

Date: 18/02/2013 13:38:18
From: Jane Clifton
To: Janice Wray , Ricki Sams
CC: Siobhan Rumble , Alasdair Manson , (T) Complaints
Subject: FW: Fire safety at Lancaster West
Attachments:

From: Cllr.Blakeman@rbkc.gov.uk [mailto:Cllr.Blakeman@rbkc.gov.uk]

Sent: 18 February 2013 12:02

To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED] steven.cunningham@london-fire.gov.uk; Siobhan Rumble; Robert Black; Chiefex@rbkc.gov.uk; Laura.Johnson@rbkc.gov.uk; Janice Wray; Cllr.Coleridge@rbkc.gov.uk; CllrR.Atkinson@rbkc.gov.uk; Cllr.Foreman@rbkc.gov.uk; ColinChiles@Leadbitter.co.uk; LizJeffs@Leadbitter.co.uk
Subject: RE: Fire safety at Lancaster West

Dear Francis

Thank you for this, it is very useful. I have asked for a full and comprehensive report once the emergency fire test at Grenfell Tower has been conducted and also for this to be an item on the Lancaster West EMB meeting agenda. I have also asked for the likely timeframe within which we can expect a response.

Just for your information, I would like to reiterate that the ward councillors are more than willing to address any legitimate concerns and complaints that residents raise with regard to the KALC project and the Grenfell Tower and Verity Close improvement works. What we are no longer prepared to address are complaints that are couched in tendentious, abusive, offensive or bullying terms. Neither will we tolerate visits to our surgery that are conducted in a similar fashion. I believe that Cllr. Coleridge has given out much the same message.

We will also not deal with vexatious complaints that are intended solely to delay the completion of the construction works. We have received and continue to receive a significant amount of feedback from local residents and their most earnest wish is for the project to be completed on time and ideally before time. Most residents do not have the opportunity to leave the area for extended holidays to get away from the disruption.

Kind regards.

Judith

From: Francis O'Connor [mailto:[REDACTED]]

Sent: 18 February 2013 01:24

To: Cllr-Blakeman

Cc: Teresa Miles; Eddie Daffarn; Steve Cunningham; Rumble, Siobhan: RBKCTMO Ltd; Robert Black; Chiefex; Johnson, Laura: HS-Housing; Wray, Janice: RBKCTMO Ltd; Cllr-Coleridge

Subject: Fw: Fire safety at Lancaster West

Dear Judith,

We are grateful for your recent interventions on the Verity Close windows issue, and no less, on the Grenfell Tower fire safety issue, where your intervention appears to have had immediate effect. However, while we welcome the proposed fire safety exercise by LFB at Grenfell Tower we still have doubts that this will fully address the issues at this site.

Please see below our recent correspondence with Steve Cunningham at LFB. I have to say that we found his response disappointing, in particular his advice that we call the police next time we

see vehicles parked illegally in the Grenfell Tower area. This strikes me as more of a fob-off than a genuine response to the issues we raised with regard to repeated obstructions of the emergency access zone by TMO and other service vehicles with the complicity of Lancaster West staff.

We have other concerns, and other evidence, which we have not yet aired. Please see the attached Grenfell Tower Fire Risk Assessment from November 2012, which was supplied to us by Janice Wray some weeks ago. Most of the content is, of course, fairly routine until you get to Page 28 where the following is recorded:

"From the asset records provided to me by the TMO the emergency lighting and fire alarm systems along with the dry riser, fire fighter lifts and the hose reels installed in this building are all subject to a maintenance contracts. Testing, servicing and maintenance is being carried out by professional third party contractors on a planned preventive maintenance programme with records kept centrally by TMO at the "Hub" and by the contractor for all these systems, no test certificates have been seen to confirm this.

RGE Services are under contract to TMO to provide portable fire fighting equipment, testing, servicing and maintenance, the fire extinguisher in this building, the basement boiler room, the lift motor room, the ground floor electrical room plus other areas were out of test date according to the contractors label on the extinguishers. The last test date was on the 8th August 2011. Some located in the roof level areas had "condemned" written on them in large black writing with a last test date of 2009 or 2010. This seems to indicate that monthly occupier inspections are not being carried out.

It is not known if the caretaker is undertaking the monthly occupier's tests of the installed emergency lighting system, fire extinguishers and structural items as per the caretakers check list this would include the external stairs and lift checks with the results being kept as a record of testing having been undertaken."

On the face of it this is alarming evidence of serious ongoing negligence, rendered all the more alarming when considered as part of a history of negligence that in all likelihood stretches back to 2004 and beyond.

I chaired the EMB Property Management Committee in 2004 when we received information that the Grenfell Tower emergency lighting system was in very poor condition, two thirds of the battery backs being dead, and the entire system would have failed in an emergency. We then fought a protracted battle with the TMO for more than a year, during which time they repeatedly denied that there was a problem, or any negligence with regard to inspection and testing of the system. Eventually we badgered them into ordering an independent investigation. This was conducted by Peter West of Capita Symonds. His report, when it was published in May 2005, was a shocking indictment of TMO administration and oversight, and of the electrical contractors whose duty it was to inspect and test the Lancaster West emergency lighting equipment.

