

IN A MATTER CONCERNING THE GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF GRAHAM WEBB

1. I make this statement to the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry in response to a written request for evidence dated 24 October 2018. This is my second statement to the Inquiry and is made further to my statement dated 23 August 2018.
2. I was Managing Director of Repairs Direct Ltd from January 2016 until November 2017 which included an initial probationary period.
3. My career background is in high volume operational team management. I have experience in largely managing operational teams, primarily blue collar. Early in my career I spent a year in social housing repairs and maintenance and I spent five years working at Heathrow of which two years were spent managing the security staff and customer services at two of the terminals. I have also worked in the industrial services sector for a company that had a manufacturing and logistics distribution element to them, and I have worked for a construction plant hire company. In all these roles, the focus has been on ensuring operational and cost efficiency, improved productivity and good customer service.
4. Repairs Direct Ltd was a wholly owned subsidiary of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisations (TMO).
5. The Board of Repairs Direct consisted of 5 members: myself as Managing Director, Sacha Jevans Executive Director for Operations at TMO, Barbara Mathews Director of Finance, ICT (Information, Communication and Technology) and Safety for TMO, Eman Yosry a resident, and a non-executive director and Chair Paul Mains who was appointed in March 2016.

6. As Managing Director of Repairs Direct, I reported to Sacha Jevans who in turn reported to Robert Black, Chief Executive of TMO.
7. Soon after I joined Repairs Direct, I developed a plan to implement a number of initiatives for Repairs Direct which had to be signed off by both the Repairs Direct board and TMO board. This was borne out of a feeling when I joined Repairs Direct that the company had no vision of where the business was going and there were a number of vacancies in the business.
8. I sought to strengthen the management team by recruiting people into roles that were filled on an interim basis or were vacant. In time, Samuel Hart was recruited into the role of Commercial Director and Derrick Singleton into the role of Operations Director in order to strengthen the management tier. The position of Service Manager whose role was to manage the planners and administration, was also filled. We also recruited planners and Repairs Direct's own Health and Safety Manager.
9. I joined at a time when there were up to 4,000 repair jobs outstanding that needed to be closed off. A key consideration of mine was to improve and protect the day to day core services being provided to residents which was always at the forefront of our minds, and that included closing off the outstanding jobs which involved getting staff to work at weekends.
10. In addition, I obtained investment for Repairs Direct to launch the commercial services arm to improve the services being provided to residents. For instance, we started offering evening appointments and Saturday morning appointments for plumbing and carpentry repairs for tenants; the highest demanded trades. We expanded the workforce by two operatives and an extra member of staff in the office so that we did not drain the resources that were devoted to the provision of core services.
11. I looked at ways of making the company more efficient in relation to productivity, improved repair timescales and improved customer services. We did appear to be successful in these aims in that we assessed the average time that it took between a fault being reported and repaired, and within the first year we had reduced that time from 15 working days to 12 working days.

12. Another initiative was to promote paid services to leaseholders, in TMO managed properties, who were responsible for repairs in their own properties, and we did a small trial on two estates in Chelsea. This was about to be rolled out into a borough wide opportunity for plumbing, carpentry and electrical services when the Grenfell Tower fire happened.
13. Another aim was to energise and engage the workforce in what Repairs Direct were trying to achieve with its customer services operation.
14. As Managing Director, I attended resident association meetings when invited, which was maybe 6-8 times a year, and other members of TMO would also attend when invited. I also attended about 6 resident panel meetings which are regional collectives of the Resident Association Chairs from all over the borough. I attended TMO resident engagement days of which the main focus was to show that we were accessible to the residents.
15. The core services provided by Repairs Direct were plumbing, carpentry and electrical services with plastering, painting and decorating services also being provided. Specialist sub-contractors were used for more complex or lower volume repairs such as drainage, roofing, scaffolding, asbestos removal.
16. The work of Repairs Direct was to repair and replace like for like and was entirely reactive to reports or requests for repair raised by residents in residential housing managed by TMO in the borough. Repairs Direct did not carry out routine preventative maintenance and inspections.
17. Repairs Direct had no involvement in design or upgrade which were matters for the Asset and Regeneration Team within TMO. Planned programmes of work would be let out through their framework contractors. In latter months, Repairs Direct began to bid for some of the smaller lots of work being tendered by the TMO, as part of the commercial expansion of the business.
18. In relation to the replacement of kitchens and bathrooms, if it were felt that a kitchen or bathroom was in poor state, Repairs Direct could suggest to TMO that it could carry out

