 24 January 2016 (SR/9, '24 January 2016 Grenfell Action Group: Grenfell Tower still a Fire Risk':

 1. This blog entry included complaints that I had been slow to react to accumulating rubbish in the Tower and had not bothered to remedy it. The TMO's cleaning company called OCS used to clear bulk rubbish from all TMO sites three times a week. Unfortunately, over the weekend when the cleaners did not attend residents would leave their rubbish in the foyer.
- 63. I considered the blog entry to be unfair because again I had gone to great lengths to address the issue for the residents. I had spoken to the Housing Officer and increased the frequency of inspections in the area to ensure that it was maintained free of obstruction. I had also sat down with Janice Jones to watch the CCTV footage from the Tower and wrote letters to all residents warning them that if they continued to dispose of their rubbish in that way we would invoice them directly as it was not fair that all residents had to pay this through their service charges.

Fire advice given to residents between 2012 and 14 June 2017

I believe that the stay put policy was widely known however I have no further knowledge of what advice was given to Grenfell Tower residents about fire precautions. The provision of this type of information did not fall into my responsibilities, although I would expect it was provided for by the Health and Safety team. It follows that I am not aware of whether it was periodically reviewed.

65. I have been asked to set my out my knowledge of whether there were evacuation plans in place at Grenfell Tower and if so, what they were. Though it was not my responsibility to inform residents of this type of information, understanding was that the "Stay Put" policy was widely known throughout the residents of Grenfell Tower.

Conclusion

- 66. I make this statement voluntarily to assist the Grenfell Tower Inquiry.
- I understand that I may be called to give evidence at the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry. I hope to be able to assist the Inquiry team in its task of understanding how the fire at Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017 began and how it spread in the manner it did, leading to such devastating loss of life.
- 68. The matters in this statement cover the period during which I worked for the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organization ("TMO"). I have done my very best to provide a meaningful statement to the Inquiry.
- 69. I would like to again provide my most sincere condolences to all those affected by the fire. I worked at the Lancaster West Estate for four years, knew, and cared about many of the residents personally. The loss of life and the impact on the area is completely devastating.

I confirm this statement to be true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

14 Siobhan Rumble I confirm that I am willing for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and published on the Inquiry's website.

Signed:

Dated: <u>8/2/19</u>