The report recommended that all batteries be replaced urgently, and this was done immediately. However, other recommendations appear to have been largely ignored, one of which was that the TMO urgently consider options for replacing the whole system, which was virtually obsolete and unfit for purpose. Another crucial recommendation that appears to have been ignored was that the TMO initiate and enforce in future a far more rigorous testing and inspection regime for fire safety equipment at Lancaster West. The implications of the Capita Symonds report went way beyond Lancaster West and led to a wide ranging review of TMO fire safety procedures throughout the borough. Unfortunately, the lessons of 2004/2005 appear to have soon been forgotten and the culture of negligence at the TMO with regard to fire safety at Lancaster West appears to have reverted to type and to have continued unabated to the present. Please see attached extract from the Capita Symonds report. Unfortunately I no longer have a copy of the full report, but it should still be on file at TMO

We were intending to simply expose these failings on our blog, rather than waste our time and

effort, as we had previously, in non-productive email exchanges with Ms Rumble and Ms Wray, who appear, as far as we can judge, not even to have read the current assessment. However having witnessed more than once your willingness to act on the Grenfell Tower fire safety issue, and the speedier responses your interventions tend to elicit, we have decided to copy this material to you first, in the hope that you can elicit the necessary urgent responses from the responsible authorities.

Incidentally, I note from the account of the recent Trellick Tower exercise that four fire appliances attended on that occasion. We would be very interested to see whether LFB can fit four appliances into the Grenfell Tower emergency access zone, particularly if it is obstructed with multiple parked service vehicles, as it often is during working hours. Given that Lancaster West management and LFB have both dismissed our concerns about such obstructions of the emergency access to Grenfell Tower, we would even dare to suggest that arrangements are made to ensure that a minimum of six service vehicles are intentionally parked in this area, for the duration of the exercise, including three in the galleys-gated area, to test ease of access and manoeuvrability of fire appliances under such circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

Francis O'Connor

----- Original Message -----

From: STEVEN.CUNNINGHAM@london-fire.gov.uk

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: JANE.PHILPOTT2@london-fire.gov.uk ; nicolas.comery@london-fire.gov.uk

Sent: Thursday, January 31, 2013 1:17 PM

Subject: RE: Fire safety at Lancaster West

Dear Mr O'Connor,

Thank you for your emails of your latest posts. I have looked at the photograph you have sent and have asked my Station to pay a visit today to make their own assessment on what they find and to relay this to me. I do hope we can work together, with the TMO as well, to ensure the access to Grenfell Tower is always available to us in an emergency. If at any time the access is blocked by illegally parked or inappropriately parked vehicles then I would advise that you should contact the Police to have the vehicles removed.

I look forward to meeting at some time convenient to yourself to discuss your concerns further. Regarding the likely disruption around the works to be carried out at Grenfell Tower I will speak to my colleague in the Regulatory Fire Safety Team and also the TMO in developing a suitable way forward when the works start.

If I can be of any help in the mean time please feel free to contact me.

Best Regards

Steven Cunningham

Station Manager G27

North Kensington

[REDACTED] p [REDACTED]

From: Francis O'Connor [[mailto:\[REDACTED\]](mailto:[REDACTED])]

Sent: 31 January 2013 00:15

To: CUNNINGHAM, STEVEN

Subject: Fire safety at Lancaster West

Dear Mr Cunningham,

Further to our telephone conversation yesterday afternoon I am writing now just to begin what I hope will be a fruitful dialogue with you on the subject of fire safety in the Grenfell Tower area. Please find the attached photo which was taken on 23rd January and shows two vehicles parked on the tight corner on the final approach to Grenfell Tower, which we discussed in our telephone conversation. The small blue van belongs to the Estate Management Board, and the larger bulk

refuse truck behind it belongs to the cleaning contractors OCS. In our opinion both of these vehicles are likely to obstruct a fire appliance responding to an emergency in the Grenfell Tower area.

Later tonight I will send you a further two emails, which are reproductions of the two most recent posts on our website;

<http://grenfellactiongroup.wordpress.com>

These webpages reproduce the text and accompanying pictures of the web content in question, which I hope will provide you with enough background information and photographic evidence to understand why we are pursuing this issue so vigourously, and some of the difficulties we have had dealing with the authorities at Lancaster West. We tried to deal with this issue by exchanging emails with Ms Rumble at LW, and MS Wray at TMO, and only resorted to the nuclear option (ie embarrassing them publicly via our blog) when we had tried repeatedly but failed to resolve this issue by more conventional (and more confidential) means.

Our campaign will continue until we are satisfied that these issues have been dealt with responsibly.

I told you on the phone that we also have a copy of the most recent (November2012) Fire Risk Assessment for Grenfell Tower and that some of the detail of this is disturbing also. With your permission I intend to copy this document to you and inform you of our concerns regarding some of the failings identified in this report.

In closing, I would like to repeat the assurance I offered you on the phone that we will not quote on our website from any response you make to us, as you have made it very clear that you are not allowed to make public statements on behalf of the LFB. Please rest assured that we will respect your wishes in this regard.

Yours Sincerely,

Francis O'Connor
Grenfell Action Group

For fire safety advice please go to <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/YourSafety.asp>

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No virus found in this incoming message.
Checked by AVG - www.avg.com
Version: 9.0.932 / Virus Database: 2639.1.1/5568 - Release Date: 01/30/13 07:37:00

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