

GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY

WITNESS STATEMENT OF BARBARA MATTHEWS

I, BARBARA MATTHEWS, WILL SAY AS FOLLOWS:-

1. I make this statement to assist the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. I understand that I may be called to give evidence at the Grenfell Tower Inquiry and in doing so I am committed to supporting the Inquiry team in any way I can.
2. The matters in this statement cover the period 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 done my very best to provide a meaningful statement to the Inquiry.

Background and role

3. As at 14 June 2017, I was employed by the TMO as the Executive Director of Financial Services and ICT.
4. My background is in management accounting. I have a degree in Computer Studies and I am a member of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants and a Fellow of the Institute of Management Accountants.
5. I began my career in the commercial sector, working my way up an electronics company over sixteen years to the position of Financial Controller. Following this, I held a number of senior finance roles in various private businesses. I subsequently decided to enter the “not for profit” sector and joined a care company where I was in charge of finance, human resources and IT. I entered the housing sector in 2005 when I joined Shaftesbury Housing in Epsom as the Director of Finance and IT.

After this, I worked for various social housing organisations, including Hanover Housing and Aldwyck Housing Group.

6. In 2015, I was approached about applying for the role of Director of Financial Services and ICT at the TMO. What drew me to the role was that the TMO was a resident-led organisation. I was interviewed and offered the role by Robert Black, Sacha Jevans, Yvonne Birch and two non-Executive Board members, Fay Edwards and Ann Dufy. I started in June 2015 and was given a helpful handover over a period of two weeks by Anthony Parkes, who held the role before me.
7. As the Director of Financial Services and ICT. My four direct reports were Rupa Bhola, the Assistant Director of Finance, Nurul Miah, the Head of ICT, Dan Wood, the Assistant Director of Home Ownership and Janice Wray, the Health and Safety and Facilities Manager. One of my key functions was to monitor the TMO's health and safety performance from a strategic level. That is, it was my role to ensure that the TMO had a health and safety strategy in place that was up to date and that identified programmes of work/training.
8. My role in relation to health and safety at the TMO was managerial rather than technical. It was my responsibility to ensure that Janice Wray had the proper support and resources to be able to carry out her role. I provided this support to Janice through formal one to one meetings every month during which we discussed issues, service plans and anything else that was topical or in issue. We would also identify what health and safety matters we felt needed to be included in the fortnightly Executive Team meetings and the annual health and safety report presented to the Executive Team and the Board. We also caught up weekly on a more informal basis.
9. The TMO had a Health and Safety Committee that met regularly. While I chaired these meetings, I made it clear to all those in attendance that Janice was the manager and the expert. My attendance at these meetings was to highlight the importance that the TMO put on health and safety. Sacha Jevans also attended as many matters concerning health and safety fell into her directorate.
10. One of my managerial health and safety functions was to ensure that there was a system in place for the procurement of Fire Risk Assessments ("FRAs") and for

addressing and closing out actions arising from this programme. Janice Wray oversaw the rolling programme of FRAs, and both Janice and I would review the significant findings and actions arising from these assessments. We would then work together to ensure that those individuals allocated with actions completed these, usually via Health and Safety Committee meetings.

11. If a policy relating to health and safety needed amending due to legislative change, Janice would inform me of this and prepare a draft policy for us to discuss. I would then assist her in getting the new policy to the stage where I could present it to the Executive Team for sign off and implementation. If the new policy was a major change relating to health and safety it would have to be approved by the board.
12. Because Janice Wray was an occupational fire safety advisor, she would take advice from specialists on specific health and safety areas and issues. By way of example, in respect of whether the properties managed by the TMO complied with the requirements of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, Janice sought specific advice from a fire safety specialist, Carl Stokes Associates.
13. I believe that Janice Wray and I worked well together. She was an incredibly conscientious, hardworking individual and one of the most committed people to safety that I have met in my career. She was very knowledgeable in occupational health and safety.
14. I have been asked about my liaisons with the RBKC both generally and in the context of safety. The TMO participated in Joint Management Meetings with the RBKC on a quarterly basis, which were attended by Robert Black, Yvonne Birch, Sacha Jevans and myself, along with Senior Executives from the RBKC. Health and Safety performance was an item on the agenda at these meetings.
15. There was an annual health and safety report that went to the Board and to the RBKC. It is possible that this report went to their Scrutiny Committee. This was prepared by Janice Wray and then reviewed by myself and the Executive Team before it went to the Board. It was a long report reviewing health and safety information and data over the last year. For example, it would say how many fire risk assessment actions were outstanding.