that replacement work and on occasions, it did carry out replacement of kitchens and bathrooms but this was more one off.

19. I recall during my time as Managing Director, there was an ongoing government initiative to improve the standard of social housing and TMO had an established programme of work for properties that required replacements of kitchens and/or bathrooms as part of that initiative. That work was let through the Capital or Asset Management Team and not through Repairs Direct.
20. In relation to tenanted properties that were 'void' or empty, Repairs Direct would be asked to do whatever work was required to ensure the property met the agreed lettable standard. This involved the Repairs Direct workforce conducting any necessary maintenance work or cleaning in order to achieve a standard good enough for the property to be let. This occasionally included updating the kitchens and bathrooms. Where the leasehold properties were concerned, the involvement was far less, as leaseholders were responsible for their own repairs.
21. Repairs Direct carried out some work in communal areas such as hallways and entrance doors of a minor plastering and repair nature. It did not carry out electrical work which accessed the high voltage supply in common areas. Our work was all about repairs and not full scale planned refurbishments. Therefore, if TMO and the Council wanted all the hallways decorated in any block of flats, that would be a separate phase of work let out through TMO and it would not be for my team to deal with. If, however, a leak in a communal area caused a patch on a wall that required re-plastering and painting, my team would deal with that piece of work.
22. A person wishing to report a defect for repair in their property could do so by contacting TMO on the Freephone number. A request would be raised on the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system with its own job identification number, which interfaced with Repairs Direct scheduling system, and it would be scheduled in for repair on a specified date.
23. If a fault were found following an estate inspection by TMO, they would raise the repair themselves, which, depending on the nature of the repair involved, could come to my team.

24. A repair that had not been fixed adequately could lead to a recall which involved another member of the team being sent to the property to look at the job and carry out the repair. About 1% of all jobs raised with Repairs Direct resulted in a recall. If a resident wished to report an issue concerning the quality of repair or the conduct of staff, they could do so through the Freephone number and a more senior member of staff or a surveyor, might be assigned to deal with it including attending at the property to assess the repair and whether it had been done to an adequate standard.
25. A resident could raise a formal complaint about a repair through the TMO Complaints team which would then be dealt with as part of the formal complaints procedure of which there were three stages. Catherine Dack was the Complaints Manager of TMO. That complaint would initially be passed to my team for investigation and for a reply to be drafted. The next two stages would follow if the resident felt the initial response was inadequate. I do not know how many Stage 2 complaints I saw but it did not happen frequently. From memory, I may have dealt with about 6 Stage 2 complaints, of which a couple moved on to Stage 3.
26. As Managing Director of Repairs Direct, I visited Grenfell Tower on a couple of occasions. I had no personal knowledge of the design, construction and composition of the building. I had no involvement with the refurbishment project which was already underway when I joined, including involvement with any issues that may have been raised by residents arising from the refurbishment works which I expect were raised through and dealt with by the refurbishment project team. If residents reported an issue through the standard freephone number, the call centre would have passed that issue to the team who managed the refurb project.
27. I had no involvement with fire safety measures within Grenfell Tower except that Repairs Direct may be called out to respond to jobs raised as a consequence of fire risk assessments or inspections.
28. TMO was responsible for fire safety management at Grenfell Tower with the support of the borough and the Fire Service. If inspections resulted in the need for repairs, some of those could be scheduled for my team to do, depending on the nature of the work.

