



GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY RT

Day 281

May 19, 2022

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(10.00 am)

SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to today's hearing. Today we're going to continue hearing evidence from Katharine Hammond, who, at the time of the fire, was director of the civil contingencies secretariat in the Cabinet Office.

So would you ask Ms Hammond to come in, please.

MS KATHARINE HAMMOND (continued)

THE WITNESS: Good morning.

SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Good morning, Ms Hammond. Yes, please sit down, make yourself comfortable.

THE WITNESS: Thank you.

SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: All right. Ready to continue, I hope?

THE WITNESS: Yes, of course.

SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you very much.

Yes, Mr Millett.

Questions from COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY (continued)

MR MILLETT: Thank you, Mr Chairman. Good morning to you.

Good morning, members of the panel.

Ms Hammond, good morning to you.

A. Good morning.

Q. Could I take you back, please, by way of introduction for today, to {CAB00000157}. It's an email string we

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looked at yesterday afternoon.

I'd like to go in it, please, to page 2

{CAB00000157/2}, which is the email from

Stuart Wainwright at 7.13, which copies the email which is the read-out at 6.16 from Denise Welch at the DCLG.

A. Yes.

Q. That's the read-out from the 5.00 am meeting.

If you scroll down to the very foot of the email on page 3 {CAB00000157/3}, just above where it says "Next SCG at 06:30", you can see a little block of text that says this:

"The block is owned by the local authority (LB Kensington and Chelsea) and managed by Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation."

Now, did you at this stage, early on the morning of 14 June, consider whether there might be a problem with the council effectively operating community engagement if it was simultaneously being, potentially at least, investigated for its role in the fire?

A. No, I didn't.

Q. Did that factor or idea come into your mind at any stage later on 14 June?

A. So just to be clear, Mr Millett, and apologies, whether being investigated for a role in the fire and performing their statutory duties were in conflict, is that your

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question?

Q. Yes, that's exactly the point.

A. No, I don't remember considering that, no.

Q. On the 14th, on the 15th, at any stage?

A. Not to my recollection.

Q. Let's go back, then, to the 14 June first ministerial meeting.

We know that the CCS had produced a number of documents in preparation for that meeting, and that included, I think, an attendees list, a brief to the chair and an agenda; yes?

A. Correct.

Q. Yes.

Now, in your first statement at paragraph 48

{CAB00014764/15} — I don't think we need to go to it —

you say you may have discussed the attendees list with Stuart Wainwright to ensure appropriate representation from first responders, national government and local government.

Did you discuss the list with Mr Wainwright itself?

A. So the list would have been prepared by Stuart Wainwright and his team. The way the process would work is they would first set the agenda and agree that with the chair, and then, on the back of that, work out who should be there. So he may have, in the course

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of that, asked me for my views. I'm afraid I can't remember the precise conversation at this distance of time.

Q. Well, let's look at the list. It's at {CAB00002711}.

If we look at the native version of the document, please, we will see the contents. If we expand that, and scroll down, you can see that from the DCLG — well, the chair is to be Nick Hurd, and from Number 10 Alastair Whitehead, and then various different attendees from different departments. Scrolling down, you can see you there from or for the Cabinet Office, together with Stuart Wainwright; we have Katherine Richardson from DCLG; Home Office, David Lamberti, et cetera, and various other central government bodies.

A. Yes.

Q. Including Number 10, "No 10 Comms".

Then dialling in, if we scroll a bit further down the list, we can see the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, he dials in, and then people in the back room as well.

Now, what you will see missing from that list is the identification of any individual from RBKC. Did you realise that at the time?

A. I don't remember having a specific conversation about RBKC attendance. In terms of — what we would have been thinking at the time is: how is information being fed

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1 into this meeting from the local response? And so on
2 the attendees list you can obviously see the Mayor, who
3 would have been getting information through from the
4 SCG; likewise the head of the resilience and emergencies
5 division in DCLG, and the ministers to whom they would
6 have been reporting.

7 So I don't remember a specific conversation about
8 RBKC, but in terms of where information about the local
9 authority would have been coming from, that would have
10 been my expectation.

11 Q. Right. Was it a deliberate decision not to have the
12 chief executive or anybody else from RBKC at this
13 meeting?

14 A. I can't recall a specific conversation about the chief
15 executive, no.

16 Q. Would it have been standard practice — so far as there
17 was a standard practice, given the nature of the
18 meeting — to have had the chief executive of the
19 relevant local authority at this meeting?

20 A. So there's no — as you allude to, Mr Millett, there's
21 no set cast list for meetings of this type. It's
22 assembled based on the agenda and the event. It
23 wouldn't be unusual to have a local authority chief
24 executive in the meeting, but in the context of the
25 presence of the Mayor, in particular, it wouldn't be

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1 automatic.

2 Q. But do you accept that having the chief executive of the
3 local authority itself as opposed to the Mayor would
4 have given you much better, closer, more first-hand or
5 actual first-hand information?

6 A. It might have done so. I can't be specific.

7 Q. I mean, do you accept that not having Nicholas Holgate
8 at least on the list of attendees was a significant
9 omission?

10 A. I think at the time we would have been of the view that
11 information about the local authority response could
12 reach the meeting through the SCG route, and the
13 Mayor's Office. You'll be aware of two email chains
14 that we've submitted in evidence which show a request,
15 I think at about 2 o'clock that afternoon, for
16 Mr Holgate to join the meeting. Unfortunately there was
17 a miscommunication surrounding that request, and the
18 operations team, who were dealing with a number of
19 ministerial meetings that day, were not clear that he
20 was being asked to attend this meeting. That,
21 I'm afraid, was a miscommunication on the day. But
22 given the other attendees, it wasn't remarked on, to my
23 recollection, because there would have been other
24 sources of that insight.

25 Q. Well, that would depend, wouldn't it, on how close

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1 Sadiq Khan himself personally was to the events on the
2 ground at the time?

3 A. Not him personally, I would expect him to be briefed by
4 his office, and I think I had already received by this
5 point an update from his office, which showed to me that
6 they were in touch with the SCG. So reasonable
7 expectation that both he and DCLG were well sighted on
8 the operation on the ground.

9 Q. Can I take you to your third statement, please, and go
10 to paragraph 27 at the foot of page 11 {CAB00014816/11}.
11 You say at the very foot of the page, last few words in
12 the third line there:

13 "I am not able to elaborate beyond that based on
14 recall of events but, given his role [and that's
15 Holgate], it would have been normal for him to attend
16 a meeting of this nature."

17 So can we take it that it would have been normal for
18 Nicholas Holgate to attend this meeting?

19 A. Yes, normal but not automatic.

20 Q. No, fair enough, normal.

21 Now, given that it was normal, on what basis was
22 there a departure from that normal practice?

23 A. I don't recall, I'm afraid, a specific conversation
24 about whether or not Mr Holgate should attend. There
25 obviously was a thought later in the day, the email

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1 chain that I've just described to you, but I don't think
2 there was a specific decision that I can recollect not
3 to have him in the meeting.

4 Q. Right. Do you remember whether the thought process went
5 as follows: we don't have to have Nicholas Holgate there
6 because it would be as good to have Sadiq Khan there?

7 A. I don't remember that thought process. I think the
8 point I was trying to make, perhaps not very clearly,
9 was that Mr Holgate's absence would not have seemed
10 glaring, given the presence of other sources of
11 information from the SCG.

12 Q. Right. So do we take it that neither you nor any other
13 attendee at the meeting raised the lack of
14 representation from RBKC at the meeting, or afterwards?

15 A. Not to my recollection. I think in the email chains you
16 have there is a second message from DCLG after the
17 meeting had already commenced, about halfway through,
18 but I'm afraid I wasn't aware of that at the time.

19 Q. Yes. I mean, do you accept — maybe you don't — that
20 the absence of a representative from RBKC limited what
21 the ministerial meeting could achieve in understanding
22 the real situation on the ground at that time?

23 A. I wouldn't have expected that to be the case, no, given
24 the other sources of information that it had.

25 Q. So was it the position, was it your understanding, that

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1 the meeting was approaching Sadiq Khan on the basis that
 2 he was, in effect, the local authority category 1
 3 responder for the purposes of providing information to
 4 the meeting and taking away guidance from the meeting?
 5 A. No, not that he was performing that role, but that the
 6 strategic co-ordinating group, which was bringing
 7 together all of the category 1 responders involved at
 8 this moment, information from that group was feeding
 9 into this meeting through several routes, one of which
 10 was the Mayor's Office.
 11 Q. Now, you I think attended the meeting yourself, didn't
 12 you?
 13 A. I did.
 14 Q. You say in paragraph 50 of your statement — let's go to
 15 that, please. First witness statement, paragraph 50,
 16 page 15 {CAB00014764/15}. You say that the meeting —
 17 and this is the third line — was attended by "a mix of
 18 ministers, civil servants, first responders and local
 19 government".
 20 Which attendees at the meeting are you referring to
 21 when you say local government?
 22 A. I think that is a reference to the Mayor.
 23 Q. That's the Mayor, is it?
 24 Now, let's go to the minute, please, at
 25 {CAB00002714}. You refer to this in paragraph 50 of

9

1 your statement.
 2 If we go to the bottom of page 1, you can see under
 3 the subheading, "c) Support for those affected and
 4 families", it says:
 5 "There was a discussion around offering Trauma
 6 Counselling to firefighters and ambulance workers
 7 involved in the incident. NHS England provided
 8 Bereavement and Trauma Counselling services and these
 9 could be made available to those who needed it."
 10 Now, although the subtitle there, as we can see, is
 11 "Support for those affected and families", the minute
 12 doesn't refer, here or anywhere else, to discussion of
 13 the provision of trauma counselling to the bereaved, the
 14 survivors and the residents. Was that not discussed in
 15 the meeting?
 16 A. I can't recollect from the meeting — would it be
 17 possible to turn to the next page of this document?
 18 Q. Yes, of course. Let's go to the top of page 2
 19 {CAB00002714/2}, please.
 20 A. So the next part of the minute records the discussion
 21 particularly around immediate support and rest centres
 22 for those who had been evacuated from the building.
 23 That might have included what elements of support were
 24 provided there. I'm afraid I don't recall. The actions
 25 resulting are recorded on the actions list, I think.

10

1 Q. Yes, and we'll look at that if need be on this point.
 2 But is it a fact that the focus in the discussions was
 3 on the blue light front-line personnel, in this respect
 4 at least, rather than the residents and the families of
 5 the deceased?
 6 A. I think the point about front-line personnel is probably
 7 drawn out because we were very — in the very early
 8 stages of the response. The conversation about
 9 families, I would infer from the minute, was more about
 10 holistic rest centre and reception, rather than the
 11 specific trauma counselling element.
 12 Q. I mean, was there discussion, to the best of your
 13 recollection, about providing trauma counselling to the
 14 bereaved, survivors and residents as well as the blue
 15 light responders?
 16 A. I can't recollect, I'm afraid, a discussion at this
 17 distance. No.
 18 Q. Is there any reason to think that the minute is
 19 incomplete in that respect?
 20 A. So the minute is summarising the discussion, rather than
 21 providing a verbatim account. I wouldn't expect it to
 22 be incomplete, but I would also be looking at the
 23 evidence in the CRIP, to be aware what was already known
 24 in the meeting, and I would be looking at the actions
 25 list.

11

1 Q. Now, looking at what we've got on the screen at the top
 2 of the page, page 2, it says:
 3 "In terms of ensuring that individuals were
 4 accounted for, it was suggested that the local authority
 5 should have a list of all those who lived in the tower
 6 block and would be working through rest centres to
 7 follow up with identifying people."
 8 What was the source of that contribution, given that
 9 Nicholas Holgate wasn't present?
 10 A. I can't recollect, I'm afraid.
 11 Q. Do you remember whether there was any confirmation that
 12 the local authority had such a list or that this had
 13 been discussed with the local authority?
 14 A. In this meeting?
 15 Q. Yes.
 16 A. I'm afraid I can't recall a specific discussion.
 17 Q. Let's look at the chair's brief, then, which might
 18 assist you. It's at {CAB00002715}. I'll show you the
 19 first page of this to identify the document. It's
 20 a document that is entitled, "MINISTERIAL MEETING on
 21 GRENELL TOWER FIRE, on Wednesday 14 June 2017 16:00".
 22 Paragraph 1:
 23 "You are chairing a Ministerial meeting at 16:00 on
 24 the Grenfell Tower fire."
 25 So just identifying the nature of the document, can

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1 we take it that this is a briefing document going to
 2 Nicholas Hurd?
 3 A. Correct.
 4 Q. Now, if we go, please, to page 2 {CAB00002715/2}, and
 5 look at item 3b, "Immediate shelter and medium term
 6 rehousing", now in the middle of your screen,
 7 Ms Hammond; can you see that?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. There are a number of points. I just want to take them
 10 quickly.
 11 Point 8 is suggested questions about arrangements
 12 for emergency shelter, alternative accommodation, how
 13 long alternative housing may be required and how
 14 challenging that would be for local authorities.
 15 If we look at point 9, the question for DCLG there
 16 on which organisations would be managing problems such
 17 as dislocation from social networks and key services
 18 such as schools and capacity to cope.
 19 Over the page {CAB00002715/3} under c, "Support for
 20 those affected and families":
 21 "YOU should ask the Home Office (David Lamberti) to
 22 outline the management of victim identification and
 23 support. YOU will want to be assured the immediate
 24 needs of individuals and families affected are being
 25 met, and that work is underway to meet their needs over

13

1 the coming months."
 2 Now, I've shown you three points out of a number
 3 here. Would those questions not best be answered by the
 4 chief executive of RBKC?
 5 A. Could we perhaps turn back to the previous page and work
 6 through —
 7 Q. Yes, of course. Can we go back to page 2
 8 {CAB00002715/2}.
 9 A. — the three points.
 10 Q. Yes.
 11 A. So the first question is addressed to DCLG in
 12 expectation that their minister would have been briefed
 13 by RED, who were at the SCG that morning. So that's
 14 where I would expect that information to come through.
 15 There's always a balance in these moments as to whether
 16 you draw in those who are busy responding on the ground
 17 to answer the questions or whether you draw that
 18 information through. So it would be normal to ask that
 19 question of DCLG, drawing on RED's knowledge.
 20 And the second one, likewise.
 21 Could we go to the next page? [{CAB00002715/3}]
 22 Then in terms of the Home Office question, addressed
 23 in that direction because of specific Home Office policy
 24 responsibilities in this area, I think.
 25 Q. Yes. Was it the case, though, that asking these central

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1 government individuals would only elicit answers which
 2 in turn would have to have come from the local
 3 authority?
 4 A. I would —
 5 Q. Or at least be informed significantly by what the local
 6 authority was saying.
 7 A. I would expect them to have come from the SCG, yes.
 8 Q. Now, the minute, if we can go back to that, at
 9 {CAB00002714}, doesn't record discussion of those
 10 particular issues. Now, I mean, we can look at it all.
 11 Take it from me that it doesn't. But your recollection
 12 may be better than the record.
 13 Were these questions asked by the chair of the
 14 meeting, Nick Hurd?
 15 A. So I would — my interpretation is that the paragraph at
 16 the top of this page records the salient points of the
 17 discussion in relation to that question which was
 18 addressed to the Home Office about the identification of
 19 individuals. So I would assume that that question was
 20 asked, and the conversation concluded that there was
 21 an expectation that the local authority would produce
 22 the list of those in the tower block — reasonable
 23 expectation — and that means of identifying their
 24 location would be followed up through rest centres. So
 25 my assumption is that that is a response to that

15

1 question.
 2 Q. Right. But that's you sitting there today working out
 3 as a matter of logic, having seen two separate documents
 4 and connecting the two. I'm really interested in your
 5 recollection.
 6 Let me try this slightly differently: did you have
 7 the questions for ministers, the briefing paper, in your
 8 hands when you attended the meeting?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. You did. Did the meeting follow that? In other words,
 11 did Nick Hurd follow his script, so to speak, and go
 12 through the questions as written for him?
 13 A. I'm afraid I can't give you a precise answer to the
 14 exact questions he asked in a meeting five years ago.
 15 I mean, ministers, generally speaking, use the chair's
 16 brief quite closely as a guide, but, of course, areas of
 17 discussion can emerge in the meeting, they may feel more
 18 reassured on some areas based on other information, so
 19 it's not a — it's not something they have to follow to
 20 the letter, but generally they do.
 21 Q. But you have had many experiences of many high-level
 22 meetings; do you recall whether this was one which stuck
 23 to the script in an organised way or whether it
 24 descended, as it were, into a general discussion?
 25 A. I don't think it descended into a general discussion,

16

1 but I'm afraid I can't recall precisely which question
2 was and wasn't asked.

3 Q. Now, the minute doesn't record discussion of other
4 issues relating to the bereaved, survivors and
5 residents, and I'll give you four examples:
6 rest centres, financial assistance, information and
7 support for those looking for their loved ones and other
8 associated humanitarian needs.

9 Do you know why that is the case?

10 A. I don't.

11 Q. Did you consider that the meeting had been effectively
12 chaired, with the right questions being asked about the
13 right topics?

14 A. Yes, I think my recollection at the time was that the
15 meeting had agreed a sensible list of actions and
16 broadly done what we expected it to do on that day.

17 Q. What preparations had you yourself done for that
18 meeting?

19 A. Forgive me, what exactly do you mean? Do you mean in
20 terms of my own attendance or —

21 Q. Yes.

22 A. So I would have been — I would have familiarised myself
23 with all of the documents, been ready for the meeting;
24 I would have talked to my readiness and response team,
25 led by Stuart Wainwright, about any issues that they

17

1 were particularly concerned about; and, of course, I had
2 been involved in the response through the day, as you've
3 seen from the email chains that you have in your
4 evidence.

5 Q. Specifically, had you looked at the doc — and there are
6 a lot of them, but there are a number of core
7 documents — the pan-London response documents published
8 by London Resilience and, in particular, the LESLP
9 protocol?

10 A. I think it's unlikely I would have done that, but
11 I don't recall specifically.

12 Q. Were you generally familiar with those documents?

13 A. I'm familiar with the London arrangements as set out in
14 the CCA. My resilience capabilities team were more
15 expert than I was on the specifics of how they were
16 operated within London.

17 Q. At all events, were you familiar at the time with the
18 nature of centres to be established in London either by
19 the Metropolitan Police or by the local authority, by
20 which I mean rest centres, survivor reception centres,
21 humanitarian assistance centres and friends and
22 relatives reception centres?

23 A. Do you mean familiar with the types of centre that might
24 be established —

25 Q. Yes.

18

1 A. — or the locations?

2 The types of centres, yes, not an expert on, but
3 familiar with the different concepts.

4 Q. Were there questions asked at the meeting about whether
5 each of those different types of centres was being
6 considered?

7 A. I'm afraid I can't add to my previous answer. I don't
8 recollect a specific conversation about rest centres.

9 Q. If we go back, then, to page 1 of the minute
10 {CAB00002714/1}, under the subheading (b), there's
11 a title, "Immediate shelter and medium term rehousing",
12 and it says:
13 "The local Council were presently identifying
14 temporary accommodation for those residents of Grenfell
15 Tower. Longer-term re-housing would also be the
16 responsibility of the Council. The Council were not
17 currently asking for additional support."

18 What was the source of that information, given the
19 absence of Nicholas Holgate?

20 A. I think it would have been provided by a DCLG minister
21 or by the head of the resilience and emergencies
22 division based on their attendance at the SCG, where
23 of course the council would have been present.

24 Q. Let's look at a different document, {CAB00013811},
25 please. What I'd like to do is to have this document,

19

1 please, up at the same time as the previous minute we
2 have been looking at at {CAB00002714}.

3 Now, I want to do a little bit of comparing and
4 contrasting, if I can, please.

5 My first question is: did you know that there were
6 different versions of the minute of the meeting on
7 14 June?

8 A. No. There may be an earlier draft and the finalised
9 draft. That would be normal.

10 Q. Now, what I want to show you is — the one on the right
11 is the one we were looking at before.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. The one on the left, which has 13811 as the final digits
14 in the reference, is a different version.

15 If we look at the one on the left {CAB00013811},
16 under "Key issues", subheading, "b) Immediate shelter
17 and medium term rehousing", that reads:
18 "THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT stated that the
19 local Council were presently identifying temporary
20 accommodation for those residents of Grenfell Tower.
21 Longer-term re-housing would also be the responsibility
22 of the Council. The MAYOR OF LONDON pressed for further
23 reassurance and requested that contact was made with the
24 local Council to ensure that affected individuals are
25 not left without accommodation."

20

1 Then compare that with the different version on the
2 right—hand side {CAB00002714}, which is the one you
3 exhibited to your statement at KH/7, which says under
4 the same title:

5 "The local Council were presently identifying
6 temporary accommodation for those residents of
7 Grenfell Tower. Longer—term re—housing would also be
8 the responsibility of the Council. The Council were not
9 currently asking for additional support."

10 Now, the reference to, as you can see on the
11 left—hand side {CAB00013811}, "The MAYOR OF LONDON
12 pressed for further reassurance and requested that
13 contact was made with the local Council to ensure that
14 affected individuals are not left without
15 accommodation", appears to have been removed or not yet
16 inserted, depending on which version came first.

17 Are you able to help us about why it is that that
18 line in the left—hand side doesn't appear on the
19 right—hand side, which is the version that you
20 exhibited?

21 A. I'm afraid I'm not. They look to me like two different
22 versions, you know, in the drafting process of creating
23 the minute. I would need to go back to the files to
24 work out in which order they came and talk to the
25 drafter to understand why they amended their notes.

21

1 Normally people taking minutes of these meetings take
2 a longhand note and then they refer back to it to amend
3 and improve the minute afterwards. But I would need to
4 talk to that person, I'm afraid.

5 Q. Well, all right, but you exhibited the one on the
6 right—hand side as an exhibit to your statement.

7 A. I did.

8 Q. When you did so, were you aware that there were at least
9 two versions of this document?

10 A. I hadn't looked at other drafts of it, no.

11 Q. Are you able to tell us whether the one you exhibited
12 was the one that was the final version, or that it
13 wasn't, and that the final version was the one on the
14 left?

15 A. I think, in exhibiting it, my assumption would have been
16 that that was the final version, but I wasn't aware of
17 the other one, so I would need to go away and confirm
18 that that's correct.

19 Q. Well, you say it was an assumption; did you receive
20 a final version of the minutes at the time?

21 A. So the minutes would not have been circulated to me,
22 they would be placed in a filing system to which I would
23 have access if I needed to refer back to it.

24 Q. Right. Can you think of any reason why you would have
25 exhibited only a draft of the minute as opposed to the

22

1 final version?

2 A. It certainly wouldn't have been a conscious decision to
3 exhibit a draft.

4 Q. No. Can we proceed, therefore, on the basis that the
5 one you exhibited was the final version? Can we proceed
6 with reasonable confidence on that basis?

7 A. I think you can proceed that I had assumed that at the
8 time of exhibiting it. Again, I wasn't aware of the
9 other version, so I would need to go and confirm that.