16. During the period I was at the TMO, I was also a Director of Repairs Direct, which was a subsidiary company owned by the TMO. While I was the member of the Repairs Direct Executive Team with particular responsibility for financial services and ICT, I did not hold the health and safety portfolio for Repairs Direct, as I did for the TMO. This was held by Graham Webb, the Managing Director of Repairs Direct. Repairs Direct had its own health and safety manager, however I cannot recall the names of the individuals who occupied this role. I recall that we tried to ensure that the Repairs Direct health and safety policies aligned with the TMO's policies where appropriate.

Grenfell Tower's original design, construction and composition

17. I did not work for the TMO when Grenfell Tower was originally constructed. Because of this, and because of my managerial rather than technical role within the TMO, I have no particular knowledge of the design, construction and composition of Grenfell Tower on completion in 1974.
18. I have no knowledge of the relevant contemporaneous building regulations, fire regulations, other legislation, guidance and industry practice that applied at the time that Grenfell Tower was constructed and it follows that I have no knowledge of whether Grenfell Tower, as originally constructed, complied with the relevant regulations, legislation, British Standards, guidance and industry practice.

Subsequent modifications prior to the 2012-2016 refurbishment

19. I have been asked about my knowledge of modifications made to Grenfell Tower after its construction but prior to the refurbishment project of 2012 to 2016. I am aware that a fire door replacement programme took place across the Borough that began in 2011 however I had no involvement in this programme as it had finished before I joined the TMO.

Modifications to the interior of the building between 2012 and 2016

20. I have been asked about my role in the 2012 to 2016 refurbishment at Grenfell Tower. This project was already in progress when I joined the TMO and I had no

particular role in it. My knowledge of the project was limited to the progress updates that were given at our Executive Team meetings.

21. I have no technical background or expertise and my role at the TMO did not require me to have this type of knowledge. It follows that I have no technical knowledge of the modifications made to the inside of Grenfell Tower between 2012 and 2016 or the reasons behind them. I also have no knowledge of whether these modifications were compliant with such regulations, legislation, British Standards, guidance and industry practice, or to what extent. Nor do I have any knowledge of the extent to which the design and construction of the modifications to the interior of Grenfell Tower took into account the design and construction of the modifications to the exterior of the Tower.
22. I have no knowledge of what advice or information was available, or what assessments were made, about the components that comprised the interior of Grenfell Tower, its fire safety, fire resistance and compliance with safety standards. I was not involved in the decision making process in relation to the refurbishment of the interior of the Tower as this was overseen by the contractor during the refurbishment.
23. 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.

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

24. For the reasons given above, I have no knowledge of the purpose of the cladding/insulation applied to the exterior of Grenfell Tower. Nor do I have any knowledge of the design, manufacture, composition and method of fixing it to Grenfell Tower.
25. I have no knowledge of the extent that the design and construction of the modifications to the exterior of Grenfell Tower took into account the design and construction of the interior of the building. Nor do I have any knowledge of whether

the exterior of Grenfell were compliant with relevant building regulations, fire regulations, other legislation, British Standards, guidance and industry practice.

26. I have no knowledge of whether the exterior of Grenfell Tower was in any way inadequate.

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

27. As the Executive Director with responsibility for health and safety, I was involved in overseeing health and safety at a strategic level. This meant that I would oversee general safety management, including fire safety management. However, my role would not extend to having specific knowledge about the fire safety measures in place at a particular property managed by the TMO.
28. It follows that I do not have any comprehensive knowledge of the fire safety measures in place at Grenfell Tower at the time of the fire. I also have no knowledge of whether the fire safety measures at Grenfell Tower were compliant with relevant building regulations, fire regulations, British Standards and other legislation, guidance and industry practice.
29. Once the Tower was returned to the TMO after the refurbishment, I had an awareness of the fire safety measures within the Tower and their overall compliance due to my role in overseeing the fire risk assessment programme. However, this knowledge was not highly specific as I was not the fire safety expert. For example, I would not know whether a particular fire door was compliant unless it emerged as an issue from a fire risk assessment.
30. I have been asked to set out my knowledge of what fire risk assessments (“FRAs”) had been carried out in relation to Grenfell Tower between January 2012 and June 2017, particularly in relation to the regeneration works.
31. I was aware that the Fire Safety Regulatory Reform Order 2005 required the TMO to have a programme in place for the procurement of FRAs at the properties within its portfolio. The oversight of this programme was one of Janice Wray’s responsibilities as the Health and Safety and Facilities Manager.