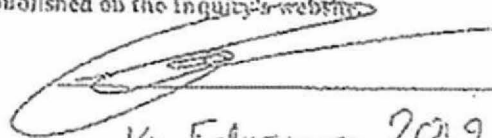
29. Fire safety inspection related repairs, where the activity fell to Repairs Direct to rectify, were managed in a direct process from the Health and Safety team at TMO into my team and they were tracked so there will be a full audit trail of these repairs. Janice Wray was in charge of the TMO Health and Safety team. If they conducted a fire safety inspection with the fire service and there were any related repairs, she would commission them for my team to do, if that was the appropriate course of action, but some repairs would go to other contractors. I do not know how often the inspections occurred and I have no detailed knowledge of the fire safety measures, nor know of any complaints in relation to defective fire safety measures or management at Grenfell Tower.
30. One issue arising from a fire risk assessment that Repairs Direct became involved in concerned agreeing a fire door specification for all replacement flat doors and installation programme for self-closers on those doors relating to Adair Tower and Hazelwood Tower only. This did not involve door replacement or installation of self-closers on doors in Grenfell Tower. There had been a government initiative about door closers on all high rise accommodation prior to Grenfell, which from memory, was as a result of a recommendation from London Fire Brigade (LFB). The boroughs were challenging this with the government and LFB, but I had been asked to quote for a 3 year programme to install across the borough. After Grenfell, I was asked to re-visit this quote to complete these works within 6 months.
31. I am aware that during the planned refurbishment works, residents expressed concern about the cladding and refurbishment programme and there was discussion with the Council, and a number of meetings were held with those residents and the resident association, however neither I nor my team were involved with that work. I do not have first-hand knowledge of those concerns. There was a whole refurbishment programme of work that included the cladding of the tower, changing it from communal heating, there were glazing elements, creating new flats, plus other work, and as part of that programme, I was aware that some residents had raised concerns around safety. I had no involvement with that work or with those discussions.
32. I received an email from Janice Wray on 19 April 2017 in which she forwarded an email and letter she received from LFB via the Council concerning fire spread on external cladding ("GW/1:TMO100016600"). The letter arose out of a fire at Shepherds Court in August 2016. I had no involvement with the investigations carried out following that fire

and I believe I was forwarded the email and letter for information. I had no involvement with cladding.

The contents of this statement are true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I am content for this statement to form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and published on the Inquiry's website.

Signed:

Dated:


14 February 2019

From: Janice Wray </O=KC TMO/OU=FIRST ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JWRAY>
 To: Alex Bosman, Anthony Cheney, Derrick Singleton, Graham Webb, Julie Selhep, Peter Maddison, Samuel Hart, Shannon MacInnes
 Cc: Adrian Bowman, Barbara Matthews
 Sent: April 19, 2017 5:03:00 PM BST
 Received: April 19, 2017 5:03:00 PM BST
 Attachments: TMO_E_00016601.jpg, TMO_E_00016602.jpg, TMO_E_00016603.pdf, TMO_E_00016605.jpg, TMO_E_00016604.jpg

Subject: FW: Letter from LFB | External Fire Spread

From: Janice Wray </O=KC TMO/OU=FIRST ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=JWRAY>
 To: Peter Maddison, Julie Selhep, Alex Bosman, Anthony Cheney, Graham Webb, Derrick Singleton, Samuel Hart, Shannon MacInnes
 Cc: Barbara Matthews, Adrian Bowman
 Sent: April 19, 2017 5:03:21 PM BST
 Received: April 19, 2017 5:03:22 PM BST
 Attachments: image007.jpg, image009.jpg, LFB External Fire Spread - AC Daly - Kensington and Chelsea.pdf, image001.jpg, image008.jpg

Hi all

FYI - Please see attached letter from the LFB regarding external cladding and glazing

Regards

Janice

Janice Wray
 TMO Health, Safety & Facilities Manager
 t: [REDACTED]
 <<http://www.kctmo.org.uk/>>
 w: www. <<http://www.kctmo.org.uk/>> kctmo.org.uk

a: 292a Kensal Road, London, W10 5BE.