10 Q. Right.

11 Were minutes of the ministerial meetings circulated
12 in draft to attendees for confirmation after the
13 meeting?

14 A. No, the normal practice after a meeting was that the
15 actions, which are the things that need to be addressed
16 rapidly, would be circulated to all attendees very
17 quickly. The minutes are taken purely for the record.
18 Anybody who needed to refer to them would come to CCS
19 and ask to do so.

20 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Can I just ask you this: I note that
21 in the minutes on the left—hand side of the screen, the
22 identity of the person giving the information is stated,
23 so the Minister of State for Health said something and
24 then the Minister for Local Government said something.

25 A. Yeah.

23

1 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Now, those who were present at the
2 meeting must have known who had made those statements —

3 A. Yes.

4 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: — but, for some reason, the
5 identities don't appear in the version on the right—hand
6 side. Can you explain that?

7 A. No, I can't. It's normal practice to make reference to
8 the person making a point, and it goes to my point:
9 I can't be sure which of these is the earlier draft.
10 I would need to go and confirm that.

11 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes. All right. Thank you.

12 MR MILLETT: If you look at the version on the left—hand
13 side {CAB00013811}, which doesn't include the sentence
14 "The Council were not currently asking for additional
15 support", which is the last sentence in the version on
16 the right—hand side, can you explain how that line came
17 to be added to the right—hand side version, the version
18 you exhibited, when it wasn't in the left—hand side
19 version?

20 A. I don't think I can add to my statement a moment ago.
21 I would need to go and investigate the order of these
22 drafts.

23 Q. Well, then, can you explain why it was deleted? One way
24 or the other — it was either added or it was deleted,
25 there is no other alternative, so can you explain why

24

1 there is a difference?
 2 A. I'm afraid I can't without further investigation, no.
 3 Q. Do you remember what the nature of the concerns of
 4 the Mayor were in relation to immediate shelter and
 5 temporary accommodation?
 6 A. I can't recollect the conversation, I'm afraid, so
 7 I would be drawing on the paperwork. I don't think
 8 I can add to that.
 9 Q. You see, he's recorded there as pressing for further
 10 reassurance and requesting that contact was made with
 11 the local council to ensure that affected individuals
 12 are not left without accommodation. Are you really sure
 13 that it's right that the meeting passed without any
 14 concern being expressed about the absence of
 15 Nicholas Holgate or anyone else from RBKC at this
 16 meeting?
 17 A. I've got no recollection of a conversation about the
 18 absence of Mr Holgate. That point I would interpret to
 19 mean the Mayor wanting to be assured that that action
 20 was in hand. I don't think that is necessarily in
 21 opposition to the statement that additional support
 22 wasn't currently being sought. But I'm interpreting the
 23 documents now.
 24 Q. I mean, do you accept, looking at that, that it would
 25 have been much better had Nicholas Holgate been at the

25

1 meeting, because then the Mayor of London would have
 2 pressed for reassurance directly from him?
 3 A. It's possible that that would have assisted the Mayor in
 4 getting that reassurance, yes.
 5 Q. Can we then go to {CAB00001236}. This is the action
 6 list that you referred to earlier this morning. You can
 7 see it is headed "Actions", and in action 2:
 8 "DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL
 9 GOVERNMENT to liaise with Kensington and Chelsea
 10 Borough Council regarding the urgent provision of
 11 temporary accommodation for those displaced from the
 12 Grenfell Tower."
 13 Was your understanding that DCLG had not liaised
 14 previously with RBKC on that issue?
 15 A. I don't think I had, at that point, a clear view on what
 16 conversations had and hadn't happened between DCLG and
 17 RBKC. That action, in my reading, is asking DCLG to
 18 assure itself that the council does not need support,
 19 even though they may not have been asking for it.
 20 Q. Well, that's a reading, isn't it, as you say?
 21 A. It is.
 22 Q. Another reading could be that DCLG needed to liaise with
 23 the local authority in order to make sure that they were
 24 doing what they were supposed to vis-à-vis the provision
 25 of temporary accommodation?

26

1 A. I don't think your statement and mine are dramatically
 2 different. But you asked me whether that was the first
 3 contact; I don't know, I'm afraid, that would be
 4 a question for DCLG. They had, of course, been present
 5 at the SCGs, where I would expect the local authority to
 6 have been present.
 7 Q. Well, you say it's a question for the DCLG. I'm really
 8 asking about your own understanding as someone who was
 9 there.
 10 Was it your understanding that this action had
 11 arisen because DCLG had not previously liaised with RBKC
 12 on that issue?
 13 A. That's not a point I recollect, no.
 14 Q. Do you recall whether this was listed as an action
 15 precisely because of the Mayor of London's request, as
 16 we've seen in the left-hand version of the minute, that
 17 contact be made with the local council on this very
 18 issue?
 19 A. I mean, actions summarise the outcome of a section of
 20 discussion normally, so it may or may not have been
 21 prompted by a specific intervention by one individual.
 22 Q. From your recollection, doing the best you can, what was
 23 the general impression you had at the first meeting
 24 about how the local council was handling the response
 25 thus far?

27

1 A. I think my overall impression of the meeting was that
 2 there were no requests for help and assistance across
 3 the board and nobody was flagging significant concerns
 4 with the response at that point, but we would always
 5 continue to ask the questions going forwards.
 6 Q. So, following that meeting, you didn't have any concerns
 7 regarding the effectiveness of the support from RBKC?
 8 I think that's what you're telling us. Is that right?
 9 A. I don't recall having specific concerns about RBKC. We
 10 would have been asking questions about all elements of
 11 the response and continuing to assure ourselves that it
 12 was doing what was necessary. I don't recall RBKC being
 13 a specific focus in that, in that moment.
 14 Q. Now, let's then see what happens after the meeting.
 15 Can we go, please, to your first statement,
 16 paragraph 53 at page 16 {CAB00014764/16}:
 17 "At the close of 14 June 2017, I felt that CCS had
 18 responded as it should do. The central government
 19 response mechanism was activated swiftly. The first
 20 ministerial meeting drew together a good mix of people
 21 with response roles at the right levels, from both
 22 within and from outside government. The Chair had been
 23 properly briefed and the meeting achieved what it needed
 24 to ..."
 25 Do you think that's right, looking back on it?

28

1 A. Yes, I think that is how I felt at the end of that day.
 2 Q. Right.
 3 Now, let's move on in the day.
 4 Can we please go to {CAB00014358}. If you look at
 5 the email, it comes from Isla Hurley Brunt, who was
 6 an assistant director in community resilience and
 7 recovery, sitting in the Cabinet Office, and it's sent
 8 to Ian Whitehouse, also within the Cabinet Office,
 9 subject "Quick readout", "Grenfell Recovery".
 10 Now, I'm sorry that it's not terribly clear on your
 11 screen, perhaps, but what she says there in the third
 12 paragraph is this:
 13 "I'm concerned about handling re the gap in the
 14 victim support piece — as this isn't a 'crime' at this
 15 stage I don't know what kicks in to support families
 16 with missing people when there hasn't been a confirmed
 17 death (DVI is going to take quite a while). It's likely
 18 that this will emerge quite quickly. There will be
 19 further strain on mental health provision — both for
 20 public/residents but also several hundred Ffs/ambulance
 21 and call handlers — lots of talking to trapped people
 22 for long periods of time etc. Dany Cotton has flagged
 23 the need for additional support and NHS England have
 24 offered their Bereavement service."
 25 Now, did you consider there to be a gap in the

29

1 victim support piece, as she says?
 2 A. I think we were asking questions about victim support
 3 throughout that week. What Isla is doing, I think, is
 4 working through the list of issues we would expect to be
 5 considered and reflecting she didn't have a clear
 6 understanding of the victim support arrangements in the
 7 event where a family is not yet confirmed to have been
 8 bereaved. As you see, I'm not copied in to this email
 9 chain specifically.
 10 Q. No, but from what you knew at the time, was there
 11 a concern about a gap in the victim support piece, as
 12 she records?
 13 A. Well, I think Isla is recording handling of the gap in
 14 the victim support piece.
 15 Q. Well, there wouldn't be a gap that had to be handled
 16 unless there was a gap.
 17 A. I mean —
 18 Q. Let me put the question again.
 19 A. Please.
 20 Q. I mean, you were, I imagine, still in the office on the
 21 evening of 14 June —
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. — and still in touch with your colleagues. Do you
 24 recall a discussion about whether there was a gap in the
 25 victim support piece, as she identifies?

30

1 A. I can't recall a specific conversation, I'm afraid, at
 2 this distance.
 3 Q. Looking back on it, do you recall thinking perhaps later
 4 that there was a structural or policy gap in that
 5 respect, the respect that she identifies here?
 6 A. So I think there is an action from a ministerial meeting
 7 the next day or perhaps the following day which
 8 initiated the setting up of the victims unit, so that
 9 I think is the culmination of conversations about
 10 whether the right level of victim support was being
 11 provided. So there was certainly a concern emerging
 12 through that time. I don't remember a specific
 13 conversation on the 14th, I'm afraid.
 14 Q. Right, and we'll come to see a little bit about the
 15 victim support unit later.
 16 Let's move on in the day, then, {CAB00007180},
 17 please. This is an email at 21.19. Now, it's rather
 18 difficult to see it, but it's the second email down, and
 19 it's an FYI to which you reply "Thank you Michael" at
 20 the top of the screen. Just go to the very top of the
 21 screen first, and then I'll show you the message that
 22 you actually get. You reply to yourself, I think, but
 23 that's fairly standard, it goes into the CCS system and
 24 it goes to Stuart Wainwright. It says "Thank you
 25 Michael", and it comes, through the FYI, from somebody

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1 called Michael, and beneath that you can see it's
 2 an email from Fiona Stone at 20.49 on 14 June, which is
 3 sent in to MHCLG RED and CCS, "Notes from the 1930
 4 multi-agency SCG". I think I have now identified the
 5 document.
 6 It says in bold:
 7 "The key messages are:
 8 "This will be a very protracted recovery and
 9 coronial process.
 10 "We cannot make this better for the families
 11 affected but we need to ensure we do not make things
 12 worse for them:
 13 "Key issues ..."
 14 Then it goes on over the page.
 15 If we scroll down on page 2 {CAB00007180/2}, please,
 16 to "Current situation" in bold, a quarter of the way
 17 down your screen, you can see, four paragraphs down from
 18 that, it says "Vulnerable people"; do you see?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. "Vulnerable people and families have been given
 21 accommodation overnight (hotel) as a priority. This is
 22 44 families from the tower and 25 from the surrounding
 23 area. There is still a shortfall of accommodation."
 24 A little bit down below that, after "LA Rest
 25 Centres":

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1 " ... some heated flare—ups between individuals
 2 especially regarding media intrusion but all handled
 3 quickly. No other issues.
 4 "The West Way rest centre will stay open overnight
 5 for those who have not been provided with alternative
 6 accommodation.
 7 "Further humanitarian assistance centre/s will open
 8 tomorrow. The terminology whether this is a Friends and
 9 Family Reception Centre (FFRC) or Humanitarian
 10 Assistance Centre (HAC) will be firmed up once needs of
 11 the community identified. Further details to come
 12 (being organised overnight)."
 13 Now, did you read the read—out when you were
 14 forwarded it on that evening?
 15 A. Yes, I think my response indicates acknowledgement and
 16 receipt of it, yes, at 9.30 that night, roughly.
 17 Q. Yes, but presumably you would have read this?
 18 A. I would have scrolled through it, yes.
 19 Q. Having read it, were you concerned, then, about the
 20 support being provided to those affected and, in
 21 particular, the shortfall of accommodation?
 22 A. I think, having read that, yes, we would have logged
 23 that as an issue to pick up in the following day's work.
 24 I would also, I think, have registered that the action
 25 you referred to a moment ago for DCLG to work with the

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1 local authority on accommodation provision should assist
 2 with that issue. So, yes, I think we — I would have
 3 registered that as an issue that needed focus the
 4 following day.
 5 Q. I see. And what would you have done the following day,
 6 having focused on it?
 7 A. So I would expect the response team to have been looking
 8 into that issue, to be talking to DCLG about the outcome
 9 of their conversations with the local authority and what
 10 help they might need. I'd expect those conversations to
 11 go on through the day and to feed into anything that
 12 might require a ministerial decision in the meeting
 13 later that afternoon.
 14 Q. Did you see any significance in the fact that there was,
 15 as yet, no FRRC, friends and family reception centre?
 16 A. I can't recollect, I'm afraid.
 17 Q. Did you see any significance in the fact that there was
 18 a doubt about whether what would open the next day would
 19 be an FRRC or a humanitarian assistance centre?
 20 A. I can't recollect my specific response to that line, but
 21 I note that it says that community needs were being
 22 identified and the type of centre would be based on that
 23 evidence, and that would be fairly normal.
 24 Q. Right. Did you know that they weren't the same, that
 25 the FRRC wasn't the same as an HAC?

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1 A. As I said before, I was familiar with the different
 2 types, but not a deep expert in the way some of my team
 3 were.
 4 Q. Did you consider at the time what the arrangements were
 5 on the ground for how families could get news of their
 6 loved ones who had been in the tower?
 7 A. So I think that was touched on in the read—out of the
 8 meeting you referred to before, that the rest centre was
 9 leading on registering and identifying those who were
 10 missing.
 11 Q. The rest centre being what? Is that the Westway or
 12 somewhere else, in your understanding?
 13 A. I think the Westway, in my understanding at that time,
 14 or whatever location was being used in that moment.
 15 Q. Were you clear about it?
 16 A. About the location?
 17 Q. Yes.
 18 A. I can't remember, I'm afraid. My recollection is that
 19 the Westway was the location we were most familiar with.
 20 Q. Location for overnight sleeping that night but also —
 21 is this right? — for a hub for information for family
 22 members who were searching for their loved ones; is that
 23 how you understood it?
 24 A. Yes, it was the first point of contact centre that had
 25 been set up. That's not a term of art, it's just

35

1 a description of what it was doing.
 2 Q. Let's then turn to 15 June.
 3 If we go, please, to {CAB00002231}. We can see, at
 4 the foot of page 1, an email from Stuart Wainwright to
 5 Katherine Richardson and Robert Mason in RED, copied to
 6 others in the CCS, and I would imagine that would
 7 include you.
 8 A. I don't think I am on that copy list, no.
 9 Q. You're not specifically so, but it says copy "CCS".
 10 Would you not have seen this?
 11 A. I think that that would probably — I don't know what
 12 specifically is redacted, but I think it's likely to be
 13 the central mailbox.
 14 Q. Yes, so you would have seen, no doubt, or at least could
 15 have accessed it?
 16 A. I could have accessed it. I can't remember if I did,
 17 I'm afraid.
 18 Q. Right. Well, the text says:
 19 "Hey CLG folks
 20 "Any readouts from SCGs today. Think the last we
 21 saw was last night's.
 22 "Stuart."
 23 Were you aware at that point — and this is just
 24 after noon on the 15th — that no read—out from the
 25 11.00 am SCG on that day had been provided to the CCS?

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1 A. I'm afraid I can't recall whether I knew at noon whether
 2 the meeting had been read out to us or not, no.
 3 Q. If we go to your first statement, then, paragraph 57 on
 4 page 17 {CAB00014764/17}, you say there in the last
 5 sentence, three lines up from the bottom:
 6 "I recall that I was personally in contact with
 7 David Bellamy the Mayor of London's Chief of Staff, who
 8 provided another source of information about the 'on the
 9 ground' situation."
 10 That's right, is it, you were in touch with him?
 11 A. I recollect being in touch with him --
 12 Q. You recollect that --
 13 A. -- periodically throughout these days.
 14 Q. Right.
 15 You say that you recall that he provided another
 16 source of information about the on--the--ground situation;
 17 what did you discuss with him about the on--the--ground
 18 situation?
 19 A. Specifically at noon on the 15th?
 20 Q. Yes.
 21 A. I'm afraid I can't recall exactly when I spoke to him on
 22 the 15th. My general recollection is that the read--outs
 23 from him accorded broadly speaking with the read--outs
 24 coming from RED via the SCG. They were based on the
 25 same meeting, generally.

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1 Q. Right. How are we to read this sentence in your
 2 statement? Are you saying that you recall that you were
 3 in contact with Mr Bellamy and that, as a matter of
 4 course, he would provide you with information about the
 5 on--the--ground situation, or are you saying that you
 6 recall the conversation on that day and that he provided
 7 information about the on--the--ground situation in it?
 8 A. So I think this sentence doesn't refer to a specific
 9 conversation; it refers to the fact that he and I were
 10 in touch throughout that period.
 11 Q. Right.
 12 Did he share any further concerns about
 13 accommodation for those affected, as appears to have
 14 been raised by the Mayor at the ministerial meeting at
 15 4 o'clock the previous day?
 16 A. At what time?
 17 Q. At the time when you were in contact with David Bellamy.
 18 A. So this is referring to a chain of contact, rather than
 19 a specific conversation. As I said, his concerns
 20 accorded with the read--outs coming from RED from the
 21 SCG, and in the read--out you've just referred to, that
 22 is recording some issues with accommodation, so I would
 23 imagine he would also have relayed a similar point.
 24 Q. Right. I just want to understand your evidence a bit
 25 more clearly.

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1 You say in the first part of this paragraph that it
 2 had been decided that a second meeting would take place
 3 on 15 June, and the surrounding paragraphs are all set
 4 within 15 June.
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Then you go on to say:
 7 "I recall that I was personally in contact with
 8 David Bellamy ..."
 9 Were you in contact with him on 15 June?
 10 A. I can't recall that -- a specific instance on 15 June,
 11 I'm afraid, but we were generally in touch by various
 12 means through those few days.
 13 Q. Right. And being generally in touch, do you recall at
 14 any stage whether he shared with you further concerns
 15 about accommodation for those affected as had been
 16 raised by Sadiq Khan at the 4 o'clock meeting on
 17 14 June?
 18 A. I can't recall a specific point, but I think it's very
 19 likely, given that he was drawing on both the Mayor's
 20 views and the read--out from the SCG, which, as you've
 21 seen, was recording some issues with accommodation.
 22 Q. Now, if we scroll down to paragraph 60 of your
 23 statement, same page {CAB00014764/17}, you say this:
 24 "Prior to the second ministerial meeting, the CCS
 25 view remained that local responders (that is, the fire

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1 and rescue service, ambulance and police) were
 2 adequately resourced to deal with the fire. The basis
 3 of this view (that there were no issues regarding
 4 resources) was principally information from the SCG, as
 5 provided to CCS by DCLG RED as part of its liaison role,
 6 and also conversations with colleagues in the
 7 Home Office."
 8 Now, the emphasis here, when discussing local
 9 responders, is on the fire and rescue, ambulance and
 10 police, not RBKC. Looking at the paragraph, that's
 11 right, isn't it?
 12 A. That's correct.
 13 Q. Yes. Now, at this point, you didn't know, did you,
 14 whether RBKC itself was adequately resourced to deal
 15 with the aftermath of the fire, did you?
 16 A. I think at the meeting on -- the meeting of the previous
 17 day and the read--out of the SCG later that night, which
 18 was starting to flag accommodation issues, would have
 19 meant that we were confident about fire and rescue,
 20 ambulance and police at this point, but aware that there
 21 were some emerging issues around those areas led by the
 22 local authority, and I think you can see that play
 23 through into the chair's brief for the meeting this
 24 afternoon.
 25 Q. Right. So the focus of paragraph 60 is solely the blue

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1 light services; is that right?

2 A. I think that is — it's worded to reflect that — where

3 our confidence lay at that moment, and having seen the

4 SCG read-out, that would be right, I think.

5 Q. Right.

6 Now, then, let's look at Stuart Wainwright's first

7 statement, please, {CAB00014776/8}, and I would like to

8 show you paragraph 29, which is now on the screen, at

9 the foot of your screen, and he says this:

10 "During the course of the day on 15 June 2017

11 I became more concerned about whether individuals

12 affected by the fire were being looked after. This was

13 mainly on the basis of discussions with DCLG who had

14 been attending SCG meetings and who were not seeing

15 a clear plan for managing this being communicated at

16 this time. Whilst I did not have a clear sense, at this

17 stage, of whether there was a significant problem or not

18 in terms of providing adequate accommodation and support

19 to those affected by the fire, it was apparent, given

20 the lack of a clear plan as DCLG reported, that this

21 would need to be an issue that required attention that

22 day including at the afternoon's ministerial meeting."

23 First, did Mr Wainwright communicate these concerns

24 to you ahead of the then scheduled 15.30 meeting on

25 15 June?

41

1 A. We would have discussed the contents of the chair's

2 brief and the status of the response, and the chair's

3 brief contains suggestions to probe on a number of these

4 areas. So, yes, we would have talked about that.

5 Q. Would I be right in thinking that you didn't raise the

6 issue of RBKC's capacity with DCLG RED before that

7 second ministerial meeting?

8 A. I don't have a record of having done so or

9 a recollection of having done so.

10 Q. Now, ahead of the 15.30 meeting there was an action

11 tracker, wasn't there?

12 We can see that. Let's go to it, {CAB00001253}. Do

13 you recall that that was circulated before the meeting?

14 A. Yes, this is a document that CCS compiles to keep track

15 of previously agreed actions. So not necessarily

16 circulated, but it's a document Stuart and his team

17 would have been using.

18 Q. Right. Well, we do have emails showing that it was

19 circulated to those dialling in. I mean, I don't need

20 to go to that unless you want me to.

21 A. No, no, that's fine.

22 Q. Take it from me that it was circulated.

23 I think you have just explained, but just to be

24 clear, this was a tool, was it, by which progress would

25 be tracked against each action?

42

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. Now, in terms of the actions from the first ministerial

3 meeting, let's look at action 2, which you can see on

4 the screen, towards the bottom:

5 "DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL

6 GOVERNMENT to liaise with Kensington and Chelsea

7 Borough Council regarding the urgent provision of

8 temporary accommodation for those displaced from the

9 Grenfell Tower."

10 Do you see that?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. If you look at the corresponding progress update in the

13 middle column, it says:

14 "DCLG have raised this issue with the local

15 authority, but a full picture of the adequacy of the

16 accommodation has yet to emerge."

17 Just pausing there, were you concerned by that

18 update?

19 A. So I think this is part of the overall picture around

20 this issue that was emerging on the morning of the 15th

21 which then fed into the chair's brief. So, yes, I mean,

22 as Stuart's statement set out, the response team in CCS

23 was starting to be concerned about this issue.

24 Q. Right. Did that response team include you?

25 A. They report to me, yes.

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1 Q. Did you share their concerns?

2 A. I think, having read the SCG report the previous night

3 and being in close contact with them, I would have been

4 aware of that issue as well.

5 Q. Aware of it and concerned about it?

6 A. Absolutely.

7 Q. Yes.

8 Action 3, please, if we look at that:

9 "METROPOLITAN POLICE ... No update from CLG

10 provided."

11 And I think I need to go to the top of page 2

12 {CAB00001253/2} to finish the left-hand column off:

13 " ... DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL

14 GOVERNMENT to liaise on improving our understanding of

15 the number of people displaced from the building."