32. The FRAs were carried out by an external company called Carl Stokes Associates. This contract was in place before I joined the TMO and, while I have met Carl Stokes a number of times, it was Janice Wray that oversaw the programme on a day-to-day basis. Essentially, Carl would produce an FRA for a property and send it to Janice, who would review it and extract the relevant actions for follow up. She would then assign these actions to various individuals within the relevant TMO department and oversee the shutting down of the actions. My recollection is that the majority of actions arising fell to the Operations Department to be resolved.
33. I was involved in the system for monitoring the performance and closing down of those actions. I received a spreadsheet on a monthly basis showing the FRA actions completed and outstanding. I recall that actions were graded based on priority and allocated to the relevant team to complete. I would then review in the monthly reports whether these actions were being closed. If the actions were not being closed as quickly as they should have been, I would chase the senior manager of that team and ensure that they closed the action down.
34. In addition to Carl Stokes' normal role in FRA programme, I am aware that Janice Wray would send Carl to properties for ad hoc inspections if issues arose relating to fire safety. Janice would then discuss these issues with me and I would support her in progressing their resolution.
35. If there were outstanding actions arising from the FRA programme, I would emphasise the importance of clearing out outstanding actions as a matter of urgency at Health and Safety meetings. By way of example, in a Health and Safety Committee meeting on 19 January 2017 I requested that each team with outstanding actions prepare a written report for the next meeting setting out the detail of each action and an explanation of what steps had been taken to progress these and when each would be fully completed. I recall that this led to a mass clearing of actions. I should say that while these were not actions that fell on my department but in my role as chair of the Committee I was anxious to do what I could do get the number down.
36. I was aware that LFB would also conduct audits of our properties, including Grenfell Tower. This involved the TMO providing the LFB with a copy of the

relevant FRA for the building that was subject to audit in order to help them prepare. Janice would lead the liaison with the LFB however I would accompany her to meetings with them on a few occasions. She would typically brief me before the meetings and then we would debrief these meetings in our one to one meetings as well as informally when she returned.

37. As stated earlier, my role at the TMO in relation to health and safety was managerial rather than technical. This means that it was my responsibility to ensure that the Health and Safety team had the resources and support to be able to carry out their function, rather than to make any decision making with respect to health and safety the properties managed by the TMO. It follows that I have no specific knowledge of the ways in which Grenfell Tower was intended to be resistant to fire spread other than that I know that the Tower was subject to a “Stay Put” policy, as were all of the TMO’s high-rise buildings. This strategy came from the LFB.
38. I also have no knowledge of what was assumed about the resistance of Grenfell Tower in relation to fire spread, nor do I have any knowledge of any checks/assessments/inspections carried out as to whether the actual condition of Grenfell Tower matched these assumptions, other than those checks carried out by Carl Stokes and the LFB.
39. I have been asked about my knowledge of the fire safety measures within Grenfell Tower. I have some knowledge of the fire safety measures at Grenfell Tower through the signification actions arising from the FRA programme. In addition to this, I recall that the TMO received a deficiency notice in respect of the Tower following the refurbishment. While I was not directly involved in progressing the remedial steps set out in that Notice, I was aware that they related to fire doors, the stairwell, the automatic opening vents and Fire Action Notices. I therefore had an awareness that these measures existed within the Tower.
40. I have no specific knowledge of whether any consideration was given to the evacuation of disabled or other vulnerable residents, and if adequate provision was made for them. However, as stated earlier, Grenfell Tower had a “Stay Put” policy and therefore evacuation would not have formed part of the strategy that would be implemented in the event of a fire.

Inspections

41. Other than the FRA programme carried out by Carl Stokes and the audits carried out by the LFB, I have no knowledge of any fire and other relevant inspections carried out during the 2012-2016 renovations. I had no technical involvement in the refurbishment project at Grenfell Tower and therefore it would not have been my role to oversee building control inspections.