P Before printing, please think about the environment

From: Johnson, Laura: HS-Housing: RBKC [mailto:Laura.Johnson@rbkc.gov.uk]
 Sent: 19 April 2017 16:56
 To: Robert Black <rblack@kctmo.org.uk>; Janice Wray <jwray@kctmo.org.uk>
 Subject: FW: Letter from LFB | External Fire Spread

fyi

Director of Housing

Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea

Town Hall, Hornton Street, W8 7NX

Email: laura.johnson@rbkc.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7361 2362

From: HANNAH.LOUGHER@london-fire.gov.uk
<<mailto:HANNAH.LOUGHER@london-fire.gov.uk>>
[<mailto:HANNAH.LOUGHER@london-fire.gov.uk>] On Behalf Of
dan.daly@london-fire.gov.uk <<mailto:dan.daly@london-fire.gov.uk>>
Sent: 06 April 2017 14:27
To: Johnson, Laura: HS-Housing: RBKC <Laura.Johnson@rbkc.gov.uk>
<<mailto:Laura.Johnson@rbkc.gov.uk>> >
Subject: Letter from LFB | External Fire Spread

Dear Mrs. Johnson,

For your information, please find attached a letter regarding our advice relating to the issue of external fire spread.

A hard copy of this letter will follow in the post.

Thank you.

Kind regards,

Hannah Lougher

PA to Assistant Commissioner Dan Daly

London Fire Brigade HQ | 169 Union Street | SE1 OLL

M: [REDACTED]

T: [REDACTED]

E: hannah.lougher@london-fire.gov.uk

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Mrs Laura Johnson
Director of Housing
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London Fire Brigade is run by the
London
Fire and Emergency Planning
Authority

Date 6 April 2017

Dear Mrs. Johnson,

TALL BUILDINGS – EXTERNAL FIRE SPREAD

The fire at Shepherd's Court in Hammersmith on 19 August 2016 received widespread coverage in the media, in the main because the cause of the fire was due to a faulty appliance that was subject to a product recall, an issue which the London Fire Brigade has been campaigning on. However, I am also drawing this fire to your attention to highlight the external spread of the fire that occurred.

My predecessor, Assistant Commissioner Steve Turek, wrote to housing providers in March 2009 about a variety of matters relating to fire safety in residential housing blocks. One of those matters was replacement double glazing and the associated replacement of spandrel and filler panels on the external faces of blocks of flats with floors above 18 meters in height. In the case of this fire, we believe such panels were a contributory factor to the external fire spread.

We have seen a number of cases where it appears, on the basis of the information available to us, that the level of fire protection to the external face of the building did not comply with the requirements of Part B of the Building Regulations insofar as they seek to limit the speed with which a fire can travel and spread over the external face of a building or may contribute to a fire.

Testing of panels has found that the combustibility of the composition of the panels at Shepherd's Court did not meet the levels expected for conformity with the building regulations. On testing it was found that panels may deform or delaminate exposing any combustible core or constituent material resulting in the panel becoming involved in the fire and allowing the fire to spread and enter flats other than the flat of origin of the fire.

In many instances, how these panels came to be used is not clear due to the length of time since installation. However, we have noted that the glazing used in such replacements has usually been subject to certification under a Competent Persons Scheme for building regulations compliance. It may have been assumed that the spandrel and in-fill panes were also covered by the certification. Our understanding is that these Competent Person Schemes in fact only cover glazing, roof lights and doors containing more than 50 per cent glazing. It is of note that guidance to support some Competent Person Schemes does not mention the need to ensure compliance with section B4 (External Fire Spread) of the Building Regulations and instead focused solely on use of windows as means of escape in case of fire.

In the light of fires that have occurred, I would urge you to consider carefully your arrangements for specifying, monitoring and approving all aspects of future replacement and improvement to building facades and construction of new buildings for which you are responsible. Contracts for the provision and installation of replacement elements of building facades, including insulation, replacement double