16 If we just go back to the foot of page 1

17 {CAB00001253/1}, you can see it records, "No update from

18 CLG provided".

19 Were you concerned, was your team concerned, by the

20 fact that there was no update yet provided from the CLG

21 on that question?

22 A. Yeah, so I think Stuart says in his statement it's not

23 unusual in the early stages of a response for it to be

24 difficult to get a handle on precise numbers. Certainly

25 I think a concern about this arose through the day on

44

1 the 15th and crystallised in the ministerial meeting
 2 when it became clear that the local authority didn't
 3 have those numbers at their fingertips.
 4 Q. Looking back at page 2 {CAB00001253/2}, you can see that
 5 the liaison was to be on:
 6 " ... improving our understanding [that's I think, is
 7 this right, CCS's or perhaps central government's more
 8 widely] of the number of ..."
 9 A. The response.
 10 Q. " ... people displaced from the building."
 11 Now, "the building" was what, Grenfell Tower?
 12 A. The building referred to I think is Grenfell Tower.
 13 That would have included anybody displaced as
 14 a consequence of the fire, I think.
 15 Q. Well, that's the question. Was your understanding that
 16 the focus at this point was on those displaced from the
 17 tower as opposed to those displaced from the surrounding
 18 blocks?
 19 A. I don't think it's a distinction we would have drawn in
 20 that way. It's just referring to those who have been
 21 displaced as a consequence.
 22 Q. I see.
 23 Now, we have the meeting at 15.30 on that day, and
 24 you attended, along with Mr Wainwright; yes?
 25 A. Yes, correct.

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1 Q. And it was chaired by Nicholas Hurd again.
 2 A. Correct.
 3 Q. If we look at the minutes, please, we find those at
 4 {CAB00002720}. You can see the attendees at this
 5 meeting.
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. Again, its title is the ministerial meeting at 15.30
 8 Friday, 15 June. Present: Nick Hurd in the chair, and
 9 you can see the various ministers present set out on
 10 that page.
 11 You can also see who was dialling in, foot of your
 12 screen:
 13 " ■ Nicholas HOLGATE, Chief Executive, The Royal
 14 Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.
 15 " ■ Neil JEROME, Metropolitan Police ...
 16 " ■ Dominic ELLIS, [LFB] ..."
 17 Now, if we go, please, to page 3 {CAB00002720/3},
 18 under "Key issues", you can see subsection (a),
 19 "Immediate shelter and medium term rehousing", it
 20 records as follows:
 21 "Those affected were being placed into hotels for
 22 immediate shelter, with 77 from Grenfell Tower and 25
 23 people from the surrounding area in hotels. A large
 24 number of people are assumed to have gone to stay with
 25 friends and family, though the Westway centre had

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1 capacity for 300 to stay and only 30 were there the
 2 previous night."
 3 Given that there was a lack of clarity about the
 4 exact numbers of those affected, do you agree that there
 5 was no appreciation of the scale of the issue in
 6 relation to accommodation.
 7 A. I think there was a lack of precision in the numbers.
 8 This records the understanding of scale at that time.
 9 It was the lack of specifics that was of concern.
 10 Q. Specifics in what respect?
 11 A. Specific numbers of people who were known to have been
 12 in the tower that night.
 13 Q. Yes.
 14 Now, at this point, were you aware, or to your
 15 observation were others aware at the meeting, that there
 16 were approximately 845 people evacuated from nearby
 17 properties who also required accommodation, at least in
 18 the very short term?
 19 A. Again, I don't think we had that specific number, and
 20 that was the source of the concern.
 21 MR MILLETT: Right.
 22 Now, if we go to your first statement, then, again,
 23 please, page 18 {CAB00014764/18} —
 24 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Well, sorry, did you know that the
 25 blocks immediately adjacent to the tower had been

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1 evacuated?
 2 A. I believe we knew there had been knock-on effects.
 3 I don't think we knew the number of people who had been
 4 affected, and that's the source of some of the concern
 5 about the data coming through.
 6 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Presumably you didn't need precise
 7 numbers if you were looking at the scale of the demand
 8 for temporary housing, but —
 9 A. So I think the scale of the demand, as reflected here,
 10 was diminished by the fact that lots of people found
 11 a friend or a family member to stay with. So what we
 12 were trying to do at the time is understand the totality
 13 of the number of people who could have been affected
 14 and, of them, how many were in need of specific support
 15 and how many had, you know, resolved that issue for
 16 themselves, as is, you know, often the case.
 17 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes, all right. Thank you.
 18 MR MILLETT: If we then go to page 18 of your first
 19 statement {CAB00014764/18}, please, paragraph 62 now,
 20 you say:
 21 "The meeting opened with an update on the current
 22 situation and operational response. The majority of the
 23 time was taken up with discussion of two key issues:
 24 immediate shelter and medium term housing, and support
 25 for those affected and their families. These were

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1 issues on which I would have expected RBKC to lead,
 2 drawing on support from others as needed. However,
 3 I recall being a little concerned that there was an
 4 absence of data which a local authority might have been
 5 expected to have readily available (most notably the
 6 numbers of tenants in Grenfell Tower). Mr Holgate was
 7 also unable to articulate any plan beyond the immediate
 8 for rehousing or supporting those affected, or what
 9 resources would be needed from outside RBKC for that to
 10 occur. My overall impression from Mr Holgate at the
 11 15 June 2017 meeting was that RBKC was overwhelmed by
 12 the requirements of its role in relation to the fire."

13 Now, let me just show you, first of all, what
 14 Stuart Wainwright says.

15 First of all, can we take it that you stand by what
 16 you say there?

17 A. I do.

18 Q. You do.

19 Now, looking at what Stuart Wainwright says, this is
 20 in his first statement, page 9 {CAB00014776/9}, please.
 21 He says at paragraph 30 — and we can pick this up three
 22 lines down:

23 "On the issue of housing, Mr Holgate was unable to
 24 articulate a clear plan simply saying that it was in
 25 hand. He was not able to say, for instance, how many

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1 people would require accommodation, what services they
 2 needed, what resource RBKC had to deliver these or what
 3 support it would need to do so. I believe the concerns
 4 at this meeting were shared by other attendees and that
 5 is why a number of the agreed actions (particularly
 6 actions 4 and 5) were directed to resolving this."

7 Do you agree with what he says there?

8 A. Yes, I think that paragraph is consistent with the
 9 paragraph in my statement, so yes.

10 Q. Well, it is, that's something that both you and I can
 11 agree on without having to be there, but does it accord
 12 with your recollection? That was my question.

13 A. Yes, my statement is based on my recollection.

14 Q. Now, you also say — and I've shown you this — that
 15 your overall impression at the meeting was that RBKC was
 16 overwhelmed by the requirements of its role in relation
 17 to the fire. Could you just expand on that for us,
 18 please?

19 A. I think, in a meeting like this, generally those in
 20 a lead — responders in a leadership role have
 21 information at their fingertips, they're able to
 22 articulate where they have clarity on what they're going
 23 to do, and where they have yet to have that clarity but
 24 how they will reach it, and, as you can see from
 25 Stuart's description and from mine, those elements were

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1 lacking. So there was a perception there of lack of
 2 grip.

3 Q. Right. You say "lack of grip"; that seems to be a term
 4 of art, or at least others have suggested it is. We see
 5 it all over central government and resilience documents.
 6 But just identify with greater precision what that
 7 actually means.

8 A. It — sorry.

9 Q. What was it that you would have expected Mr Holgate to
 10 have articulated with clarity that you weren't getting
 11 from him, which led to the impression that he was
 12 overwhelmed?

13 A. I would have expected him to be able to give a clear
 14 account of the number of people requiring support from
 15 the local authority, and I would have expected him to be
 16 able to articulate the plan for that, how that would be
 17 delivered in more detail than was the case in the
 18 meeting, and Stuart records him saying it was in hand
 19 but not describing that further.

20 Q. Did you or Stuart Wainwright ask him any specific
 21 pointed questions, detailed questions, such as: is there
 22 a humanitarian assistance centre? Where is it? What's
 23 it doing? Is there a friends and relatives reception
 24 centre? Et cetera.

25 A. I can't recall either of us asking that question in the

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1 meeting, for which we were, of course, providing the
 2 secretariat.

3 Q. Can you tell us why this question, the general questions
 4 about housing, where it is said that Mr Holgate couldn't
 5 offer an articulate plan, wasn't raised at the meeting
 6 the previous day? What had changed since 4.00 pm on the
 7 Wednesday afternoon by the time of the Thursday
 8 afternoon?

9 A. So I think, looking back at the evidence that we have
 10 looked at this morning, clearly this was an issue which
 11 the SCG was now focusing on and had been since late the
 12 previous evening, and I would expect that to be the
 13 first place at which these kind of issues were arisen.
 14 So I think that the factor that has changed is that
 15 visibility, first through the SCG, had improved.

16 Q. Right.

17 Now, let's turn to what happened after the meeting.

18 Can you remember what actions you took after the
 19 15.30 ministerial meeting, given your concerns that you
 20 felt at that meeting that RBKC had become overwhelmed?

21 A. Do you mean specific actions actioned in the meeting?

22 Q. No, actions —

23 A. Or do you mean what I did —

24 Q. — following the meeting, consequent upon the meeting.

25 A. Oh, yes, of course. Yes, so I think a short time after

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1 the meeting — forgive me, I can't recall the exact time
 2 now — I had an email exchange with colleagues in DCLG,
 3 which was really sense-checking whether they shared
 4 those concerns and suggesting that someone more senior
 5 in DCLG should make contact with the local authority to
 6 really get to the bottom of what was going on.
 7 Q. Yes. Let's cover those.
 8 Let's start with {CAB00002899}. I'm going to run
 9 through this, I think, as chronologically as I can on
 10 that evening. This I think is out of chronology, but
 11 I don't think it matters.
 12 This is, if you go to page 1, an email, second email
 13 down, if you go to it, Sue Gray in the Cabinet Office —
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. — to you, "thank you so much". I think you have given
 16 her an update, or you have shared with her an update
 17 which had come. She thanks you and asks you, "how was
 18 your ministerial meeting", and you say this to her:
 19 "Not bad. Very tired NH."
 20 Who was NH?
 21 A. I think that refers to the chair.
 22 Q. Right, not Nicholas Holgate?
 23 A. No.
 24 Q. You can see how that question arises.
 25 A. Indeed, indeed. Same initials.

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1 Q. Why was NH, Nicholas Hurd, very tired? What was the
 2 problem with him?
 3 A. So these meetings were taking place very shortly after
 4 the general election of that year. Ministers had only
 5 been appointed, in some cases, a day or two before.
 6 I think we were just seeing the aftermath of some of
 7 that.
 8 Q. Right.
 9 A. I don't think it affected his ability to chair the
 10 meeting at all.
 11 Q. Well, that was my next question. It didn't.
 12 It goes on to say:
 13 "Local authority chief exec did not inspire
 14 confidence, though — we will keep an eye on that."
 15 We don't need the rest of it.
 16 How were you going to keep an eye on that?
 17 A. So we would continue to track it through the action
 18 process and the meeting process, and the "we" there
 19 I think refers to the government effort. So DCLG were
 20 clearly already in contact, so I'm referring in part to
 21 that as well, I think.
 22 Q. Did you make any contact with the Home Office, as lead
 23 government department for the response, to raise your
 24 concerns, as expressed here, about RBKC?
 25 A. I wouldn't have made those concerns to the Home Office

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1 because DCLG, as lead department both for, you know, the
 2 local authority sector and for the recovery, of which
 3 this is really, you know, now a key part, or starting to
 4 become a key part, it would have been for them to lead
 5 on that relationship. So, no.
 6 Q. Now, you say in your first statement at paragraph 64
 7 {CAB00014764/18} that you sent an email to DCLG to seek
 8 their view about whether your impression about RBKC was
 9 correct.
 10 Let's look at that. It's at {CAB00002896/2}. If we
 11 go to page 2 in that email run, we can see an email at
 12 19.57 that evening, so that's just before your email to
 13 Sue Gray, second email down on page 2. You write:
 14 "Hello — good to see you both today. Would it make
 15 sense to rearrange our catch up tomorrow given the
 16 ongoing incident?"
 17 A. Just as a point of clarity, that's not me.
 18 Q. That's Katherine Richardson.
 19 A. That's Katherine Richardson, yes.
 20 Q. Yes, you're right, and then you respond to that, copied
 21 to Jillian Kay, and you say:
 22 "Hi Katherine — yes, I suspect we will be in 10VS
 23 [10 Victoria Street] again at that point! Would be good
 24 to take stock with you on the local authority though and
 25 how they are doing outside the wider meeting."

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1 You make reference to the local authority unprompted
 2 by Katherine Richardson's question to you there; yes?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. Yes. You don't ask her, though, whether your impression
 5 from the meeting was correct, did you?
 6 A. So I think — could we go to the next email in the
 7 chain?
 8 Q. Yes, page 1 {CAB00002896/1}. We can do that.
 9 A. Yes. So the second part of that — of the final email
 10 in the chain — the penultimate email in the chain,
 11 excuse me, is me recording my concerns from that
 12 meeting, and, you know, asking — the last question is
 13 essentially me testing my assumptions with Katherine and
 14 with Jillian.
 15 Q. Yes. I mean, I was going to take you through this a bit
 16 more slowly, but we can take it a bit more quickly
 17 because you're familiar with it.
 18 A. I am.
 19 Q. So you don't ask her about her impressions in that
 20 email.
 21 She comes back, foot of page 1, and says:
 22 "Thank ... one step forward [with the inquiry] ..."
 23 And you go back to her and say:
 24 "No problemo. Three and a half years of my life put
 25 to good use finally."

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1 I think we know what that's a reference to, but we
 2 don't need to go into it :
 3 "On the LA — I wondered if Jo might want to put in
 4 a call chief exec to chief exec so to speak and give her
 5 view? She may already have I guess. The numbers issues
 6 were worrying me today — especially on how many flats
 7 were council tenants vs in private hands. Surely
 8 a sensible person with access to their files could be
 9 working out that and decent estimates of occupancy
 10 (tenancies + electoral register + council tax)?"
 11 That's what you say, and she thanks you for that in
 12 response, 21.03:
 13 "Thanks Katherine — yes Jo has already spoken to
 14 Nick Holgate (offering specific support on the housing
 15 issue). Our housing minister is also intending to speak
 16 to Nick/the housing director and/or the cabinet member
 17 for housing tomorrow morning. Between them they'll be
 18 getting into the detail we didn't have today."
 19 And it rounds off at the top with a reference to
 20 feeding into the Chairman's brief.
 21 Now, why weren't you more direct in your questions
 22 to DCLG RED about the fact that RBKC were overwhelmed
 23 and what steps you perceived needed to be taken by RED?
 24 A. I think that is quite direct. These are colleagues that
 25 I know very well. They would have known that me writing

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1 to express that concern was setting out, you know,
 2 a genuine worry. And Katherine's response said to me
 3 that they shared those concerns, because their director
 4 general had already spoken to the chief executive, and
 5 they clearly had plans for further conversations. So
 6 I think, on the basis of that exchange, I was confident
 7 that we were sharing the same worries about the
 8 performance of the local authority.
 9 Q. Right. Did you know by that stage, on 15 June, that
 10 Nicholas Holgate had agreed with John Barradell to —
 11 and I'm choosing my words carefully here — activate
 12 London Gold?
 13 A. I don't think I did know that, no.
 14 Q. Right. Was that something you should have known, given
 15 that it might have materially affected your views of the
 16 local authority and its needs going forward?
 17 A. It's not something I would have expected to have been
 18 consulted on. I would have expected to find out,
 19 you know, reasonably swiftly afterwards if it had
 20 a material impact on the response. I think, in fact,
 21 I found out in the — very early the following morning.
 22 I think that's correct.
 23 Q. Now, at the top of the email string you suggest
 24 a catch-up the next day, the 16th. Did that catch-up
 25 happen?

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1 A. I can't recollect. There certainly would have been lots
 2 of contact between the response team and DCLG through
 3 the morning.
 4 Q. Right. Do you know what the next thing was that you
 5 discussed with DCLG that next morning?
 6 A. I'm afraid not. I can't recall.
 7 MR MILLETT: Let's round off the day, then, at paragraph 65
 8 of your first statement at page 19 {CAB00014764/19}.
 9 Mr Chairman, looking at the clock, it will be
 10 a convenient moment after this paragraph.
 11 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes. Well, let's take this first,
 12 shall we?
 13 MR MILLETT: If we may, thank you.
 14 You see you say there, at paragraph 65, as follows:
 15 "At the close of 15 June 2017, I remained of the
 16 view that emergency response mechanism for which CCS is
 17 responsible was working well. The right people were
 18 given the right information to generate the right
 19 decisions and recommendations. My concern was with the
 20 capacity of RBKC to cope, which I considered that the
 21 relevant Government Department (DCLG) was aware of and
 22 considering how to act on."
 23 What exactly was the emergency response mechanism
 24 that you say was working well?
 25 A. That's a reference to the ministerial meetings being

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1 convened.
 2 Q. Right.
 3 Were you at the time confident that DCLG had
 4 sufficient capacity and expertise within it to deal with
 5 the concerns about RBKC?
 6 A. I can't recall having a specific view on capacity at
 7 that moment. I think the email chains show that DCLG
 8 were still in the process of understanding the scale of
 9 the ask which might come to them. So I think it would
 10 have been difficult to be clear on capacity at that
 11 moment.
 12 Q. With hindsight, perhaps, do you accept that you should
 13 have been more proactive in probing DCLG RED about
 14 exactly what was going to be done to address the
 15 problems and concerns about RBKC?
 16 A. No, I don't think so. I mean, those are colleagues that
 17 I knew very well, and their response reassured me that
 18 they were on the case, that they'd taken this to very
 19 senior levels in their department, that they had further
 20 plans for contact, even at ministerial level. So it
 21 looked to me like it was being taken very seriously and
 22 it was within their area of responsibility. So, on that
 23 basis, I don't think it would have been helpful for me
 24 to have probed further.
 25 MR MILLETT: Mr Chairman, is that a convenient moment?

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1 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes, thank you very much.
 2 Well, Ms Hammond, we will have our morning break at
 3 that point. We'll resume, please, at 11.35, and as
 4 before, please don't talk to anyone about your evidence
 5 while you're out of the room.
 6 THE WITNESS: Of course.
 7 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: All right? Thank you very much.
 8 THE WITNESS: Thank you.
 9 (Pause)
 10 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you, Mr Millett.
 11 11.35, then, please. Thank you.
 12 (11.20 am)
 13 (A short break)
 14 (11.35 am)
 15 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Right, Ms Hammond, on we go, yes.
 16 Yes, Mr Millett.
 17 MR MILLETT: Yes, Mr Chairman.
 18 Ms Hammond, 16 June, the Friday, let's turn to that.
 19 Now, do you remember whether there was a handover
 20 from Stuart Wainwright to Peter Tallantire on that
 21 evening, on the evening of 15 June?
 22 A. Yes, I think that's correct. Stuart and Peter have
 23 given evidence on that.
 24 Q. Well, they have, but do you recall that?
 25 A. I can't remember if I was present at that handover, no.

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1 Q. Right.
 2 Now, Peter Tallantire, just to identify him, he was
 3 the head of the crisis management team within the CCS,
 4 wasn't he?
 5 A. He was head of the operations team, so the team which
 6 was responsible, in particular, for the provision of the
 7 sites and the doctrine.
 8 Q. And he was very experienced?
 9 A. Extremely experienced, yes.
 10 Q. Yes. And I think Stuart Wainwright was handing over
 11 because he was about to go on annual leave.
 12 A. Correct. So Peter had previously been in the role that
 13 Stuart was in at the time, so he was very well versed in
 14 how to do that job.
 15 Q. Yes.
 16 Now, there were a number of developments over the
 17 course of the morning of Friday, 16 June I'm going to
 18 show you in turn, and first let's look at correspondence
 19 from the Home Office, who were the lead government
 20 department in this response.
 21 Can we start, please, with {CAB00012037/2}, and I'd
 22 like to go to an email at 8.56 at the top of that page
 23 from FMin PS to the office of Sajid Javid, copied to the
 24 office of Alok Sharma and you; do you see that?
 25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. FMin PS I think is fire minister private secretary, so
 2 it's Nick Hurd, isn't it?
 3 A. His office, yes.
 4 Q. Yes. It's coming from the Home Office, effectively;
 5 yes?
 6 A. Coming from the Minister of State for Policing and the
 7 Fire Service, yes.
 8 Q. Right.
 9 A. In the Home Office.
 10 Q. In the Home Office, yes, thank you.
 11 Now, you're copied in to this, and it says:
 12 "Hi James, Tom,
 13 "With many thanks (Tom) for your time on the phone —
 14 the Minister is receiving direct feedback this morning
 15 that the coordination on the ground in terms of i)
 16 connecting families and ii) coordinating the volunteer
 17 effort is not quite there yet and is perceived as
 18 'chaotic'.
 19 "He feels it would be helpful for us collectively to
 20 identify who is actually responsible for coordinating
 21 both efforts (as in a person) and what, if any, more
 22 support they may need.
 23 "I understand this is likely to sit within RBKC and
 24 be one of their senior officials? Would it be possible
 25 for DCLG colleagues to check this out? (Happy to do so

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1 from here but I don't want to cut across your lines of
 2 communication with the Council).
 3 "Thanks,
 4 "Deborah."
 5 That comes from Deborah Morrison, who is Nick Hurd's
 6 PS; yes?
 7 Now, at this stage, which department did you
 8 consider was responsible for establishing that
 9 information, the Home Office as lead government
 10 department or DCLG RED?
 11 A. Which information are you referring to, the name of the
 12 individual responsible?
 13 Q. Yes.
 14 A. Yeah —
 15 Q. Well, there are a number of bits of information, but
 16 yes, I mean, one can take that as the first point.
 17 A. So I think it's absolutely right that that was within
 18 DCLG's responsibility, both as the lead department for
 19 local authorities and because of their RED
 20 responsibilities, and, of course, because they would be
 21 lead on the recovery operation, which is what we were
 22 heading into on this Friday.
 23 Q. Just in relation to conduits of information, would you
 24 have expected to receive that information from the DCLG
 25 RED, given their role as a link between local responders

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1 and central government?

2 A. Yes, I think that would be normal, yes.

3 Q. Right. So not the Home Office, then?

4 A. No, I think the Home Office here are doing the right

5 thing. Their minister has received a piece of

6 information; they're asking their DCLG colleagues for

7 the answer to that question, rather than cutting across

8 them.

9 Q. Right. Would you have expected that information to have

10 been established by this point? This is the morning of

11 the 16th.

12 A. I would certainly expect the lead to be a known person,

13 yes.

14 Q. Yes.

15 Now, if you go, please, to {CAB00012037/1}, you can

16 see you send an email at 9.02 to Katherine Richardson

17 and Jillian Kay:

18 "Forwarding ...

19 "Would a catch up mid-morning suit you guys?

20 Perhaps 10.30?"

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Then there is a follow-up email. You say at the very

23 top of the email string, and this is at 9.29:

24 "It would be good to catch up on the focus for this

25 afternoon, and also on the move to recovery."