Governance/Management

42. I have been asked to set out my knowledge and understanding of any other fires that occurred at Grenfell Tower or other buildings under the authority of RBKC.
43. I recall that there was a fire at Adair Tower in 2015 during which the LFB made a decision on the day to abandon the "Stay Put" policy. I was in Scotland on the day of this fire, however I understand from what was reported to me upon my return that it was the LFB that made the decision to change the "Stay Put" strategy. This was explained in a meeting we had with the LFB following the fire, in which they explained that because they had received a certain number of calls regarding the fire from concerned residents, they made the decision to evacuate.
44. Following the fire at Adair Tower, the LFB served two enforcement notices on the TMO in respect of Adair Tower and its sister tower, Hazelwood. My recollection is that the notices related to the ventilation in the staircase. I was aware that Janice had sought advice from Exova who assisted in closing out of the enforcement notices and making the necessary changes to the staircases at these buildings.
45. In a Health and Safety Committee meeting on the 24 November 2015 there was a detailed discussion about the fire at Adair Tower and we circulated a detailed significant findings and action plan produced by Janice Wray. In addition to this, I recall that Janice produced an article in the TMO's magazine to tenants, "Link", reminding residents about the "Stay Put" strategy. There was also considerable discussion about Adair Tower at the Board meeting on 26 November 2015 and I believe it was discussed in a Joint Management Meeting between the TMO and the

RBKC. Finally, I recall that both Robert Black and I met with the Borough Commander of LFB to discuss the TMO's response to this fire.

46. Ultimately I worked with Janice to ensure that the fire at Adair and the ensuing enforcement notices were discussed at a senior level, with the causes fully understood and actions taken in response to the LFB and Exova's recommendations.
47. The only other fire I recall taking place within the stock was a fire at Trelick Tower in 2017. I do not recall being involved in the fire on the day however I do recall being involved in subsequent discussions about its cause, which I understand was a cigarette that had fallen from a balcony above and set fire to a cupboard. After this fire we made a huge effort to ensure that residents kept their balconies clear.

Communication with residents

48. I have been asked to set out my knowledge of what systems there were for Grenfell Tower residents to express their concerns and views about fire safety. In general, the TMO advised residents of anything that they needed to be aware of through regular newsletters. This newsletter provided the details of the Customer Service Centre, which residents could call to ask questions or report concerns.
49. The TMO had a formal complaints process that was overseen by a Complaints Team based at Network Hub. This team was managed by Janet Seward, who reported to Yvonne Birch, the Executive Director of People and Performances. I had no specific role or oversight of the complaints process and I would certainly not have knowledge of every complaint made, however I was made aware of certain complaints that were escalated to Executive level.
50. I have been asked whether any of these complaints related to fire safety at Grenfell Tower. I do recall that there were several complaints made by residents in relation to the National Grid works that took place at the Tower at the end of 2016. I am aware that some residents complained that the pipes installed by National Grid created a fire risk. However, my involvement in the National Grid works related more to an incident whereby a National Grid worker drilled into some asbestos containing material. I am also aware that concerns were expressed by residents

about the location of the pipes installed by National Grid however this matter was handled by Janice Wray and Sacha Jevans.

51. I also recall that a complaint was made in relation to the floor signage at Grenfell Tower. My recollection is that this was reported by a resident to Councillor Blakeman, a TMO Board member, who required Janice Wray to confirm that the LFB had attended Grenfell Tower and familiarised themselves with the issue. Janice also arranged for Carl Stokes to visit Grenfell Tower in respect of this issue. However I cannot recall the exact details of this complaint but I am confident that Janice Wray dealt with it.
52. I have been asked whether I would look at blog posts written by residents and I can confirm that I did not. There was a formal complaints procedure for residents who were dissatisfied with a service or they could raise any concerns via the Customer Service Centre. However, I do recall being advised that a resident called Edward Daffarn had written a blog post, which was forwarded to Robert Black by Councillor Blakeman, which referenced a fatality in a fire at Hazelwood Tower ten years ago. However, Janice Wray had been with TMO since its establishment in 1995 and could confirm that there had been no such fatality. I was therefore aware that there were blog posts being written which contained misinformation.

Fire advice given to residents between 2012 and 14 June 2017

53. I have been asked to set out my knowledge of what advice was given to residents about fire precautions. I can recall that following the fire at Adair Tower, the TMO sent communications to residents reminding them of the "Stay Put" policy. Tenants received fire safety information when they joined as new tenants. We also provided regular fire safety updates in "the Link" which was the residents' magazine. If there was fire safety information specific to a building that needed to be provided to residents we would produce and deliver individual letters.

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

Signed: Barbara Matthews

Dated: 22/8/19