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1 Did you end up having the catch-up with Ms Kay and

2 Ms Richardson ahead of the ministerial meeting of that

3 day?

4 A. I'm afraid I can't recall. We would have been talking

5 throughout this period. I'm afraid I don't recall that

6 specific conversation.

7 Q. Right.

8 Then if we go to {CAB00001152}, you can see the

9 second email down on page 1 there is from the

10 Home Office to you, copied to Number 10 and the DCLG,

11 Katherine Richardson, but it's also copied to others in

12 the Home Office like David Lamberti, and Lorna Gratton

13 at Number 10. It says:

14 "Katherine,

15 "Thank you so much for your time on the phone

16 earlier this morning.

17 "As we discussed, in advance of the meeting this

18 afternoon the Minister would be really grateful if the

19 Secretariat could pull together a written summary of

20 what we are doing across the system to:

21 "i. support victims;

22 "ii. provide support for emergency services

23 personnel;

24 "iii. action taken to so far to identify and check

25 similar buildings;

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1 "iv. action taken so far to re-house people and what

2 is our common understanding (D[C]LG/RBKC) of the

3 commitment to re-house people locally;

4 "v. action taken so far to reassure people about

5 their fire safety; and

6 "vi. an update on access to cash (and how it's

7 working on the ground/any updates from local Banks?)

8 "We've touched on all these questions over the last

9 two meetings but the Minister thinks it would be helpful

10 to have a summary that we can work through point by

11 point. He feels it is important that we use this

12 meeting to really stress test the reality on the ground,

13 given the conflicting reporting and as this is likely to

14 be the 'handover' meeting before we switch into recovery

15 mode.

16 "Would that be possible?

17 "Thanks again,

18 "Deborah."

19 Now, just looking at the last part of that, bottom

20 of page 1, top of page 2, where it said that the

21 minister felt it was important that you used the meeting

22 to really stress test the reality on the ground given

23 the conflicting reporting, what was your understanding

24 of what was meant by that?

25 A. So obviously the minister had received some direct

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1 feedback from people on the ground, which was referred

2 to in the email chain you had -- you took me to before.

3 I think the conflicting reporting is just referring to

4 different accounts of how well parts of the response

5 were going. So there'd obviously been, you know, some

6 reassurance the previous day that things were in hand.

7 That sits at odds with accounts he was receiving from on

8 the ground. So I think that's what that's referring to,

9 the fact that there wasn't a sort of, you know, single

10 established version of that at that time.

11 Q. Right. Was there a growing concern at this point that

12 those involved at a central government level did not

13 have an accurate insight into the reality of the issues

14 on the ground with respect to survivors and affected

15 residents?

16 A. I think we're always concerned to make sure that we've

17 got the most accurate possible picture. Those concerns

18 had arisen after the meeting the previous day. We

19 talked before about the issues around data and numbers.

20 So, yes, I think we were concerned about that

21 information at this point.

22 Q. Now, I want to ask you about DCLG.

23 Can we go to {CAB00001150}. If we go to the foot of

24 page 1, we can see an email from Peter Tallantire at

25 9.10 in the morning to the CCS, and you specifically,

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1 and he says this:
 2 "I've been reflecting on the fire and next steps.
 3 A few quick thoughts which may already be in hand (or
 4 deemed unnecessary) in light of discussions so [far]
 5 which I'm largely unsighted."
 6 Then he says, if we go over to page 2
 7 {CAB00001150/2}, please, point 5 of a number, and he
 8 says — it's the first of the two point 5s there:
 9 "I think ministers will need to meet at least once
 10 over the weekend or they risk getting crucified as they
 11 will need to be on top of the detail and able to assure
 12 media/public they are doing everything to address the
 13 wider problem, so no let up over the weekend. We should
 14 plan/staff accordingly."
 15 Now, in response to that point, we can see your
 16 email, please, if we go back to page 1 {CAB00001150/1}.
 17 You can see your response there at 9.22, back to
 18 Peter Tallantire, and in the last paragraph you say:
 19 "On the weekend — I think the general feeling is we
 20 shift from response to recovery after today: most of the
 21 issues are now the longer term ones. Perhaps a call
 22 over the weekend would do it (I fear otherwise CLG may
 23 fall over)."
 24 First, why did you think a call would be sufficient
 25 over the weekend, rather than a further ministerial

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1 meeting?
 2 A. Well, I mean, a call doesn't presume that it's not
 3 ministerial, it's perfectly possible to have — to draw
 4 ministers together on a call, and that would be normal
 5 practice. So I think I'm just testing whether we need
 6 to bring people together in person versus do it on the
 7 telephone.
 8 Q. I see.
 9 Did you appreciate the extent of the concerns with
 10 the local response at the time?
 11 A. Yeah, I think I was certainly sighted on concerns about
 12 the provision of accommodation, as we've already
 13 discussed, yes.
 14 Q. What did you mean by "otherwise CLG may fall over"?
 15 A. I can't recollect entirely. I suspect I'm just
 16 reflecting it had been a very busy few days for
 17 a relatively small team and we would want to protect
 18 capacity for what was clearly going to be a long—running
 19 response.
 20 Q. Yes. I mean, did you have concerns about DCLG's
 21 capacity to deal with the issues that had been
 22 identified?
 23 A. Not, I don't think, beyond what I've just said.
 24 Q. Well, is that right? I mean, you say you wanted to
 25 protect the capacity, "I fear otherwise CLG may fall

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1 over"; isn't that the same thing, in a sense, that you
 2 were concerned — is this right? — that there was
 3 a risk, at least, that CLG may lack capacity?
 4 A. I think I'm just reflecting that it's not a gigantic
 5 team. It was well organised to do things, running in
 6 shifts. This was a response which was obviously
 7 running, you know, pretty much from very early in the
 8 morning to very late at night, so I'm reflecting that,
 9 you know, that is stretching for the team.
 10 Q. Yes, yes, and did you take any steps to consider
 11 providing or co—ordinating further steps for that team,
 12 the DCLG team?
 13 A. I — they're not within my responsibility, I'm afraid.
 14 The support that we did provide over to DCLG was in the
 15 form of Ian Whitehouse, one of my deputy directors. He
 16 went across to support the recovery effort.
 17 Q. Right. What was the mechanism available to you to
 18 address your concern about the need to protect the
 19 DCLG's capacity?
 20 A. So the capacity of DCLG and the RED team was the
 21 responsibility of Jillian Kay, my counterpart over
 22 there, so I knew that she would be thinking about
 23 ensuring that the team had the right people in the right
 24 place.
 25 Q. You say Ian Whitehouse went across to support the

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1 recovery effort; was that an ad hoc arrangement or was
 2 that pursuant to a specific mechanism?
 3 A. Sorry, could you just clarify, what do you mean by
 4 specific mechanism?
 5 Q. Well, was there a protocol, a practice, a procedure,
 6 a process in place, written down on a piece of paper,
 7 which would allow you to send one of your staffers to
 8 a government department?
 9 A. No, no protocol. We — it was on the basis of
 10 a conversation with DCLG colleagues, who said they would
 11 find it helpful to have someone of Ian's expertise
 12 helping them as they set up the recovery process.
 13 Q. If we go to paragraph 64 of your first statement,
 14 page 18 {CAB00014764/18}, you say there — perhaps we
 15 don't need to see it, it's a short point in
 16 paragraph 64 — that:
 17 "DCLG is the liaison between local and national
 18 government in any crisis. It is also the Government
 19 lead for local authorities."
 20 This comes back to a point we discussed yesterday.
 21 Was the DCLG always the liaison between local and
 22 national government in any crisis of whatever kind?
 23 A. Yes, that's their stand — one of their standing roles.
 24 Q. Right, and is always, as a standing role, the government
 25 lead for local authorities? I think you said that

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1 yesterday.
 2 A. That's correct, that's within the department's policy
 3 responsibilities .
 4 Q. Yes.
 5 How effective did you think at the time DCLG was in
 6 their liaison function at this stage of the development
 7 of the crisis ?
 8 A. I think we were broadly getting the sort of information
 9 I would expect to get from liaison officers at this
 10 point. Certainly we've provided the lessons learned
 11 documents to the Inquiry, and when we — on reflecting
 12 back, we concluded that it would be helpful to give
 13 those liaison officers some additional training and
 14 support in how to spot and raise overstretch in local
 15 authorities . So that is certainly a lesson taken from
 16 this event and something that has been taken forward.
 17 Q. Yes, and we'll come to that later in your evidence.
 18 At this point, do you remember, had you raised any
 19 concerns about DCLG with those more senior to you,
 20 for example Paddy McGuinness or Mark Sedwill?
 21 A. I would have to check the record. I'm afraid I can't
 22 recollect .
 23 Q. I want to turn next, then, if I can, please, to the
 24 appointment of John Barradell.
 25 You say in your first statement at paragraph 68 at

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1 page 19 {CAB00014764/19} that you recall learning that
 2 morning from Mr Bellamy that John Barradell had been
 3 appointed to take over from RBKC as Recovery Gold. You
 4 say that three lines down within that paragraph.
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. If we go to your third statement, please, page 14
 7 {CAB00014816/14}, paragraph 34, you clarify what you say
 8 here, and you say:
 9 "I understood this to be a change of leadership,
 10 rather than a change of the role of RBKC. Mr Barradell
 11 took over responsibility for leadership of the recovery
 12 operation from Mr Holgate."
 13 In the light of what you say there, was it your
 14 understanding of the LLAG arrangements that LLAG would
 15 assume the same executive authority and powers vested in
 16 the relevant chief executive, ie Nick Holgate?
 17 A. Yes, I assumed that Mr Barradell was acting on behalf of
 18 Mr Holgate in respect of this area of his
 19 responsibilities . That was my understanding at the
 20 time.
 21 Q. What was the basis of that understanding?
 22 A. I think the way I learned about this was through
 23 conversation with Mr Bellamy, so that would be the
 24 basis .
 25 Q. Can you remember what he said to you?

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1 A. Not in precise words, I'm afraid.
 2 Q. You say in quite precise terms in your answer but one
 3 ago that you assumed that Mr Barradell was acting on
 4 behalf of Mr Holgate in respect of this area of his
 5 responsibilities . Now, you say you assumed that; what
 6 was that assumption based on?
 7 A. Based on my conversation with Mr Bellamy.
 8 Q. So was it your assumption or view, understanding
 9 perhaps, that Mr Barradell had been delegated by
 10 Mr Holgate to perform the obligations that he,
 11 Mr Holgate, had as chief executive of RBKC as
 12 a category 1 responder?
 13 A. Not in their totality . So I understood that he had been
 14 appointed as Recovery Gold in relation to this event.
 15 So not taking over Mr Holgate's general
 16 responsibilities , but in relation to this specific
 17 recovery operation, that he was now in the — now
 18 leading it on behalf of Mr Holgate.
 19 Q. Well, you say "on behalf of Mr Holgate". I just want to
 20 be clear: was your understanding that he stepped into
 21 Mr Holgate's shoes in respect of Mr Holgate's
 22 responsibilities as chief executive of RBKC as
 23 a category 1 responder?
 24 A. Only insofar as they relate to this recovery operation.
 25 Q. So yes, in response to the Grenfell Tower fire?

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1 A. Correct.
 2 Q. Right. What were the mechanics, did you understand at
 3 the time, by which Mr Barradell received his delegation?
 4 A. Very difficult to recollect the precise conversation
 5 I had with Mr Bellamy. I think my basic understanding
 6 was that there had been a conversation at the —
 7 you know, at the pan-London level, it had been
 8 recognised, I think including by RBKC, that they were in
 9 need of additional support. Mr Barradell was very
 10 experienced, one of the deputy chairs of the LRF, and
 11 identified as the right person to take that role.
 12 Q. Now, "take that role", I just want to explore that.
 13 First, did you understand that Mr Barradell, in
 14 taking that role, was there not to support Mr Holgate in
 15 the discharge of his functions, but to take them over
 16 from him?
 17 A. I understood that he was acting in Mr Holgate's place in
 18 respect of the Grenfell Tower recovery operation.
 19 That's what I understood. So not reporting to him, no,
 20 but acting in his stead for this operation.
 21 Q. And reporting to whom?
 22 A. Well, with responsibility back to the local authority,
 23 but not to Mr Holgate specifically .
 24 Q. Who at the local authority?
 25 A. I'm afraid you're beyond my level of intricate

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1 understanding.
 2 Q. I just want to see if I can explore what the outer
 3 boundaries of that understanding were.
 4 Did you have a discussion at all with anybody,
 5 whether David Bellamy or anybody else, about what the
 6 mechanisms were by which Mr Barradell received his power
 7 and authority to act?
 8 A. I didn't have a detailed legal conversation. To my
 9 understanding, there was an existing arrangement by
 10 which this was possible. There were no legal issues or
 11 concerns raised.
 12 Q. That leads to my next question: did you understand at
 13 the time that this delegation, if you like, was being
 14 done pursuant to an existing framework?
 15 A. I can't recall a specific conversation about the precise
 16 mechanics of how it had taken place, but certainly,
 17 you know, my conversation with Mr Bellamy left me
 18 reassured that a sensible arrangement had been put in
 19 place. I would have expected that if the GLA had had
 20 concerns about the legitimacy of that, they would have
 21 acted on them.
 22 Q. Were you familiar at the time with the London Gold
 23 resolution and its supporting documents?
 24 A. I'm aware of it. I'm not familiar with every element of
 25 detail, no.

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1 Q. Was your understanding, however it came about, that the
 2 appointment of John Barradell to do what he was going to
 3 do, as you've described it, was within the terms of the
 4 London Gold resolution and the arrangements at the time,
 5 or outside it and wholly novel?
 6 A. I'm afraid I don't recollect a specific conversation
 7 about that.
 8 Q. Now, your understanding, I think, was that the decision
 9 to appoint John Barradell as Recovery Gold on 16 June
 10 was made by the Mayor's Office, or the Mayor's deputy,
 11 who chairs the LRF in London. I think that's what you
 12 say in paragraph 68 {CAB00014764/19}. That's right,
 13 is it?
 14 A. I think that was my understanding at the time, yes.
 15 Q. Do you accept now that your understanding was wrong and
 16 that the Mayor's Office would have no power to make that
 17 appointment?
 18 A. I mean, I don't think my understanding at the time was
 19 based on a sort of set of legal accountabilities. That
 20 was my understanding of how it had come about, so it
 21 wasn't a sort of legal judgement.
 22 Q. Right.
 23 Was your understanding at the time that the Mayor
 24 had some kind of legally available mechanism whereby he
 25 could put John Barradell in post? Was that your

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1 understanding?
 2 A. I think it was my understanding that RBKC were very
 3 happy with this arrangement and therefore content to
 4 delegate this role to Mr Holgate.
 5 Q. I'm sorry --
 6 A. So the question of the Mayor's legal role I don't think
 7 is something we discussed.
 8 Q. Well, that wasn't an answer, I'm afraid, to the
 9 question.
 10 My question was: was your understanding at the time
 11 that the Mayor was acting in accordance with some kind
 12 of mechanism, some established protocol or arrangement,
 13 which empowered him to put Mr Barradell into
 14 Mr Holgate's place?
 15 A. I'm afraid I can't recall a specific conversation about
 16 the protocol under which that had taken place, no.
 17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well, I think the question was: at
 18 the time, did you believe that the Mayor had the power
 19 to appoint Mr Barradell to the role? What was your
 20 understanding?
 21 A. Yes, at the time I thought Mr Barradell was in the role
 22 perfectly legitimately and with consent of RBKC, so the
 23 question of the Mayor's role --
 24 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, but on the say--so of the Mayor?
 25 That was Mr Millett's question.

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1 A. So I don't think I understood at the time that this had
 2 been the Mayor's direction --
 3 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Ah.
 4 A. -- but that this had been negotiated through the offices
 5 of the Mayor's Office, is my understanding. Apologies,
 6 that's the distinction I'm trying to draw, but not very
 7 clearly.
 8 MR MILLETT: So whatever the precise position so far as
 9 the Mayor was concerned, was it your understanding that
 10 the Mayor had a material influence in the outcome,
 11 namely the takeover by Mr Barradell from Mr Holgate?
 12 A. Yes, I understood that the Mayor's Office had been
 13 involved in that discussion, yes.
 14 Q. Right.
 15 Can we look, then, at your precise language in
 16 paragraph 68 of your first statement at page 19
 17 {CAB00014764/19}. You say in the middle of the
 18 paragraph:
 19 "I understood this to mean [this is from your
 20 conversation with Mr Bellamy] he was taking over leading
 21 the recovery operation from Nicholas Holgate (for
 22 example, in relation to rehousing). CCS was not
 23 involved in the selection or appointment of
 24 John Barradell. My understanding was that this decision
 25 had been taken by the Mayor's office or by the Mayor's

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1 deputy who chairs the LRF in London. I recall being
2 pleased to learn of Mr Barradell's appointment, as it
3 indicated that my concerns regarding RBKC's apparent
4 lack of plan for addressing the accommodation issues had
5 been identified and acted upon."

6 Acted upon by whom?

7 A. So I think what that sentence is reflecting is,
8 you know, firstly pleasure that some action had been
9 taken to replace the leadership, and secondly I think my
10 assumption at the time was that there had been a series
11 of, you know, engagements with the local authority and
12 with the GLA, not necessarily prompted by me but
13 prompted by the general concerns which had resulted in
14 this action. So I don't think that refers to a specific
15 individual, it refers to the system having resulted in
16 a good outcome.

17 Q. Right. Was it your understanding that Mr Barradell was
18 imposed on RBKC by the Mayor, by whatever route, or that
19 RBKC had invited him to take over?

20 A. My understanding was that the arrangement was brokered
21 by the Mayor's Office, but that it was done with RBKC's
22 consent. But, again, this is based on quite a short
23 conversation on the morning of the Friday.

24 Q. Let's then turn to the correspondence from Number 10 on
25 that day.

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1 We were looking, I think — and if we weren't, we
2 should now — at {CAB00000473/3}. If we go to page 3 in
3 this email run, please, we can see that at 10.50,
4 halfway down your screen, Alastair Whitehead at
5 Number 10 send an email to the CCS and to you
6 specifically, and also to the other PPSs, including
7 Nicholas Hurd, as you can see, office of Sajid Javid,
8 Chancellor, and others.

9 If you go down it, it says:

10 "All,

11 "The Prime Minister has decided that this
12 afternoon's CCS Ministerial meeting will now be the
13 first meeting of the Prime Minister—chaired
14 Grenfell Towers Recovery Taskforce at 1330 in
15 70 Whitehall (CCS will confirm with a Calling Notice),
16 with SoSs from DCLG, HO, DfE, DWP, MoJ, HMT, DH
17 attending, along with the Policing and Fire Minister,
18 Minister for London, operational partners and the Mayor
19 of London and RB Kensington and Chelsea."

20 Had the CCS been consulted about that decision in
21 advance of this message?

22 A. I can't recollect, I'm afraid. I mean, normally
23 Alastair would have been talking to Stuart Wainwright
24 about the following meeting, so it's very possible they
25 had a conversation about it. I'm afraid I can't recall.

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1 Q. What did you understand the status of this taskforce to
2 be?

3 A. I understood it to be the formal evolution of the
4 ministerial meeting process, so now specifically focused
5 on recovery. The recovery practice is normally that the
6 ministerial recovery group or taskforce — the word
7 doesn't really make any difference — you know, is
8 convened at the moment where it is needed.

9 Q. I mean, within the civil contingencies framework of
10 legislation, regulation and guidance, what was this
11 taskforce? Where did this sit?

12 A. It's a ministerial recovery meeting.

13 Q. And what's that? I mean, I know what that would mean
14 ordinarily, but what is that in contingency lingo?
15 Where does it sit in the framework? Is it something
16 that's specifically contemplated by the regulation or by
17 the statutory or non-statutory guidance?

18 A. Not by the regulation, but by — in the doctrine. So if
19 a COBR or a ministerial meeting is leading the response
20 phase, this is its equivalent for the recovery phase.

21 I think that's the most succinct explanation I can give
22 you.

23 Q. Right.

24 Do you know what effort was made to make sure that
25 this group, whatever you might call it, linked to the

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1 national London civil contingencies framework, or did it
2 not matter?

3 A. So this is the central government operation. Its link
4 with the local would have been by inviting in attendees,
5 as it says here in Alastair's email.

6 Q. Now, let's go to the witness statement of Lorna Gratton,
7 {CAB00014853/22}, and I'd like to go within it, please,
8 to paragraph 64.

9 Now, as I said I think before this morning, or asked
10 you about, is it right she was the private secretary to
11 the Prime Minister with particular responsibility for
12 matters relating to the DCLG and the CCS?

13 A. Just DCLG.

14 Q. Just DCLG?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Right.

17 She says this in her statement at paragraph 64:

18 "It is my understanding that the Prime Minister
19 decided to lead the government response to the Grenfell
20 Tower due to the high priority she accorded to the need
21 to ensure that the survivors were properly supported.
22 The Prime Minister was acutely aware of the events
23 surrounding the fire. The Prime Minister had attended
24 the site of the fire herself and she had been appraised
25 of the information coming out of the cross-Whitehall

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1 meetings."

2 Was it your understanding that the Prime Minister

3 was now leading the government response because the

4 initial response had not been good enough in respect of

5 the needs of survivors and families?

6 A. I don't think I can add to Lorna's evidence as to what

7 was in the Prime Minister's mind, other than to say

8 I think at the time I assumed she wanted to assure

9 herself on the points that Lorna raises here, and that

10 that is absolutely the Prime Minister's right and not

11 unusual for them to step into and out of the chair of

12 these kind of meetings.

13 Q. Now, if we go back to your first statement, we can come,

14 then, to the 13.30 meeting chaired by the

15 Prime Minister.

16 If we go to page 20 of your first statement

17 {CAB00014764/20}, paragraph 69, at the top of your

18 screen you say:

19 "At 9.50am I learned from Alastair Whitehead

20 (Private Secretary to the Prime Minister) that the Prime

21 Minister had decided to chair the Ministerial meeting

22 that afternoon, which would be named the Grenfell Tower

23 Recovery Taskforce from this point onwards. The name

24 'Grenfell Tower Recovery Taskforce' was chosen by No 10.

25 I believe it correctly reflected the fact that the

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1 balance of activity in dealing with the incident had

2 shifted away from extinguishing the fire and was

3 increasingly focused on what we would term 'recovery',

4 specifically supporting the victims."

5 Now, did you think that shifting the focus to

6 victims two days after the fire — this is more than

7 48 hours after the 8.00 am moment — was too late?

8 A. No, so I don't think this is referring to any sort of

9 start of a focus on victims, this is referring to the

10 shift in emphasis of the meeting. So in the early hours

11 on the 14th and the 15th, during the response phase,

12 there were obviously immediate considerations in the

13 response which, by this point, you know, had diminished.

14 So, for example, the fire had been extinguished. So in

15 terms of shift in emphasis, supporting the victims was

16 now, you know, the single focus.

17 Q. Right. You used the expression "shift in emphasis";

18 that's how you saw it, is it?

19 A. Yeah. So often recovery and response operations

20 effectively start in parallel. There's not normally

21 an absolutely clear dividing line between them, although

22 sometimes there is. So generally the way that manifests

23 is a shift in emphasis from managing the immediate set

24 of issues on the ground into thinking about the

25 long-term needs and requirements particularly of those

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1 affected. So that's what I mean by shift in emphasis.

2 Q. Yes. Did that indicate to you that the transition had

3 been made to the recovery phase from the response phase?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Was DCLG now the lead government department?

6 A. Yes. So they had been, from the start of the incident

7 and on a pre-agreed basis, the lead for recovery, so

8 that responsibility was unchanged.

9 Q. Yes, but they may not have known about the view about

10 the shift. From what you could tell at the time, was

11 DCLG aware that they had now or were about to become now

12 the lead government department?

13 A. I mean, they had — they were already the lead

14 government department and they were already actively

15 engaged in thinking about recovery, so I think the basis

16 of your question is not quite right, forgive me.

17 Q. Oh, I'm sorry, then let me put it again.

18 Were they aware that they were going to become the

19 most prominent, the primary lead government department,

20 because of the shift in emphasis now to recovery?

21 A. As soon as that decision had been taken to re-title the

22 mechanism the recovery taskforce, then, yes, they would

23 have been — that would have been very clear to them.

24 Q. Let's go to your first statement, please, page 20

25 {CAB00014764/20}. In paragraph 70 of your statement

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1 there, you say:

2 "That the meeting was to be chaired by the

3 Prime Minister did not materially affect CCS'

4 preparation for the meeting. The Home Office remained

5 the Lead Government Department for the response at this

6 time. As it did for the previous two meetings, CCS drew

7 up the attendees' list, briefed the Chair, drafted the

8 agenda and updated the CRIP."

9 "CRIP" we have heard a lot, and has been I think

10 identified as the commonly recognised information

11 picture.

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Is that a notion, an idea, that's specific to CCS

14 responses, or is it a wider acronym used more commonly

15 across government?

16 A. It's used whenever the crisis response machinery is

17 activated, whether that's a CCS-led response or by other

18 parts of the Cabinet Office, so it's a common piece of

19 doctrine.

20 Q. What was the role of the Home Office at this stage? Was

21 it still lead government department in response to the

22 response?

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Right.

25 Was there clarity about when the formal transition

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1 to the recovery phase occurred?

2 A. So I think the creation of the recovery taskforce,

3 you know, marked that formal shift in emphasis, but, as

4 I explained a moment ago, in effect, these two

5 responsibilities were running in parallel in those first

6 few days, and of course the Home Office responsibility

7 didn't completely end with the start of recovery. So

8 really the titling of the ministerial forum reflects the

9 primary focus of the meeting, rather than the end of one

10 thing and the start of another. I hope that makes

11 sense.

12 Q. Right.

13 Well, let me show you something: {CAB00001150}.

14 This is an email we looked at earlier, and I showed you

15 this. If you look at your email to Peter Tallantire of

16 9.22 on the morning of the 16th, in the last paragraph,

17 you say:

18 "On the weekend — I think the general feeling is we

19 shift from response to recovery after today ..."

20 So was it clear in your mind that the 16th would

21 still be a day when the Home Office was the primary LGD,

22 but after the 16th, it would switch to DCLG being the

23 primary LGD?

24 A. I think, in effect, it's happening through the course of

25 that day —

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1 Q. I see.

2 A. — as we move more clearly into recovery mode.

3 As I say, there often isn't a moment in which that

4 occurs.

5 Q. Let's then go to the minutes of the meeting,

6 {CAB00002726}. The meeting is entitled:

7 "GRENFELL TOWER RECOVERY TASKFORCE.

8 "Minutes of Ministerial Meeting on Grenfell Tower

9 Fire.

10 "Conference Room F, 70WH.

11 "At 1330 Friday 16 June."

12 WH is Westminster Hall, is it?

13 A. Whitehall.

14 Q. Whitehall.

15 A. So the Cabinet Office building.

16 Q. Right.

17 Present, the chair, and you can see it's the

18 Prime Minister, and others present. Some familiar names

19 there. If you look down, you can see Nick Hurd is also

20 there. You are there, left — hand column, as is

21 David Bellamy, Mark Sedwill and other familiar names.

22 If you turn on, please, to — well, can I ask you:

23 conference room F at 70 Whitehall, is that one of the

24 Cabinet Office briefing rooms?

25 A. Yes, it forms part of that suite, yes.

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1 Q. Given that the Cabinet Office briefing rooms are the

2 physical location from which the central response is

3 activated — and you will know that that's paragraph 3.1

4 of ConOps — does this indicate that COBR had been

5 activated on 16 June?

6 A. No. Although the COBR suite is often where COBRs are

7 run from, you can activate the central response in

8 practice from any location. This was very clearly

9 a recovery meeting which happened to be taking place in

10 those rooms.

11 Q. Right. Why in those rooms and not the same rooms that

12 the meetings on the afternoons of 14 and 15 June

13 occurred?

14 A. I honestly can't remember. It may have been

15 availability or convenience of the location. I wouldn't

16 attach any significance to it.

17 Q. Right.

18 Now, let's look at ConOps again, please, if we can.

19 That's {CAB00000026/9}. We'll come back to the minute

20 of the meeting in a moment, but I just want to take

21 a sideways look, if I can, please, with you, and look at

22 paragraph 1.10 in the middle of your screen there, and

23 the last sentence in that paragraph says:

24 "In practice, the level of central government

25 engagement may change over time (both up and down) as

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1 the demands of the emergency change."

2 Now, that's obviously correct. Had there been

3 a change up or down by 13.30 on the 16th?

4 A. Compared to when?

5 Q. Compared to the 14th or the 15th.

6 A. Yes, I think central government engagement was — or

7 responsibilities were increasingly engaged as we headed

8 into recovery, particularly DCLG was by this point,

9 I think, you know, very heavily involved in looking for

10 sources of accommodation, long-term accommodation.

11 Q. Right.

12 Then let's go, in light of that answer, to annex B,

13 which we looked at yesterday, in ConOps, page 68

14 {CAB00000026/68}. There it is. It charts the likely

15 form of central government engagement based on the

16 impact and geographic spread of an emergency in England.

17 The question I have on this at this point is: did

18 the Prime Minister, in convening the Grenfell Tower

19 recovery taskforce and deciding to chair it on that day,

20 represent an escalation in the central government's

21 response for the purposes of this graph or this chart?

22 A. So this chart refers to response and not recovery. The

23 Prime Minister, of course, took the chair of the

24 recovery taskforce. And I certainly think it reflects

25 an increased focus from her, in terms of wanting to

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1 assure herself that things — that actions were being
 2 taken forward promptly, but this chart refers to
 3 response rather than recovery, I think.
 4 Q. Well, the title doesn't, it just refers to engagement,
 5 but are you referring, when you say it refers to
 6 response, to the words within the —
 7 A. Yes.
 8 Q. — chart?
 9 A. So COBR is a response rather than a recovery —
 10 Q. I see. So is it the case that COBR is about the
 11 response but not about the recovery?
 12 A. Yes, although, as I said before, those two things can
 13 often run in parallel, so COBR sometimes does take
 14 forward elements of recovery.
 15 Q. Well, that's the point. Exactly. Was there, in her
 16 chairing the meeting, an escalation in the response part
 17 of the engagement of central government, if I can use
 18 a neutral word?
 19 A. I don't think there is an escalation in the response,
 20 no. I think government had a bigger role in recovery
 21 than it did in response, for reasons that we discussed
 22 previously.
 23 Q. Right.
 24 So was one of the reasons why COBR, as I think you
 25 say, wasn't activated on 16 June that the response was

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1 either over or was fading and we were now increasingly
 2 into a recovery mode?
 3 A. I don't think there was a reason to activate anything
 4 additional on 16 June called COBR because the issues
 5 that we were aware of would be taken forward through the
 6 recovery taskforce.
 7 Q. Let's then go to the attendees list at {CAB00002728}.
 8 We have seen the list of those recorded present, but we
 9 have a more detailed list here, and you can see that
 10 it's an email at 16.25 on 16 June, which is being sent
 11 on pursuant to a request.
 12 If you scroll down, please, to page 2 in this email
 13 {CAB00002728/2}, you can see who was there from
 14 Number 10, and you've got some seven staff from
 15 Number 10 at this meeting.
 16 Is it or was it standard practice to have so many
 17 Number 10 officials in attendance at a ministerial
 18 meeting?
 19 A. I mean, the Prime Minister would — prime ministers in
 20 general tend to bring members of their staff with them
 21 to these meetings. I haven't gone back and counted how
 22 many were normal, but you can see that the spread of
 23 responsibilities that were engaged are reflected here:
 24 so Alastair in relation to the Home Office and the
 25 response element, which was, you know, the shift in

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1 emphasis away from but still there; Lorna in relation to
 2 the recovery, for example. So I think the people who
 3 are there reflect the people she obviously felt she
 4 wanted to support her.
 5 Q. Yes. It's a matter of impression, obviously, but was it
 6 your impression, given the number and identity of the
 7 Number 10 staff that the Prime Minister brought to the
 8 meeting, of the level of engagement that Number 10 was
 9 intending to take?
 10 A. I don't think I would have drawn a specific inference.
 11 I think the fact that the Prime Minister had decided to
 12 chair the meeting herself was a good indication that she
 13 was engaged and placing a lot of importance on these
 14 activities.
 15 Q. I mean, cutting through this, was it your impression,
 16 given that she'd essentially requested the meeting, had
 17 decided to chair it herself and brought seven senior
 18 staffers from Number 10 with her, that she was taking
 19 charge of the recovery?
 20 A. Yes, I mean, it's always the Prime Minister's right to
 21 do so.
 22 Q. Well —
 23 A. But not taking on departmental responsibilities, no.
 24 But taking the chair of the meeting.
 25 Q. Well, she, as Prime Minister, was taking charge of the

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1 recovery.
 2 A. I want to be really precise in my response. So I don't
 3 think she was taking on the role of a lead government
 4 department into Number 10, no. I think she was chairing
 5 the meeting to assure herself that the recovery was
 6 being taken forward by departments involved as it should
 7 be. So certainly taking the lead in that respect, but
 8 not taking charge in respect of taking on others'
 9 responsibilities.
 10 Sorry, that seems like a complicated answer, but I'm
 11 just trying to be precise.
 12 Q. So did you think she was there on
 13 an information-gathering —
 14 A. No.
 15 Q. — mission, or a mission to propel action?
 16 A. I think she was there on a mission to ensure that the
 17 right actions were being taken, yes.
 18 Q. Let's go to the minute again, please, which is at
 19 {CAB00002726/2}, item 1, and you can see that the
 20 heading is:
 21 "CURRENT SITUATION AND SUPPORT FOR THOSE AFFECTED
 22 "THE CHAIR welcomed everyone to the meeting and
 23 opened by explaining that she wanted to ensure that the
 24 Government was providing the best package of support to
 25 victims and doing everything possible to assist those on

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1 the ground.”

2 Now, clearly, would you accept, this demonstrated

3 a shift of focus, or shift of emphasis, if you like, in

4 this meeting towards the needs of those affected,

5 compared with the ministerial meetings on 14 and

6 15 June?

7 A. I think there's an increased focus here, yes, as the

8 immediate response questions have been resolved.

9 Q. Now, the meeting covered a number of topics. I would

10 like to take you through them.

11 First, co-ordination and support from DCLG.

12 If we go, please, to paragraph 3 on page 3

13 {CAB00002726/3}, it says:

14 " ... the SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF

15 COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT said that while he

16 could not provide absolute reassurance that there was

17 genuine coordination on the ground, his Department had

18 already committed to deploying more people which could

19 only help the situation .”

20 Why could reassurance not be provided that there was

21 genuine co-ordination on the ground?

22 A. I find it very difficult to give evidence on behalf of

23 the Secretary of State as to why he said that. I'm very

24 happy to go back and explore it, but my assumption would

25 be that he didn't feel he had information which said

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1 that that was clearly the case.

2 Q. Well, I'm really asking for your recollections of your

3 own understanding at the time —

4 A. Oh.

5 Q. — rather than looking into his mind.

6 To your way of looking at it at the time, so far as

7 you can recall it, what was your understanding about why

8 absolute reassurance could not be given about genuine

9 co-ordination on the ground?

10 A. I think because of some of the issues we've rehearsed

11 today, Mr Millett, about uncertainty about whether

12 victims were getting all the support that they needed at

13 this time.

14 Q. Were you concerned to learn that that kind of

15 reassurance could not be given?

16 A. It's always of concern when there are elements of the

17 response which don't appear to be functioning exactly as

18 you would like, yes.

19 Q. When it says that his department had already committed

20 to deploying more people, what was that? Who were the

21 people who had been deployed, or were to be deployed?

22 A. I can't recollect exactly who was to be deployed, but

23 I think the gist of that is DCLG civil servants to

24 provide direct support on the ground.

25 Q. Let's go to page 2 {CAB00002726/2}, please, I want to go

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1 back a bit. This is about accommodation for

2 non—Grenfell Tower evacuated residents.

3 If you look at item 2 of the minutes, "Update from

4 Government Departments", "Housing", it records that the

5 main focus here — it goes on:

6 "The SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF

7 COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT explained that the

8 focus right now was on ensuring that the families

9 impacted are accommodated locally as quickly as

10 possible. This should not be limited to those resident

11 in Grenfell Tower but should also include those

12 residents in nearby homes within the cordon. The

13 commitment to re—house those affected locally, was now

14 defined as within Kensington and Chelsea Borough Council

15 (KCBC) or neighbouring Boroughs.”

16 Is it right that this was the first time that the

17 needs of those evacuated residents in terms of emergency

18 accommodation was acknowledged, at least by Number 10

19 and the Cabinet Office?

20 A. No, I don't think so. I think this is just stating for

21 clarity and for the record that everybody within the

22 cordon was included in that definition .

23 Q. Now, to the best of your understanding at the time, who

24 was responsible, did you think, for the needs of

25 evacuated residents at this point? Was it RBKC, or was

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1 it John Barradell?

2 A. So I think the responsibility in organisational terms

3 was with RBKC. John Barradell, in the way we discussed

4 before, was acting in a leadership role on their behalf.

5 Q. Right.

6 Was there any discussion about prioritisation of

7 those in Grenfell Tower over the needs of those in the

8 surrounding blocks, the walkways, and other blocks like

9 Treadgold House and Grenfell Walk?

10 A. I honestly can't recollect, I'm afraid.

11 Q. Was there any discussion at this meeting about the role

12 of the Tenant Management Organisation, the TMO, in

13 facilitating the return of evacuated residents to the

14 walkways and outlying blocks?

15 A. I mean, the role of the TMO had been raised very early

16 in the response, so I think it's likely that their

17 involvement could have been part of the discussion. I'm

18 afraid I can't recall at this distance the exact

19 conversation.

20 Q. Do you recall whether any concerns had been expressed or

21 were expressed at this meeting about whether it was

22 appropriate that the TMO should fulfil the role of

23 facilitating the return of evacuated residents?

24 A. I can't recall that, I'm afraid, no.

25 Q. Did you have an understanding about what the role of the

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1 TMO was in the response, or in the recovery?
 2 A. So I understood them to be responsible for the
 3 management of Grenfell Tower on behalf of RBKC, and that
 4 their role in the recovery would therefore be part of
 5 the recovery effort being led by Mr Barradell.
 6 Q. I see. Did you ask or did you have an understanding
 7 about the relationship between the TMO and Mr Barradell
 8 and how they would work together?
 9 A. I can't remember asking about the specific mechanism.
 10 I think my assumption would be they would be part of his
 11 recovery group.
 12 Q. Can we go to page 6 {CAB00002726/6}, please,
 13 paragraph 15. It says here:
 14 "In discussion, it was noted the urgency to get
 15 a list of all residents of the Tower Block drawing on
 16 all available channels, in order to get a view of the
 17 potential number of fatalities. There was also a need
 18 to consider the religious dimension of burials."
 19 Given the concerns that you had expressed, as we've
 20 seen, to DCLG the previous evening regarding
 21 Mr Holgate's inability to provide estimates of
 22 occupancy, and you'll remember the ease with which you
 23 said it could be done, what was your impression of the
 24 extent of progress that had been made on that question
 25 up to that point?

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1 A. I think it was an issue of concern that we still didn't
 2 have clarity on those numbers.
 3 Q. Did it surprise you at all that this was still
 4 a question?
 5 A. I think it was certainly disappointing. I reflect that
 6 Mr Barradell had been in the role for only a few —
 7 a short number of hours at this point, so I wouldn't
 8 necessarily have expected that to be resolved
 9 immediately, but it was — it's clearly an issue of
 10 concern in order to drive the response.
 11 Q. Could we then go to {CAB00002727}. This is your
 12 exhibit 25. It's the action list from this meeting,
 13 isn't it? I think it is.
 14 A. Yes, correct.
 15 Q. Yes.
 16 Now, it covers a large number of actions. I just
 17 want to pick up some of them with you.
 18 Action 4:
 19 "4. [DCLG] to set up ... a single integrated support
 20 service (following the model of the Victims of Terrorism
 21 Unit) to coordinate cross-government activity and
 22 provide those affected with a single point of access
 23 into central government.
 24 "5. [DCLG] to deploy a suitably experienced person
 25 to GOLD COMMAND to provide a direct link into central

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1 Government.
 2 "6. [DCLG] to make available £5m to provide
 3 discretionary payments to help those affected by the
 4 fire.
 5 "7. [DCLG] single integrated support service working
 6 with [the council] to ensure the various support funds
 7 established are administered and funds dispersed
 8 effectively."
 9 Then if we go to the top of page 2
 10 {CAB00002727/2} — I'm summarising again as closely as
 11 I can to the text — action 9 is that the council will
 12 develop with the DCLG an effective mechanism to ensure
 13 the co-ordination of offers of assistance and
 14 distribution of materials.
 15 Now, do you agree that this was the first time that
 16 this level of focus, at least within central government,
 17 was given to humanitarian assistance and support for
 18 those affected at the ministerial meetings?
 19 A. I think it's certainly the largest number of actions
 20 under that heading.
 21 Q. Yes, all right.
 22 Now, looking down the list to action 11, it says:
 23 "COBR agreed that HMG should fund legal
 24 representation for affected families."
 25 If COBR hadn't been activated, why was COBR agreeing

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1 anything?
 2 A. I apologise for that. I think that is shorthand which
 3 has been used by a colleague, probably because we were
 4 sitting in one of the briefing rooms, as you previously
 5 alluded to. It should read, "The Grenfell Tower
 6 ministerial recovery taskforce agreed". So I think
 7 that's just an admin error, for which apologies.
 8 Q. Right. Who was on this taskforce? Was this everyone at
 9 the meeting?
 10 A. Yes, the taskforce was the name of the meeting.
 11 Q. So there was no force per se, just a meeting of people
 12 who called themselves taskforce?
 13 A. I'm not sure I would agree with the statement there's no
 14 force in a meeting chaired by the Prime Minister.
 15 Q. No, sorry, there was no force per se; in other words,
 16 there was no body of individuals, no collective
 17 comprising a taskforce?
 18 A. I understand your question, apologies. I didn't mean to
 19 be glib before. All of the attendees of that meeting
 20 would have been drawing on the capability in their own
 21 departments and organisations.
 22 Q. Right. So what I'm trying to understand is: is COBR
 23 here a shorthand for "the meeting agreed" —
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. — or is it shorthand for a number of people at the

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1 meeting?

2 A. No, COBR is the wrong phrase. It should say "the

3 recovery taskforce, ie the meeting, agreed".

4 Q. Right, I follow. Do you know how that error came to be

5 made?

6 A. I think it's just a typing error from the person writing

7 the actions. These go out quite quickly and I apologise

8 for it.

9 Q. But did it indicate, or does it indicate, some degree of

10 confusion about whether COBR had been activated or not?

11 A. No, not at all. It's just an admin error.

12 Q. There is quite a difference, isn't there, between COBR

13 being activated and a meeting of ministers assembling

14 not pursuant to the COBR protocol? We have been through

15 that yesterday. Can you explain why that mistake could

16 have been made if there was that clarity?

17 A. I think because we were sitting in the facility in which

18 a COBR meeting is often held. As you rightly pointed

19 out, COBR stands originally for Cabinet Office Briefing

20 Rooms, a place. It is now used to mean a mechanism,

21 a meeting of people. So I don't think there's any

22 confusion about the basis of the meeting, I think it's

23 just an error based on sitting in that room.

24 Q. Right.

25 What was your impression of the progress made during

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1 this meeting compared with the progress made at the

2 previous two ministerial meetings on the two previous

3 days?

4 A. I think this is a good business—like meeting. It's

5 a good list of actions. It addresses the issues which

6 we were concerned about, and certainly the presence of,

7 you know, Mr Barradell gave a degree of confidence that

8 the local authority response was going to improve.

9 Q. To your way of understanding at the time, did it make

10 a difference that the focus had now shifted from

11 response to recovery in this sense: that it was easier

12 to calmly plan for the medium term than it was to

13 respond in the immediate aftermath?

14 A. No, I don't think it was easier at all, but I think it's

15 the correct shift in focus at this point, now that the

16 immediate response, ie the extinguishing of the fire and

17 evacuating of people from the building and the

18 surrounding area, had largely concluded.

19 Q. Now, let's look at what happened after this meeting,

20 which happened at 13.30.

21 Let's go, please, to {CAB00002898}. Now, the timing

22 of this is important. We can see at the foot of page 1

23 that Mark Sedwill sends you an email on 16 June 2017,

24 and he says:

25 "Katherine

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1 "Well done with today's meeting. It was clear that

2 K&C are completely out of their depth, so we should

3 probably have prompted a DCLG intervention earlier, but

4 all that can come out via lessons learned etc."

5 I'm assuming that stands for "in due course"?

6 A. It does, yes.

7 Q. "Shall I follow up with Melanie on London/HMG support

8 for K&C or do you think all that is in hand?"

9 Now, first, we can see that Mark Sedwill was at the

10 meeting. Was that because of his role?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Do you agree with his assessment that RBKC were

13 completely out of their depth?

14 A. I think we — I'd formed the view that they were

15 overwhelmed on the meeting on the 14th.

16 Q. Yes, overwhelmed meaning the same thing, is it, as out

17 of their depth?

18 A. I think in effect it's a different phrase but the same

19 thing.

20 Q. Right. Did you share his opinion that CCS should

21 probably have prompted a DCLG intervention earlier?

22 A. Well, I think, with hindsight, clearly an intervention

23 was justified. I think the only earlier time it could

24 have happened would have been on the 14th itself, and at

25 that time I think the information coming through was not

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1 clear that any intervention was needed. So with the

2 benefit of hindsight, might that have assisted? Yes.

3 Based on the information we had at the time, it's

4 difficult to understand how we would have done that.

5 Q. Right. So, to be clear, hindsight at the time, in the

6 sense of hindsight back from 16 June to 14 June?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Yes, I see. And that's because you didn't know on

9 14 June that K&C would end up out of their depth, but

10 that was now clear by the 16th?

11 A. It was clear on the 15th, and so by the 16th, yes.

12 Q. Very well.

13 Now, then, you reply to this, if we go up page 1,

14 higher up the screen. You say at 15.58:

15 "Hi Mark

16 "We've been working with the Mayor's office on K&C —

17 they were really effective in prompting the Barradell

18 intervention, which is good. I spoke to Melanie before

19 the meeting and put her in touch with Barradell — she

20 has spoken to him and offered support (that's the RED

21 officer that was mentioned). So I think all OK there."

22 Now, in what way had you been working with the

23 Mayor's Office on K&C?

24 A. I think that it just reflects the conversations with

25 Mr Bellamy that we talked about before.

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1 Q. I see.
 2 What support did you understand had been offered
 3 by — well, Melanie, I imagine, is Melanie Dawes, is it?
 4 A. It is, correct, yes.
 5 Q. Right. What support did you understand had been offered
 6 by Melanie Dawes to John Barradell?
 7 A. I didn't take part in that conversation, so I'm afraid
 8 I can't describe precisely what she offered, but the
 9 offer of an embedded senior person from RED, which
 10 I think was recorded in the actions of the meeting, is
 11 I think what's being referred to here.
 12 Q. Did you have any residual concerns about the response at
 13 that point?
 14 A. There were clearly ongoing issues which had yet to be
 15 resolved, so yes, but I think the actions from the
 16 meeting felt like the right ones to address those
 17 concerns.
 18 Q. If you go, please, to {CAB00005339}, we can pick this up
 19 just before 6 o'clock in the evening on 16 June 2017,
 20 the Friday.
 21 If you look at the second email down on the screen,
 22 this is from Theresa May to Gavin Barwell, copied to
 23 others, but it I think comes in — well, perhaps you
 24 don't see it. She emails Number 10 staff, including
 25 Lorna Gratton, and she says this:

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1 "The one message that came over from my meeting this
 2 pm loud and clear was about the utter uselessness of
 3 K and C council. They haven't been communicating with
 4 anyone. They tried to shut down the church centre I was
 5 at despite the centre housing people. There are people
 6 still without temporary accommodation etc ... I've tried
 7 to speak to the Leader of the council [but] no joy so
 8 far. Urgent thinking please about how we can ensure
 9 everything we need and agreed gets done. At least
 10 someone from the council could call the vicar of the
 11 church I went to and ask what is needed."
 12 Now, I don't know whether you saw this email chain
 13 at the time, but my question is: do you agree with
 14 Theresa May's assessment in that email?
 15 A. So I think the point about RBKC being overwhelmed is
 16 reflect — I agree with, and that's what she's
 17 reflecting in her first sentence.
 18 The church centre, I'm afraid I don't know what that
 19 refers to. I assume it is somewhere she visited, having
 20 been to the site the day before.
 21 It's certainly correct that there were — continued
 22 to be issues with accommodation.
 23 I'm afraid I can't speak to whether or not she
 24 successfully spoke to the leader of the council.
 25 And then the final two sentences I think are

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1 reflecting her desire to ensure that actions that had
 2 been agreed really are followed through and delivered.
 3 So, yes, I would agree with the need to do that.
 4 Q. Well, the exercise you have just gone through is reading
 5 and interpreting the email. It may be the fault lies in
 6 my question, but my question is: was what Theresa May
 7 was telling Gavin Barwell and others on this email
 8 string consistent with your understanding of matters as
 9 they stood at the time?
 10 A. Apologies, my taking it point by point I think indicates
 11 that there are elements there that were not familiar to
 12 me at the time, so I'm not familiar with what the church
 13 centre refers to, but the elements I highlighted I think
 14 are consistent with discussion at the meeting and
 15 therefore my understanding.
 16 Q. Right.
 17 Now, we can see Will Macfarlane's response. He was
 18 a Number 10 staff member, I think.
 19 A. Deputy principal private secretary.
 20 Q. Right, so a senior staff member, as one might expect in
 21 an email of this nature. He says, and it goes back to
 22 Theresa May and Gavin Barwell:
 23 "PM
 24 "Lorna has immediately made contact with DCLG to
 25 play-back this overwhelming message from your

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1 discussions.
 2 " Specifically :
 3 " — we have instructed DCLG to bring together what
 4 additional resource they could quickly put in to the
 5 Council and have it ready to go
 6 " — we have told them to make contact with Gold
 7 Command in order to go round K&C and identify where we
 8 could immediately and helpfully place people."
 9 Now, those instructions to DCLG are clearly coming
 10 from Number 10 here. Should they have come from the
 11 CCS?
 12 A. I think this is Number 10 adding its weight helpfully to
 13 the actions that came out of the meeting in the
 14 afternoon. There are some more specific suggestions in
 15 here, but it's obviously — it's not unusual for
 16 Number 10 to interact directly with departments like
 17 this.
 18 Q. No, okay. Are these actions things which DCLG ought to
 19 have done earlier?
 20 A. So I think that the first action, putting in additional
 21 resource, I think that was already something which was
 22 being talked about and actioned based on the record of
 23 the meeting.
 24 The Gold Command point I would have to take away.
 25 I'm not entirely sure specifically what was behind that.

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1 Q. Well, the phrase that's used is — and I know it's not
2 your email and you didn't draft it and didn't receive
3 it —
4 A. No.
5 Q. — but what is said is:
6 "We have told them to make contact with Gold Command
7 in order to go round K&C and identify where we could
8 immediately and helpfully place people."
9 Was it your understanding that Gold Command was
10 going to, as it were, circumvent K&C or review K&C and
11 look within it to see where they could put people?
12 A. As you correctly said, I didn't — I had — I didn't see
13 this email at the time, so I didn't have any
14 contemporary understanding. My assumption would be,
15 reading it now, that the intention was to use Gold
16 Command as a means of diagnosing what support might be
17 helpful by talking to K&C.
18 Q. Right.
19 Then let's go to {CAB00011967}. This is a little
20 bit later, a few minutes later actually, at 18.25 on
21 that evening, 16 June, and it's Alastair Whitehead to
22 you at 18.25, and he says:
23 "Sorry, got an initial steer now — we are going to
24 have to have another PM—chaired meeting tomorrow
25 (sorry), given the seeming chaos on the ground due to

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1 RBKC not gripping this. We will then maybe do a call on
2 Sunday, but hopefully not a full physical meeting.
3 "We'll be in contact with exact timing."
4 Why did it take the Prime Minister's intervention
5 for there to be a decision to have further meetings over
6 the weekend, given the extent of the problems already
7 identified with RBKC's response?
8 A. So absolutely normal practice is that the chair of the
9 meeting, whether it's response or recovery, then takes
10 the decision about what will happen next. I think that
11 wasn't concluded in the meeting that afternoon, and the
12 email exchange you showed between myself and
13 Mark Sedwill I think confirms that, and I was asking if
14 he had managed to take the Prime Minister's view on
15 this. So the email at the base of the screen here from
16 myself to Alastair is me saying, "This is our current
17 assumption in the absence of that view", and then
18 Alastair recounting, "This is the Prime Minister's
19 decision".
20 So it's a normal course of process that the chair
21 would decide what happens next.
22 Q. Yes. The reason given for another meeting appears to be
23 the "seeming chaos on the ground due to RBKC not
24 gripping this". Were you surprised to learn that
25 another meeting was required for that reason, given that

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1 John Barradell had by now been appointed and had taken
2 over?
3 A. Not surprised, no. I think that reflects the tone of
4 the meeting that afternoon and the need to ensure that
5 the significant actions were followed through and,
6 you know, the situation improved.
7 Q. Let's then go to {CAB00002932}, which takes us later
8 into that evening. This is now 20.26, and at that stage
9 you can see that this is an email from Melanie Dawes to
10 Mark Sedwill into which you were copied, as well as
11 people in Number 10, as you can see. It says:
12 "Mark,
13 "I know the PM has been very concerned about
14 Kensington and Chelsea's capacity today.
15 "As I said in the margins of COBR, John Barradell
16 took over at lunch time as gold command for the whole
17 recovery and he has just rung me with an update. He has
18 clearly made very significant progress this afternoon
19 and I think we can now be assured that the situation is
20 coming under proper control."
21 Now, again, we see a reference to COBR. Why was
22 that, do you know, if this wasn't a COBR meeting?
23 A. I think for the same reason it appears in the actions
24 list, that it did take place in the briefing rooms, and
25 almost certainly just being used as shorthand. There is

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1 no significance I would attach to that.
2 Q. Well, right. This comes from Melanie Dawes, who one
3 might imagine would be familiar with the difference
4 between a COBR meeting and a non-COBR meeting of
5 ministers. Is that a fair comment?
6 A. I'm sure she would, but she's also writing at 8.30 in
7 the evening after a busy day. I think it's entirely
8 forgivable that she uses that shorthand.
9 Q. Right.
10 Did you agree with Ms Dawes' assessment that you
11 could now be assured that the situation was coming under
12 proper control?
13 A. I was very pleased to see it. I think she had been in
14 direct contact with Mr Barradell, so I had no reason to
15 doubt her assessment.
16 Q. Then there is a list of bullet points, which I don't
17 think I need to take you through, under key points, but
18 they start:
19 "He has taken over the entire recovery operation.
20 Parallel teams to the K&C ones are now in place on all
21 fronts, including housing."
22 And it continues in that vein:
23 "John has brought in heavyweight leadership ..."
24 And then the last—but—one bullet point:
25 "... moving the humanitarian crisis centre and

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1 turning it into something much more professional—looking
2 rather than the 'pillow and blanket' approach of the
3 sports centre."

4 Then it goes on at the end, after the list of bullet
5 points, some of which I've shown you:

6 "On K&C itself, John is clear that they are in a bad
7 way. At official level the gold structure manages this
8 risk for the time being — it has basically taken over.
9 At political level other London Councils are coming in
10 with support. After the immediate crisis is over we
11 will clearly need to consider a long term solution."

12 Now, given the reported progress that was being made
13 since John Barradell's appointment, and the ongoing
14 concerns with RBKC, did you think at the time that he
15 should have been appointed into that role at an earlier
16 stage?

17 A. I think my perception at the time was that that
18 appointment had taken place pretty swiftly after
19 concerns about RBKC had crystallised on the 15th. So
20 I think with the — you know, understanding how events
21 unfolded, his earlier appointment I'm sure would have
22 had a positive effect. I think my perception at the
23 time was that it had happened pretty rapidly after it
24 was clear there was a problem.

25 Q. Then it goes on in the next paragraph:

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1 "We have embedded RED response and housing liaison
2 into the local effort this afternoon — as well as
3 helping on the ground this will also ensure we start to
4 get the information we need on rehousing etc. We are
5 also proving ..."

6 I think that means "providing".

7 A. I think so.

8 Q. "... finance liaison from Monday, at John's request.
9 I have made sure that they know that finance is not an
10 issue and I am confident that Nick Holgate understands
11 this as well as John."

12 Is it right that this intervention from DCLG took
13 place on the afternoon of 16 June, and coincided with
14 John Barradell's appointment and the PM chairing the
15 ministerial meeting?

16 A. So I think Mr Barradell was appointed, I think you put
17 to me earlier, on the previous evening, so the evening
18 of the 15th. I learned about that on the morning of the
19 16th. Exactly when the RED response arrived and was
20 embedded, I'm afraid I don't know. You would have to
21 ask DCLG for the timing of that.

22 Q. Do you accept that the DCLG could have implemented these
23 actions before 16 June?

24 A. Well, I mean, that's certainly possible. I think they
25 were responding to their understanding of what was

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1 required at the time.

2 Q. I mean, did you or anyone else at the CCS suggest that
3 DCLG should be taking these steps before

4 John Barradell's appointment and before the
5 Prime Minister's 13.30 meeting on that day?

6 A. I can't recollect, I'm afraid.

7 Q. Now, there's a reference to John Barradell taking over
8 the entire recovery operation. Was your understanding
9 that that included responsibility for residents from the
10 wider cordon, as well as those from Grenfell Tower
11 itself?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Yes.

14 Now, let's move forward in time to September 2017
15 for a moment, and go, please, to {CAB00014768}. This is
16 a document entitled "Grenfell Tower tragedy — lessons
17 for the central response". Am I right in thinking this
18 was authored by the CCS?

19 A. Yes, so this was pulled together by CCS with input from
20 all of the departments who would have been involved.

21 Q. Yes, there was a cross-government feedback arrangement
22 or —

23 A. Exactly.

24 Q. — system.

25 A. Yes.

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1 Q. Right.

2 Now, if we go to page 3 {CAB00014768/3}, please,
3 paragraph 12, which starts, "CRIPs were issued daily",
4 just after halfway down that paragraph, it says, after
5 the bracket:

6 "There was also uncertainty over the respective role
7 of the Council and 'Recovery Gold' — COBR understood
8 that the latter (John Bar[r]adell) had taken control of
9 the response on the ground, but it subsequently
10 transpired he was only responsible for the residents of
11 the Tower itself, not all those affected in the wider
12 community or adjacent properties which remained the
13 responsibility of the RBKC."

14 Are you able to help us about how and when it
15 subsequently transpired that Mr Barradell was only
16 responsible for the residents of the tower itself as
17 opposed to the wider community or adjacent properties?

18 A. I'm not, I'm afraid. I was — my understanding at the
19 time was that he was responsible for both throughout in
20 his role as Recovery Gold. So I think this report is
21 reflecting different understandings of that, but that
22 was not my understanding, that his role was split out in
23 that way.

24 Q. Right. When did you first discover that it had been?
25 Was it when you read this? I'm assuming you did read

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1 this.
2 A. I did read this after the fact, obviously, yes.
3 Q. After the fact?
4 A. Yes.
5 Q. Well, did you have any contribution to it? Did you have
6 any input into this document?
7 A. I can't specifically recollect. I mean, normally
8 I would provide my views in the same way as other people
9 in the CCS.
10 Q. Did you consider, either at the time or later, that the
11 uncertainty that has emerged about the scope of
12 John Barradell's role would contribute to the ongoing
13 problems relating to evacuated residents?
14 A. As I say, I wasn't aware of uncertainty about his role
15 at the time.
16 Q. Let's then turn to the following days, then, starting
17 with the Saturday, 17 June.
18 On that day, I think you will recall that there was
19 a further Prime Minister—chaired meeting.
20 A. Correct.
21 Q. And that happened at 11.00 am; yes?
22 A. Correct.
23 Q. And that you attended; yes?
24 A. Yes.
25 Q. If we go to the minute, it's at {CAB00002735}. You can

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1 see who was present. It included John Barradell by
2 telephone. If you turn to page 2 {CAB00002735/2},
3 please, you can see by teleconference you have
4 Philip Hammond, John Barradell and Mark Sedwill.
5 If you go on, please, to the bottom of page 2,
6 scroll to the bottom, paragraph 5:
7 "In discussion, the following main points were
8 raised ..."
9 If you go over to the top of page 3 {CAB00002735/3},
10 you can see a set of bullet points, five bullet points:
11 "■ residents were unsure how to access services and
12 support and needed help to do so;
13 "■ officials with high visibility jackets or similar
14 should be deployed to the area to advise members of the
15 community how to get the support they needed;
16 "■ it would be important to explain that it would
17 take time to announce the final number of fatalities,
18 due to the challenges surrounding body retrieval and
19 identification; and
20 "■ some members of the public may be reluctant to
21 come forward as they may not have been legally
22 registered at Grenfell Tower. The Government should
23 ensure that these individuals are reassured that no
24 action will be taken against them; and
25 "■ there was a meeting planned with members of the

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1 local community later that day. It was important that
2 the government and Recovery Gold were represented to
3 hear directly from those affected and answer questions
4 on the response."
5 Now, is it right, one of the continuing issues
6 through the week was the lack of clear information and
7 signposting of support for survivors, residents and
8 bereaved? Is that right?
9 A. I think as recorded here, it's completely correct. The
10 lack of clarity on how exactly to access support was
11 a continued issue, yes.
12 Q. If we scroll down, please, to the foot of the page,
13 under:
14 "ITEM 2: Update on key actions
15 "a) co—ordination of government support for those
16 affected."
17 8 says this:
18 "RECOVERY GOLD provided an update on the
19 coordination of local recovery."
20 Then if you look at (i) it says:
21 "Of the 845 individuals who had been evacuated, some
22 had now returned, many were unable to return and some
23 had chosen not to return. Re—housing efforts had been
24 prioritised according to two categories: residents of
25 Grenfell tower (Category A), and residents displaced

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1 from the wider community (Category B). Work was
2 underway to re—house those displaced to properties
3 appropriate to family size and need. Offers would be
4 made to families on Monday."
5 Now, you can see the prioritisation that's
6 identified to the meeting there, and that was what
7 John Barradell was telling you.
8 Do you know who had decided on that priority?
9 A. I don't, I'm afraid.
10 Q. Was your understanding that those categories were to be
11 treated equally, A and B, or was A to be given priority
12 over B?
13 A. I think my understanding was that the categorisation
14 reflected that they were likely to have different needs
15 and requirements, and therefore they had been grouped in
16 that way.
17 Q. Right. So they were categorised by reference to
18 difference in need, not by reference to difference in
19 prioritisation; is that your understanding?
20 A. I think so, but to be honest my recollection is not very
21 clear.
22 Q. Then if we go to {CAB00002980}, this takes us late into
23 the day on 17 June. It's an email, if you go to the
24 foot of page 1 and over to page 2, from Mark Sedwill to
25 the office of Melanie Dawes, but if you go over to the

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1 top of page 2 {CAB00002980/2} you can see you are copied
 2 in on it, and it's timed at 23.47 on 17 June. I'm
 3 afraid I didn't show you that at the foot of page 1, but
 4 take that from me. He says this:
 5 "Hi Melanie
 6 "Thanks. I was on the phone at today's COBR. A few
 7 points struck me."
 8 Just pausing there, again, now we see Mark Sedwill
 9 himself referring to this meeting as a COBR meeting.
 10 Was this another error or was this evidence of some kind
 11 of confusion?
 12 A. No, I don't think it's confusion, it's just a shorthand
 13 for a meeting of this type.
 14 Q. Right.
 15 A. In the same way that Melanie Dawes used it.
 16 Q. Right. He says:
 17 "A few points struck me."
 18 Then the second one down:
 19 "John B's sense of grip was palpable so I hope that
 20 the situation on the ground will now gain and
 21 demonstrate some momentum, but"
 22 Third bullet point:
 23 "Do we need a Gold for Whitehall on all the wider
 24 issues, or maybe a Gold plus Gold Minister eg
 25 Jo Ferrar[sic] plus Greg Hands?"

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1 I think that's a reference to Dr Jo Farrar:
 2 "They would have to drop everything else. I fear
 3 this will become our New Orleans otherwise."
 4 First, what did you understand Mr Sedwill to mean
 5 by, "I fear this will become our New Orleans otherwise"?
 6 A. I think I understood him to mean that the response would
 7 not be adequate to meet needs at the time.
 8 Q. Was this a reference to the criticisms of the
 9 White House that had arisen as a result of the
 10 United States central government's handling of
 11 Hurricane Katrina?
 12 A. I assume so, but you would need to confirm that with
 13 Mark, obviously.
 14 Q. I'm just understanding about your understanding as one
 15 of the —
 16 A. Yes.
 17 Q. — people who received this email at the time.
 18 A. That was my interpretation, yes.
 19 Q. Right, thank you.
 20 Secondly, the concept of Gold for Whitehall or Gold
 21 plus Gold Minister, was that new or was that written
 22 into the existing contingency frameworks?
 23 A. No, so I don't think that is a standard sort of concept
 24 that exists in the doctrine. Gold is normally used
 25 particularly by the police but other first responders to

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1 refer to the person in strategic command of a particular
 2 operation. I think Mark is drawing on his understanding
 3 of that framework and using that term to describe the
 4 sort of role that he thinks is needed.
 5 MR MILLETT: I see, thank you.
 6 We will come to 18 June after the lunch break, for
 7 which I'm now going to ask the Chairman.
 8 Mr Chairman, is that a convenient moment?
 9 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes, it is, Mr Millett. Well, we
 10 will come to it, I think, at 2 o'clock, please. We will
 11 break there and, as I say, resume at 2 o'clock. And
 12 again, please don't talk to anyone about your evidence
 13 over the break. All right?
 14 THE WITNESS: Okay. Thank you.
 15 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you very much.
 16 (Pause)
 17 Thank you, Mr Millett. 2 o'clock, then, please.
 18 Thank you.
 19 (1.03 pm)
 20 (The short adjournment)
 21 (2.00 pm)
 22 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Right, Ms Hammond, ready to carry
 23 on, I hope?
 24 THE WITNESS: Good afternoon, yes.
 25 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes, thank you very much.

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1 Yes, Mr Millett.
 2 MR MILLETT: Thank you, Mr Chairman.
 3 Ms Hammond, 18 June 2017, and before I get into it,
 4 in the usual way, I need to take a step back.
 5 I think it's right, and we've seen, that as of
 6 16 June, I think, Mark Sedwill had become involved.
 7 We've seen that from the email chain; yes?
 8 A. Yes, he attended a meeting.
 9 Q. Did his presence indicate the seriousness of the
 10 situation as it was by then?
 11 A. Yes, I think his presence indicated that he was taking
 12 a close personal interest, as was the Prime Minister at
 13 that time.
 14 Q. Right.
 15 Now, you knew, did you, that Mr Sedwill had been
 16 a long-standing civil servant who had worked with the
 17 Prime Minister, both at the Home Office as National
 18 Security Adviser and then afterwards with — well, he
 19 became the Cabinet Secretary after Jeremy Heywood's
 20 untimely passing, didn't he?
 21 A. He did.
 22 Q. Did his presence indicate to you something of what was
 23 really going on, namely that there was a national
 24 security concern which required his expertise?
 25 A. No. Mr Sedwill's remit included resilience. So the

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1 Deputy National Security Adviser, Paddy McGuinness, who
 2 you referred to before, resilience was part of his
 3 brief, and Mr McGuinness reported to Mark Sedwill. So
 4 it didn't indicate a national security concern per se.
 5 It would be normal for very senior officials to attend
 6 meetings chaired by the Prime Minister.
 7 Q. The reason I ask you is because we know from earlier
 8 evidence that there had been civil unrest in Kensington,
 9 at the Town Hall, I think, before Mr Sedwill entered the
 10 scene, and there is, in his own words, a reference to
 11 Hurricane Katrina, "our New Orleans". The question is
 12 whether it was on your radar or CCS's radar that, in
 13 addition to the local response, there was a risk of
 14 civil unrest, and that is why Mr Sedwill's expertise was
 15 required?
 16 A. No.
 17 Q. Let's move, then, forward.
 18 You will recall that on 18 June at 10.00 am there
 19 was another GT recovery taskforce meeting, I think; yes?
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. That took place at 10.00 am and was chaired by
 22 Paddy McGuinness, I think.
 23 A. Yes, that's right.
 24 Q. Were you there?
 25 A. I think so, yes.

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1 Q. Now, we have no minutes of that meeting. We have plenty
 2 of documents about it, but no minute. Can you explain
 3 why?
 4 A. I think, from having reviewed the documents, a very
 5 extensive actions list was produced, and I suspect at
 6 the time an additional minute felt unnecessary. But
 7 I'm afraid I can't provide much more explanation than
 8 that. We would normally produce a minute of those
 9 meetings.
 10 Q. What was the purpose of the meeting?
 11 A. It was primarily to ensure that actions that had been
 12 agreed in the previous two days were being pursued and
 13 completed.
 14 Q. Then I think after that meeting you provided advice to
 15 the DCLG about how it could be supported as the response
 16 shifted into recovery mode.
 17 A. I'm not sure which specific document you're referring
 18 to.
 19 Q. Your statement, paragraph 79. Would you like to look at
 20 that?
 21 A. Yes, please.
 22 Q. First statement, paragraph 79, page 22 {CAB00014764/22}.
 23 You say:
 24 "Following the officials —level meeting, CCS resumed
 25 preparations for the next day's Prime Minister—chaired

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1 ministerial meeting."
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. Then you say:
 4 "This included updating the First Secretary of
 5 State ..."
 6 And then you say:
 7 "I provided advice on how DCLG could be supported as
 8 the Grenfell response shifted into recovery. This
 9 included suggesting that Ian Whitehouse, one of my
 10 Deputy Directors, be seconded to DCLG. He moved to DCLG
 11 from 19 June ... to help them in their role ..."
 12 We have touched on that before.
 13 A. We have.
 14 Q. Was that the only action that fell to you after that
 15 meeting?
 16 A. I would have to look at the actions list to refresh my
 17 memory, I think, on that.
 18 Q. Well, we do have an action tracker, but it's the only
 19 action I think you refer to in your statement, but there
 20 are others, but you don't know without looking at the
 21 tracker.
 22 Let's move on, then, into the 19th, which is the
 23 Monday morning.
 24 A. Correct.
 25 Q. On that afternoon of that day, I think it's right, isn't

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1 it, that the third Grenfell Tower fire recovery
 2 taskforce meeting took place?
 3 A. I think that's right, yes.
 4 Q. That was at 4 o'clock, and I think you attended; yes?
 5 A. I think that's right.
 6 Q. If we go to {CAB00002741} we can see who was present.
 7 Again, chaired by the Prime Minister, and you can see
 8 the cast of attendees. You can see that John Barradell
 9 was there on page 1.
 10 If you go to page 2 {CAB00002741/2}, please, you can
 11 see under "ITEM 2: Support for those affected",
 12 "Housing"; do you see that?
 13 A. Yes.
 14 Q. Then you need to go to page 3 {CAB00002741/3}, under
 15 paragraph 5b, and that says:
 16 "At that time, 217 households were being housed in
 17 hotels. Around 100–120 of these households were thought
 18 to be 'Category A' (former residents of Grenfell Tower
 19 or of properties on the nearby Grenfell Walk), but a
 20 final picture on this was still to emerge."
 21 Now, is it right, therefore, that now six days into
 22 the emergency response, it appears that there was still
 23 a lack of clarity about the precise number of
 24 Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk residents who are
 25 described there in emergency accommodation? Why was

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1 that?

2 A. So, yes, I think it's right that there were still

3 difficulties in getting precise numbers at that time.

4 Q. Why was that?

5 A. Well, I mean, it's often a challenge to get data like

6 this in an emergency because the situation is very fluid

7 on the ground. I think our assumption at the time was

8 that it was a symptom of some of the challenges we've

9 already described around the co-ordination of the

10 response to victims in particular.

11 Q. If we go to the beginning of paragraph 5, it says this,

12 read with me:

13 "Continuing, the DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND

14 LOCAL GOVERNMENT outlined the latest situation in

15 relation to finding temporary accommodation for those

16 affected. The effort to do so within three weeks was

17 largely thought to be on track."

18 Now, the reference there to three weeks, was that

19 a reference to the Prime Minister's undertaking to

20 rehouse everybody within three weeks?

21 A. Yes, I think that's correct.

22 Q. Right.

23 Now, in evidence, we have a number of accounts from

24 survivors and residents who were in hotel accommodation

25 for a significantly extended period of time. Can you

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1 explain why there was such a discrepancy between the

2 optimism about rehousing everybody expressed in the

3 discussions at central government level, as indicated

4 here, within three weeks, and the reality on the ground

5 at the time?

6 A. Well, I think the three weeks, as you say, was

7 an intention, and obviously something which everybody

8 was working to deliver. I think the precise reasons why

9 that proved so challenging on the ground, others will

10 give you better evidence than I will, having been more

11 closely involved. But, I mean, it was far from

12 a straightforward undertaking and hampered by

13 a difficult start, was my impression.

14 Q. Was the reality that the undertaking to rehouse

15 everybody within three weeks was wildly and unreasonably

16 optimistic? It could never be done in reality.

17 A. It didn't seem so at the time.

18 Q. When did it first become apparent to you, to the best of

19 your recollection, when it became an impossible target,

20 let alone an achievable undertaking?

21 A. I have no recollection of reaching that conclusion in

22 this seven-day period, I'm afraid.

23 Q. We have heard evidence from others, particularly

24 involved in housing at the sharp end of the undertaking,

25 that it was always a wildly optimistic promise to make

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1 and could never be achieved. What would you say to

2 them?

3 A. I don't recollect that being the advice given at the

4 time, but I don't question their professional judgement.

5 Q. Now, page 3 {CAB00002741/3}, paragraph 7, foot of the

6 screen:

7 "The RECOVERY GOLD highlighted that there were

8 issues with the provision of hot water and gas to

9 a number of affected properties situated within the

10 wider cordon (around 400 households in total). The

11 RECOVERY GOLD raised concerns about the effectiveness of

12 Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation

13 (TMO), who managed Grenfell Tower and surround

14 properties. In conjunction with the DEPARTMENT FOR

15 COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT, RECOVERY GOLD was

16 tasked with considering how these concerns could be

17 addressed. It was noted that all such affected

18 households were entitled to hotel accommodation and

19 access to the discretionary fund."

20 Was this the first occasion, so far as you can

21 recall, on which issues were raised regarding hot water

22 and gas provision to those within the wider cordon?

23 A. I can't recall precisely. I think this may be the first

24 time where — or the first moment in time with there's

25 serious consideration of people returning to their homes

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1 within the cordon, so that may have increased its

2 prominence at this moment. But I'm afraid I can't

3 recall exactly.

4 Q. Right. So why would this be the first time — this is

5 now Monday — when there's serious consideration of

6 people returning to their homes within the cordon?

7 A. Because obviously every effort had been made to ensure

8 that it was safe for them to do so.

9 I must say, my recollection of exactly this

10 conversation, I'm afraid, is not precise.

11 Q. Was this the first time that you became aware that there

12 were concerns regarding the TMO?

13 A. I can't recall, I'm afraid. I was certainly aware of

14 their existence and their role, but I don't think I was

15 aware of concerns distinct to the concerns about RBKC on

16 whose behalf they were managing the properties.

17 Q. Do you recall what the specific concerns about the TMO

18 were?

19 A. I think there were — some concerns arose, although

20 whether it was exactly at this point I can't remember,

21 about their relationship with the tenants of the

22 properties they managed. There was some difficult

23 history there, was my understanding, and a concern about

24 the effectiveness of their management. So in relation

25 to the ability, for example, to determine who they

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1 believed was in the block on that night.
 2 Q. What was the source of your understanding that the
 3 relationship with the tenants of the properties and the
 4 TMO was a strained one? My word, not yours.
 5 A. I can't recall, I'm afraid. I think at some point in
 6 these discussions it became clear that there had been
 7 past difficulties, and I think that was the source of
 8 that conclusion.
 9 Q. Let's go to {CAB00002739}. What I'm showing you now,
 10 Ms Hammond, is the list of actions following that
 11 19 June taskforce meeting. Paragraph 1 says:
 12 "DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT and
 13 RECOVERY GOLD to consider urgently how best to address
 14 concerns around the effectiveness of the KENSINGTON AND
 15 CHELSEA TENANT MANAGEMENT ORGANISATION, and to take
 16 a decision today (Monday) on next steps."
 17 Now, this is addressed as item 1 on the action list.
 18 Can we take it that the performance of the TMO by this
 19 stage was a significant enough concern for its
 20 performance to be item 1 on the action list?
 21 A. So the presence at item — sorry, let me start again.
 22 Actions are recorded generally in the order in which
 23 they are directed in the meeting, not by order of
 24 priority. But I certainly think it was an issue of
 25 concern, hence the action as it's worded.

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1 Q. What was proposed as the next steps to address these
 2 concerns?
 3 A. Well, I think as you can see here, the responsibility
 4 was placed on DCLG and Mr Barradell to identify what
 5 they thought the most effective step would be.
 6 Q. I see. So can we take it there was no discussion about
 7 what those next steps would be, simply that a decision
 8 was made that it would be the department plus
 9 Mr Barradell who would decide that today, Monday?
 10 A. I can't be sure there was no discussion of what the
 11 options were, but certainly the action reflects how that
 12 was to be brought to a conclusion.
 13 Q. Did you realise at the time that the TMO was a separate
 14 entity from RBKC and not itself a category 1 responder?
 15 A. I can't remember having a specific conversation about
 16 their status, but yes, we understood they were
 17 a management company operating on behalf of RBKC.
 18 Q. Do you remember having any concerns about whether the
 19 TMO was sufficiently resourced or had the relevant
 20 capabilities to be able to assist in the way that was
 21 expected by Mr Barradell, given that the TMO was not
 22 a category 1 responder?
 23 A. I don't think concerns about the TMO were linked to its
 24 status. I mean, it was operating on behalf of and on
 25 the instruction of a category 1 responder, so we

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1 wouldn't have been concerned on that basis. I think
 2 those concerns were based on the performance issues
 3 which are being alluded to in the documents you've shown
 4 me.
 5 Q. What were the performance issues?
 6 A. Well, so poor relationship with the tenants,
 7 difficulties in getting precise information, and,
 8 you know, a sense that that — that they were not
 9 fulfilling the function that was needed of them at that
 10 time.
 11 Q. Let's move to the Tuesday, 20 June.
 12 Now, I think you will recall there was another
 13 meeting. You have called it in your statement
 14 an officials — level meeting, chaired by Paddy McGuinness;
 15 yes?
 16 A. Correct.
 17 Q. And I think you attended; yes?
 18 A. Yes.
 19 Q. It was at 15.30, and we can look at the minute of that
 20 meeting at {CAB00002792}, please. We can see that it
 21 still carries the title:
 22 "GRENFELL TOWER RECOVERY TASKFORCE
 23 "Minutes of Officials Meeting on Grenfell Tower Fire
 24 " ...
 25 "At 1530 Tuesday 20 June

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1 "PRESENT
 2 "CHAIR:
 3 "Paddy MCGUINNESS
 4 "Deputy National Security Adviser."
 5 And then others.
 6 So had Paddy McGuinness essentially taken the chair
 7 over from the Prime Minister?
 8 A. So these kind of meetings can operate at a variety of
 9 different levels. So the Prime Minister chaired the
 10 ministerial meeting the day before, Paddy was chairing
 11 the officials version of that meeting. The level of the
 12 meeting and its chair can move from day to day,
 13 depending on what's needed.
 14 Q. I see. So just so I understand this, there was no such
 15 thing or body of people called the Grenfell Tower
 16 recovery taskforce; am I right in thinking it was simply
 17 a name given to whoever happened to attend, officials,
 18 at meetings convened on the subject of the
 19 Grenfell Tower recovery?
 20 A. I wouldn't phrase it quite like that, but I think
 21 basically you're right, yes.
 22 Q. Right.
 23 Now, we can see the meeting.
 24 If we go to page 2 {CAB00002792/2}, please, you can
 25 see that, apart from in paragraph 3, the identification

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1 of a proposed "day of rage", we can see under item 4
 2 that:
 3 "THE CHAIR asked John BARRADELL to provide an update
 4 on the housing situation. JOHN BARRADELL updated that
 5 249 households were in emergency accommodation, 109 of
 6 which were within the cordon area. 33 households had
 7 been offered properties, but none had accepted. Media
 8 reports suggesting that families were being rehoused
 9 outside of Kensington and Chelsea Borough were untrue.
 10 18 offers of temporary accommodation had been made, but
 11 none had been accepted. There remained one family in
 12 the rest centre, who had declined offers of
 13 accommodation four times. JOHN BARRADELL said he
 14 believed that the three week target to move everyone to
 15 temporary accommodation was still achievable."
 16 If you go, please, to page 3 of the minutes
 17 {CAB00002792/3} at paragraph 6, you can see there under
 18 paragraph 6:
 19 "THE CHAIR asked what was needed in order for the
 20 hot water to be restored. JOHN BARRADELL replied that
 21 an engineering solution was required."
 22 Now, first, was it your impression at the time that
 23 the rehousing effort was going reasonably well, no
 24 concerns about it?
 25 A. I think I would have accepted Mr Barradell's judgement

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1 that it was achievable within three weeks. It was
 2 obviously not going to be straightforward.
 3 Q. Now, second, did you consider that sufficient emphasis
 4 had been applied to the problems with evacuated
 5 properties and the understanding of the scale of the
 6 problems?
 7 A. I don't think I would have second-guessed
 8 Recovery Gold's judgement on that point. It was
 9 certainly an issue that he seemed to have in his sights
 10 and he'd be dealing with.
 11 Q. Right. So was it your view or understanding at the time
 12 that, notwithstanding the problems that we'd already
 13 seen in the previous cross-government meetings to date,
 14 and the problems which Mr Barradell was identifying as
 15 I've shown you in paragraph 4, you nonetheless had
 16 unqualified confidence in John Barradell's statement
 17 that he thought three weeks was still achievable?
 18 A. I had every confidence in his professional judgement,
 19 yes.
 20 Q. Right.
 21 Now, I want to ask you some specific questions next
 22 about the Westway Centre.
 23 Now, we go back in time a little bit to 18 June, if
 24 we can, please, and we can start with {CLG00020672/2},
 25 and if we go to the foot of page 2, you can see this is

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1 an email on 18 June at 18.36 from Suzanne Kochanowski to
 2 Jillian Kay and to you, and if we go to the top of
 3 page 3 {CLG00020672/3}, please, it says:
 4 "Katharine, thanks for helping pressing depts.
 5 "The attached message has gone out to Depts through
 6 our contacts."
 7 You can see:
 8 " ... specific departments ... to physically deploy
 9 staff to the Community Assistance Centre at
 10 1 Crowthorne Road W10 (Westway Sports Centre).
 11 "We need to make clear this is a PM priority. No
 12 ifs or buts. If they have a problem then ask them for
 13 the name of their director or DG and we can escalate.
 14 "Need two shifts ... "
 15 And then you go into the detail.
 16 Is it right that civil servants from those
 17 departments did not attend the Westway Centre in the end
 18 until Monday, 19 June, despite this being directed in
 19 the Prime Minister's meeting on the 17th, as we've seen?
 20 A. I'm afraid I don't have the details of when individual
 21 staff deployed. I would have to go away and look at the
 22 evidence on that.
 23 Q. Well, no, do you generally know that they didn't go till
 24 the Monday? I'm not asking you about specific people at
 25 specific times, but just a general, overall impression.

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1 Was it your recollection that civil servants from the
 2 departments listed didn't go to the Westway until the
 3 Monday?
 4 A. I don't think I can give you a blanket answer which
 5 encompasses all of those departments. I think my
 6 impression at the time was that some departments had
 7 moved more quickly than others, but I'm afraid I can't
 8 be more specific than that.
 9 Q. Right.
 10 Now, in your third witness statement at paragraph 47
 11 {CAB00014816/18} you say it's not common to have staff
 12 from central government departments deployed on the
 13 ground in an emergency in this way, but it can sometimes
 14 happen. In what circumstances would it sometimes
 15 happen?
 16 A. So, for example, I think a number of the requirements
 17 here were for re-issuing of identification documents
 18 which had been lost in the fire. So sometimes there are
 19 things which only civil servants from central
 20 departments can do. That, in my four years in CCS, was
 21 relatively uncommon.
 22 Q. Why did it happen in this case, do you know?
 23 A. Because there were specific needs which those
 24 departments could address, like, for example, re-issuing
 25 documents, driving licences, I seem to recall, that had

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1 been destroyed in the flames.
 2 Q. Right.
 3 We know that there is such a thing as a surge team,
 4 isn't there, which I think central government can offer?
 5 A. There is a surge team which is operated from
 6 Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs, which essentially
 7 provides staff in teams in order to perform specific
 8 administrative functions. What they don't come in with
 9 is expertise in doing specific tasks, like issuing
 10 a driving licence, for example.
 11 Q. Let's then go to {CAB00009946}, please, which is
 12 an email on 20 June, the Tuesday, at 11.46. We can find
 13 that at the foot of your screen, and it's from
 14 Sebastian James within the Cabinet Office.
 15 A. I think, just to clarify, Mr James was working for BEIS,
 16 but using a Cabinet Office address because he had
 17 previously worked in the department. I think that's
 18 right.
 19 Q. Right. We have indeed seen his name in other
 20 contexts —
 21 A. Yeah.
 22 Q. — in that role, and we know that — yes, that's right.
 23 Now, he says:
 24 "Hello,
 25 "I hope we're contacting the right team, if not

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1 could please you pass on the comments to the relevant
 2 Central Government Team?
 3 "We (BEIS) [that's it] have a physical presence at
 4 the Westway Contact Centre which will continue until we
 5 believe we no longer add value. We had our first
 6 representatives there yesterday."
 7 Just pausing there, you referred to BEIS; had he
 8 been seconded from BEIS over to the Cabinet Office,
 9 which is why he has a Cabinet Office email address?
 10 A. No, I think — no, that's not right. He had previously
 11 worked for the Cabinet Office and I think was still
 12 using that email address, presumably because there was
 13 some issue with his BEIS IT.
 14 Q. Oh, I see. Right.
 15 Moving to page 2 {CAB00009946/2}, then, we can see,
 16 as you say, he said he had a physical presence though
 17 his department at the Westway Centre, and then at page 2
 18 he says — and there's quite a lot of text here, but
 19 let's look at it. He said:
 20 "1. There didn't seem to be any controlling elements
 21 in charge of the centre, it is our understanding that
 22 the Local Authorities should be running the centre, but
 23 given the particular situation, we recognise that there
 24 may be a need for some Central Government oversight of
 25 the centre. Should this be DCLG?

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1 "2. There seemed to be no route for information for
 2 either government/agency staffs, nor for the victims.
 3 On entering the centre, although there were teams
 4 dealing with registration and security, once you'd got
 5 through them in to the hall, there was no central point
 6 for information for who to speak to about what issues.
 7 This leaves victims wandering around the hall a number
 8 of times, asking individual desk 'so what can you do for
 9 me?', which is completely unacceptable. Individual
 10 teams and desks have started putting their own signage
 11 up, but there is no central signage or support.
 12 "3. Citizens Advice were due to act as
 13 a triage/caseworker support structure, working with
 14 victims to ensure that they were accompanied throughout
 15 the process and could get answers from individual desks
 16 in the centre. Does DCLG know why this is not happening
 17 or whether the Local Authority are putting additional
 18 structures in place to provide support, staff and
 19 additional signage?"
 20 Just pausing there, in a long list of problems he
 21 has identified, were you aware of any of the problems of
 22 this kind being encountered by central government at the
 23 Westway?
 24 A. So I don't think this email was shared with me at the
 25 time, so I didn't see this precise diagnosis. I think

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1 I was aware that some officials, when they had arrived,
 2 had struggled to work out exactly how they could be most
 3 useful, but I hadn't seen this account.
 4 Q. Then he continues at paragraph 4:
 5 "We're deeply concerned that victims are being
 6 passed from 'pillar to post', and being told to call
 7 lots of different numbers by lots of different teams.
 8 We believe we need more coordination and more
 9 information about what services are already being
 10 provided inside the hall."
 11 Again, is that a problem that was brought to your
 12 attention?
 13 A. I mean, I don't think I can add more to my previous
 14 answer. I hadn't seen this particular diagnosis before.
 15 Q. Right, so we've got 5, "little coordination between
 16 government teams"; 6, "unclear who is part of the
 17 'taskforce' and what each team has responsibility for";
 18 7:
 19 "If all the above issues are all due to lack of
 20 coordination from the Local Authority, we would very
 21 much like to suggest that Central Government takes
 22 responsibility for elements of the response, and provide
 23 an SCS team to the LA to provide support to help with
 24 leadership, command and control of the supportive
 25 organisations in the Contact Centre ..."

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1 Again, I'm going to assume unless you correct me
 2 that you knew nothing of these problems and complaints?
 3 A. I hadn't seen this account, no, which I think --
 4 I assume was sent to DCLG, from the way it's phrased.
 5 Q. Right.
 6 Can you explain why problems on the ground of this
 7 very precise nature were not brought to your attention?
 8 A. I don't think I can.
 9 Q. Is there something wrong with the reporting chains and
 10 channels within the Cabinet Office which meant that
 11 Mr James, who was within your office --
 12 A. He wasn't, just to be clear, he was working in BEIS.
 13 Q. But nonetheless he was working in BEIS but operating in,
 14 I suppose, a recovery role.
 15 A. But on behalf of that department, not Cabinet Office.
 16 Q. Right. So does that indicate that there's a problem
 17 with communication between the department on the ground
 18 who are victim-facing, if I can put it that way, and the
 19 Cabinet Office, who are co-ordinating?
 20 A. Well, I mean, you're asking me what my understanding was
 21 at the time. I'm not sure who else Mr James spoke to at
 22 that moment. I would have expected, if issues were
 23 being raised with departments, then they would look at
 24 them and that would be shared upwards as they thought
 25 necessary in the process of creating CRIPs and situation

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1 reports.
 2 So it may have been the case that DCLG looked at
 3 some elements of this and didn't agree with the
 4 assessment. I'm afraid I can't tell you.
 5 Q. Looking at the top of page 1 {CAB00009946/1}, we can see
 6 to whom he sends the email below it, and he thanks DCLG
 7 for a prompt and positive response. He sends the email
 8 to MHCLG RED, but copies it to a large number of
 9 individuals in different parts of what looks like the
 10 BEIS; is that right? Including --
 11 A. That's right.
 12 Q. -- civil nuclear and resilience.
 13 A. That's right, yes.
 14 Q. Why was civil nuclear and resilience involved in the
 15 Grenfell Tower response or recovery?
 16 A. So I don't know that individual, but most likely what
 17 you have there is officials from across the department
 18 being drawn in to support the departmental response. So
 19 very likely that person was just acting in a general
 20 response capability, but their day job was in civil
 21 nuclear and resilience, would be my guess.
 22 Q. Right.
 23 A. In fact, yes, forgive me, that is right, because other
 24 names on the list I know, which have the same heading
 25 after them. Indeed, this is the BEIS central response

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1 function in action.
 2 Q. Now, you told us a moment ago that you hadn't seen
 3 Sebastian James' email.
 4 A. No. Not to my recollection, no.
 5 Q. Let's see if that's right.
 6 Can we look together at {CAB00012389}, please. Here
 7 it is again.
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. You can see that, above it, it seems to be sent from
 10 Paul in the CCS to Alex Taylor at the Cabinet Office.
 11 So I may have been wrong when I put it to you that it
 12 didn't come into the Cabinet Office. It certainly
 13 appears to have done. Would that be right?
 14 A. Yes. It looks from the copy list like it came into the
 15 central CCS mailbox, so that is one member of CCS staff
 16 accessing it from the shared mailbox and sending it to
 17 a member of the team working on the response.
 18 Q. So, to be clear, you had access to this as well?
 19 A. I did have access to that mailbox. As I said, I have no
 20 recollection of having seen this at the time.
 21 Q. Can I ask you, as a matter of your practice at the time,
 22 would you only look at emails that were sent to you
 23 either directly or in copy, or would you sometimes
 24 spot-check the CCS email box to see if there was
 25 anything that concerned you in relation to a project you

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1 were working on, even though you weren't on the email?
 2 A. So I would sometimes dip into it, but generally speaking
 3 there were staff assigned to be monitoring the inbox and
 4 they would make me aware of emails that I needed to see.
 5 Q. Looking at this email, would you agree that this was
 6 an email which really ought to have been brought to your
 7 attention once it arrived in the CCS inbox?
 8 A. Well, it is certainly describing some concerns with the
 9 situation on the ground. I wouldn't have expected that
 10 normally to be escalated directly to me. The chain
 11 you've got here gives -- shows a member of the senior
 12 civil service in CCS directing it to a relevant person
 13 in the response team to look at and draw on it for
 14 the chair's brief. So that would be a normal practice.
 15 I wouldn't expect it to come directly to me.
 16 Q. Yes. I mean, it says in the text:
 17 "Alex,
 18 "Seb being very CCS but some good points here we
 19 will want to factor in to the chair's brief."
 20 Now, I can't imagine what he means by "being very
 21 CCS", but there are good points to factor into
 22 the chair's brief; the chair, am I right in thinking,
 23 would be Paddy McGuinness; yes?
 24 A. I assume that's correct, yes. Whether he --
 25 Q. And you would want to know what was in the chair's

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1 brief, wouldn't you?
 2 A. Absolutely would read the chair's brief, yes.
 3 Q. And therefore can we take it that you would want to know
 4 what these factors were?
 5 A. I would certainly have read the chair's brief for the
 6 meeting, yes.
 7 Q. Yes. I mean —
 8 A. I would not necessarily have read all the documents
 9 which fed into it.
 10 Q. No, but can we take it from what he's saying here, that
 11 this would feed into the brief, that the Seb James email
 12 and the seven points in it were matters which ought to
 13 have been brought to your attention?
 14 A. I think it's being flagged as something — as one input
 15 to the work being done that morning. Normally what CCS
 16 is doing is taking information from a variety of sources
 17 and drawing them together and cross-checking. So it's
 18 one input. I wouldn't expect each of those inputs to be
 19 brought to my attention.
 20 Q. Why is that, given that this was something to be
 21 factored into the chair's brief?
 22 A. Because there is a team of people whose job it is to
 23 bring that together and synthesise it, and I would not
 24 second-guess all of their work.
 25 Q. Let's turn to a different topic, which is lessons

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1 learned, and I'm going to ask you about some of the
 2 correspondence and reflections at the time of the
 3 response itself, and then look at the more formal
 4 lessons learned exercises.
 5 Now, first, I think you make the general point in
 6 your first statement that many of the ministers in
 7 attendance had only been appointed hours before the
 8 fire, after the 8 June general election and the
 9 formation of the government on the 11th; yes?
 10 A. Correct.
 11 Q. So these were ministers, senior though they were, who,
 12 in all fairness to them, were not fully on top of their
 13 briefs, or had only just been handed their briefs.
 14 A. I wouldn't make the judgement that they weren't on top
 15 of their briefs, but they were, in some cases, new to
 16 the role.
 17 Q. All right. Let's go with new to the role.
 18 Did that impact on the effectiveness of central
 19 government's response in any way you could detect?
 20 A. I don't recall it being an issue at the time, no.
 21 I mean, I think there was a very impressive ability of
 22 departments to get their ministers up to speed on these
 23 issues and, as you can see, there were officials present
 24 in a lot of the meetings, so that longer-standing
 25 expertise was there.

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1 Q. Yes.
 2 Can we go to {CAB00014769/5}, please. This is
 3 Peter Tallantire's first statement, and at page 5,
 4 paragraph 18, he says that on 17 June:
 5 "I recall that there were difficulties with
 6 obtaining clear, accurate information and being
 7 frustrated by this given more than two days had passed
 8 since the fire started. I had expected to receive
 9 better data from either RBKC or the Department for
 10 Communities and Local Government (DCLG) (as the liaison
 11 between central government and local authorities) on key
 12 issues such as who was responsible for what, and the
 13 number of people needing support."
 14 Would you agree with that assessment?
 15 A. I've got no reason to disagree with Peter's assessment
 16 and we've talked about the data issue previously.
 17 Q. Who do you consider was responsible for the lack of data
 18 available on key issues, including the number of people
 19 needing support?
 20 A. So the data we would expect to come from RBKC and into
 21 us through DCLG, as this suggests.
 22 Q. Can we go to {CAB00003152}. This is an email from
 23 Peter Tallantire late on the Saturday night, 23.19, to
 24 you, and I think you alone, because the only other
 25 person receiving it is himself; would that be right?

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1 A. I think that's right.
 2 Q. The subject is "Grenfell ramblings":
 3 "I was reflecting on progress and where we are
 4 compared to other emergencies, so a few late night
 5 ramblings. No two emergencies are ever the same and we
 6 are in unique circumstances, but my instinct would be to
 7 try to do more to shape our destiny. Currently:
 8 "1) we are poorly sighted on thinking within DCLG.
 9 "2) we [are] currently operating in a largely
 10 reactive and passive way and have limited levers to
 11 influence direction.
 12 "3) there doesn't appear to be core narrative
 13 joining together the various strands into a coherent
 14 approach;
 15 "On DCLG, if we are not going to pull people into
 16 the centre (I think it is too late and probably the
 17 wrong solution), I think we should deploy an LO to DCLG
 18 to work alongside/support the DCLG team. Not
 19 necessarily in the victims unit, but maybe with Helen or
 20 Gill so we know what they are thinking, can shape
 21 events, and help them join up government. It will be
 22 a resource drain, but I think it will make our lives
 23 easier unless we expect to withdraw completely
 24 imminently."
 25 Now, did you respond to this message? We can't see

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1 a document that shows that you did.
 2 A. I can't recollect, I'm afraid. I certainly would have
 3 talked to Peter about it, if I hadn't responded in
 4 writing.
 5 Q. You say you certainly would have talked to him; would
 6 you have rung him on the phone that night, or perhaps at
 7 a more civilised hour the next morning?
 8 A. I think it's unlikely I would have rung him after 11.20
 9 in the evening. I would probably have talked to him the
 10 next day.
 11 Q. I mean, do you remember having a conversation with him
 12 on the telephone in one hand and your laptop on the
 13 other?
 14 A. No, I'm afraid I can't recall at this distance.
 15 Q. Do you agree that CCS was poorly sighted on thinking
 16 within DCLG?
 17 A. I don't know exactly what Peter is referring to there.
 18 I mean, by this time there's a big DCLG effort under way
 19 which spans very widely across future housing, they were
 20 looking at the wider policy issues around cladding. So
 21 I can't identify from the document exactly what he was
 22 thinking about there.
 23 Q. When you received it, and you saw the words "we are
 24 poorly sighted on thinking within DCLG", did you think,
 25 "Oh, he's wrong about that", or did you think, "He's

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1 right about that"?
 2 A. I'm afraid I can't recollect.
 3 Q. Do you remember asking him what he meant?
 4 A. I'm sure I would have had a conversation with him about
 5 it. I'm afraid it's very difficult to recall. I mean,
 6 you know, the solution he's proposing further down the
 7 line is that we should — LO is liaison officer — we
 8 should essentially deploy a CCS member of staff in to
 9 support DCLG in the recovery effort and, indeed, I sent
 10 one of my deputy directors to do just that two days
 11 later.
 12 So, you know, I think the sort of proposals which
 13 are being made here are clearly things which entered
 14 into our thinking.
 15 Q. Right. Did you agree with him or disagree with him,
 16 either in your own mind or expressly in a conversation,
 17 that you were currently operating in a largely reactive
 18 and passive way, with limited levers to influence
 19 direction?
 20 A. I think probably the "we" he means there is government
 21 as a whole, so it's drawing on the difficulty in getting
 22 information from the local response at this time, which
 23 is — you've previously referred to. I would say that
 24 departments were responding well, but there were
 25 difficulties in understanding what was needed of them.

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1 I don't think I would quite have phrased that as
 2 reactive and passive, but I can see the point that Peter
 3 is making.
 4 Q. If he's referring to government as a whole and is saying
 5 that government as a whole have limited levers to
 6 influence direction, how does that sit with the fact
 7 that the Prime Minister herself had convened and chaired
 8 two meetings on the 16th and 17th that we've seen?
 9 A. I'm afraid I can't explain what Peter means by that
 10 point. I think the prime ministerial meetings did set
 11 directions and agree actions.
 12 Q. Do you know why it was one of your deputy directors
 13 raising these issues rather than you, given your own
 14 role and your presence at the ministerial meetings from
 15 14 June?
 16 A. So I think what you've got here is Peter, who had taken
 17 a temporary covering role in the response, as you saw,
 18 reflecting on the time he had spent doing that and
 19 offering his thoughts as an input upwards to me to help
 20 shape my thinking.
 21 Q. Now, can we go to {CAB00000119}. This is exhibit 22 to
 22 Peter Tallantire's second statement, I think. He says
 23 in this email — and he sends it to Lucy Hancock, who
 24 has a Cabinet Office address. Does that mean she was at
 25 the Cabinet Office?

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1 A. I assume so. I'm afraid I don't recollect the name.
 2 Q. Right. At any rate, it goes into the CCS system and it
 3 comes to you directly.
 4 "Where we are", is the title; do you see that?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. If you look at the text underneath that, it says:
 7 "After a strong initial response from the emergency
 8 services, victims were let down by a lack of support
 9 from the local council. This has now been largely
 10 addressed by a surge from across the London councils by
 11 John Barradell (Chief Executive of the City of London)
 12 supported by a number of other London Chief Executives.
 13 Within central government, departments have upped their
 14 game and are now firmly gripping issues."
 15 And it continues.
 16 Then you look at the reference lower down to,
 17 "Bullets for PM response could include", the second
 18 bullet point says:
 19 "We were slow to recognise the failings in
 20 the council response and to gear up support activity
 21 across government."
 22 That's a suggested response for the Prime Minister.
 23 Did you agree with that assessment?
 24 A. Well, I think when you look back on the events of those
 25 days, I think it's certainly true to say that an earlier

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1 intervention with the local authority would have been
 2 helpful. In that moment, based on the information we
 3 had, it's difficult to see how that would have come
 4 about, but I don't think that undermines Peter's point
 5 that earlier action would have been helpful.
 6 Q. Well, all right. Let me just see if I can focus a bit
 7 more closely on that answer.
 8 Although you are right that this is a hindsight
 9 reflection, it is only three days' worth of hindsight,
 10 because this is going out mid-morning on Monday,
 11 19 June.
 12 A. Yeah.
 13 Q. Would you agree that even at that point, a few days
 14 after the fire, central government had been "slow to
 15 recognise the failings in the council response and to
 16 gear up support activity across government"?
 17 A. Well, I mean, a lot had happened in those few days, so
 18 reflecting, again, that the surge being described and
 19 the appointment of John Barradell happened on Friday
 20 morning, and we are now, what, three days beyond that in
 21 this email, this is already reflecting back on
 22 fast-moving events from three or four days ago. So
 23 I think it's definitely a hindsight assessment. I don't
 24 disagree that earlier action might have, you know,
 25 produced a different outcome. But as I think it says in

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1 the lessons learned report, based on the information we
 2 had at the time, that would have been a very difficult
 3 judgement to make.
 4 Q. What was the primary reason for the slowness?
 5 A. I mean, I think, at risk of repeating what I just said,
 6 those judgements were made once the information was
 7 there to suggest that that was the right conclusion to
 8 reach.
 9 Q. What should have been done differently? At that point,
 10 mid-morning Monday morning, looking back over the
 11 previous five days, what at that point did you recognise
 12 or do you think could have been recognised should have
 13 been done differently?
 14 A. Well, I think it's a very difficult question to answer.
 15 We did that really through the lessons learned process,
 16 and I would agree with the conclusions there, which
 17 recognises that, you know, an earlier push to provide
 18 more support to the local authority or to intervene
 19 there could have been very beneficial, but on the basis
 20 of the information we had, it was a very difficult call
 21 to make. So it's that offer of support which I think
 22 it's being suggested could have happened sooner.
 23 Q. Let me try and get at this in a slightly different way.
 24 Did you think at the time, having received this,
 25 that briefing the Prime Minister to admit that

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1 government had been slow to recognise the failings in
 2 the council was a fair thing to ask the Prime Minister
 3 to say?
 4 A. I'm not sure what this briefing is being provided for,
 5 but I think they're reasonable points as set out.
 6 Q. Now, let's go to your first statement, please, at
 7 page 22 {CAB00014764/22}, paragraph 79.
 8 You say there that — I'm sorry about this, it's
 9 about three-quarters of the way down the text, five
 10 lines up from the bottom.
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. The previous moment is 19 June, that's what you're
 13 referring to, and you say:
 14 "I also started thinking about some preliminary
 15 'lessons learned' in response to a proposal for No 10
 16 for a Civil Disaster Resilience Taskforce (CDRT), which
 17 I set out in an email to Paddy McGuinness at 8.48am on
 18 19 June 2017."
 19 Now, we can look at the email, but was that prompted
 20 by Peter Tallantire's own late-night ramblings, as he
 21 himself put it, on the Saturday night that we've just
 22 seen?
 23 A. Not prompted by, I don't think, but I'm sure Peter's
 24 thinking would have fed into my own.
 25 Q. Right.

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1 Can we go to the email, then. It's {CAB00002960/2}.
 2 We can pick this up at 8.25 am. There's an email from
 3 Natalie Black, who I think is within Number 10; is that
 4 right?
 5 A. Correct.
 6 Q. And it's to Jamie Cowling and Lorna Gratton, Peter Hill
 7 and Will Macfarlane copied, also within Number 10:
 8 "The PM has asked for the following to be included
 9 in her narrative for the QS."
 10 And the QS was what?
 11 A. Queen's speech.
 12 Q. Queen's speech:
 13 "We will also develop a new strategy for national
 14 and local resilience in major disasters — which could
 15 include a new Civil Disaster Reaction Force that is
 16 dispatched to help at times of emergency."
 17 Just help me, I'm sure it's a matter of public
 18 record, but I don't have a grasp of it: when was the
 19 Queen's speech to which this is a reference?
 20 A. Oh, forgive me, I can't remember the date of the Queen's
 21 speech in 2017. It would have been a day or two after
 22 this, I assume.
 23 Q. But within a very short timeframe after this? Fine.
 24 A. I assume so.
 25 Q. So is it right that, actually, within Number 10, content

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1 for the proposed Queen's speech was being developed at
 2 the same time as the recovery at Grenfell Tower was
 3 being handled?
 4 A. Yes, I think that's right.
 5 Q. Then if we look up the page, Peter Hill, who is one of
 6 the recipients, sends an email to Mark Sedwill, same
 7 morning a few minutes later, and to Paddy McGuinness,
 8 and says:
 9 "If you think this is not a good idea, you'll need
 10 to come back on it asap. I think the deadline for QS
 11 stuff is this morning."
 12 Then if you go up the chain, please, into page 1
 13 {CAB00002960/1}, there is an intervening email, but at
 14 the foot of page 1, Paddy McGuinness back to Peter Hill:
 15 "Peter
 16 "I am wary of rushing this. Local authorities do
 17 Mutual Assistance (which is what we see London Boroughs
 18 doing now — just not quick enough) and (the critical
 19 point) have the skills to reinforce another authority.
 20 Resilience and Emergency Division in DCLG is meant to be
 21 the Central [Government] reinforcement and support for
 22 this but is underpowered.
 23 "I don't think putting this right is QS territory or
 24 to be done on the hoof — though we should do it quickly.
 25 The political risk is that this is seen to be [a]

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1 sticking plaster over under—resourcing/alleged poor
 2 leadership of DCLG."
 3 It's signed off by Paddy McGuinness on the next
 4 page.
 5 Do you agree that DCLG RED was under—powered and
 6 under—resourced?
 7 A. I think at the time RED was being reduced in size and,
 8 yes, I think that was an issue for concern, the
 9 reduction, and I think if you go to my email up the
 10 chain, there is a reference to reversing that reduction.
 11 Q. Yes, there is. I'll come to that in a moment.
 12 Did you also consider that there had been poor
 13 leadership within DCLG, as Peter Hill seems to be
 14 suggesting?
 15 A. So I —
 16 Q. As Paddy McGuinness, I'm sorry, seems to be suggesting.
 17 A. Yes. I mean, I think Paddy is referring to allegations
 18 of poor leadership in DCLG. I don't think that is the
 19 phrase — a phrase I would have used.
 20 Q. Right.
 21 I mean, the political risk he's referring to there,
 22 as we can see, is the existence of certain defects.
 23 Were these problems a systemic set of issues before the
 24 Grenfell Tower fire, under—resourcing of DCLG, poor
 25 leadership of DCLG?

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1 A. So I think the reduction — the potential reduction in
 2 the size of RED was under discussion before the fire.
 3 I don't know which allegation of poor leadership Paddy
 4 is referring to precisely, so I can't tell you when that
 5 arose.
 6 Q. Now, if we go to the top of page 1, as you've pointed
 7 out, you responded at 8.48 yourself:
 8 "Paddy
 9 "Better alternatives from my perspective would be:
 10 " — Enhancing CLG's RED division (currently being
 11 downsized) which would enable us to spot failing LAs
 12 much more quickly and ensure support reached them — LAs
 13 will not want central government teams turning up but
 14 rather local government folks who know the system.
 15 " — Putting in place better mutual aid arrangements
 16 between local authorities (this IS the surge capacity,
 17 as we have seen in London, but it can be a bit slow to
 18 kick in — we could offer national deployment mechanism
 19 as the police and fire have).
 20 " — A body to manage coordination of volunteers in
 21 emergencies (currently an LA thing but often an issue)."
 22 Now, just on that last point, you say "often
 23 an issue"; what was your experience that informed that
 24 view?
 25 A. I think experience of talking to LRFs, who often found

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1 it challenging to manage very well—intended and very
 2 kind offers of support in crises but which didn't always
 3 meet their needs at the time. So we were already
 4 working I think at this time on a piece of guidance
 5 about how to manage that kind of spontaneous offer of
 6 help.
 7 Q. You refer to better mutual aid, putting in place better
 8 mutual aid arrangements. What was wrong with the mutual
 9 aid arrangements operating in London, so far as you
 10 could tell, given that they hadn't in fact been invoked
 11 by Mr Holgate until the evening of 15 June?
 12 A. So I don't think this is referring to exactly that
 13 arrangement, nor is it a point specifically about
 14 London. But the difference I'm drawing out is that for
 15 the police, for example, there's a centrally
 16 co—ordinated mechanism which would receive a request
 17 from one support — from one force for additional
 18 support and then would source that support for them and
 19 deploy it. For local authorities it was a much more
 20 ad hoc set of arrangements. So the suggestion here is
 21 that there should be something more centrally controlled
 22 to manage that.
 23 Q. Looking at the first point, the RED division — we have
 24 gone backwards up this email, I'm afraid — do I detect
 25 or are we to detect in this response a hint that it was

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1 RED division's being downsized which in part, perhaps,
 2 contributed to its inability to spot RBKC as a failing
 3 local authority in this response?
 4 A. I think you can detect that enhancing the capability of
 5 that team would, in my view, be helpful in enabling us
 6 to do that.
 7 Q. If we go to {CAB00012068}, please. We're now on
 8 20 June. If we go, please, down to the foot of
 9 page 1 — I'm sorry, the writing is very small —
 10 there's an email from you to Nawab Ayaaz, who I think is
 11 the National Security Secretariat, on behalf of
 12 Mark Sedwill; is that right?
 13 A. Ayaaz Nawab. The name is that way round.
 14 Q. Oh, right. Apologies.
 15 A. I think he was one of Mark's private secretaries.
 16 Q. Right. Ayaaz Nawab.
 17 The email itself is at the foot of page 2
 18 {CAB00012068/2}:
 19 "Katharine,
 20 "Sending just to you at this stage (copying Paddy
 21 and Mark).
 22 "Thanks very much to the team for the note Some
 23 initial thoughts from Mark, which we might get from the
 24 process that we put in place to produce a new strategy."
 25 Then there are some bullet points underneath that.

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1 Then over the page on page 3 {CAB00012068/3}, he
 2 says:
 3 "And how do we trigger that? K&C didn't realise
 4 that they were out of their depth for at least 2—3 days,
 5 so it can't be a local decision to pull in
 6 regional/national support. We need a 'push' mechanism
 7 to 'nationalise' a disaster, and insert
 8 regional/national resources led by a local Gold with
 9 a national Gold to lead on wider implications."
 10 So is it right that those within the CCS itself,
 11 including the National Security Adviser, saw, during the
 12 actual incident itself or the recovery from it, that the
 13 LLAG arrangements, which left triggering them to the
 14 chief executive of the local authority, were unworkable,
 15 or potentially unworkable?
 16 A. I don't think Mark is using the word "unworkable" here.
 17 He's offering reflections, you know, very soon after the
 18 event on the sorts of things we should be thinking about
 19 in terms of future policy work, and these kind of
 20 in—the—moment reflections then fed into the work that
 21 was done over that summer, which formed the national
 22 resilience project.
 23 Q. Well, I say in my question "unworkable or potentially
 24 unworkable" precisely because Ayaaz Nawab says:
 25 "... so it can't be a local decision to pull in

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1 regional/national support. We need a 'push'
 2 mechanism ..."
 3 So just to put my question a slightly different way:
 4 can we take it that even during the incident itself, the
 5 CCA understood or learnt that the LLAG arrangements
 6 which left triggering them to the chief executive of
 7 a local authority, let me put it this way, carried very
 8 considerable risks, given that the arrangements could
 9 only be acted on at his or her invitation?
 10 A. I don't think you can say that a firm conclusion was
 11 reached on that. I think Mark is putting forward,
 12 you know, thoughts to be tested. You can see from my
 13 responses as well that we could see there was an issue
 14 in how support was got quickly to local authorities,
 15 particularly when what they, you know, really needed was
 16 support from other local authorities.
 17 Q. Well, cutting to the chase, has a push mechanism to
 18 nationalise a disaster where regional and national
 19 resources can be inserted actually been established
 20 since the Grenfell Tower fire?
 21 A. So I don't think something matching that description
 22 exactly has, no. These observations fed, as I said,
 23 into the national resilience project, and one of the
 24 conclusions there was a significant piece of work which
 25 I believe DCLG have taken forward — although, forgive

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1 me, it's two years since I left CCS — to work with
 2 local authorities on much more stable and pre-set mutual
 3 aid arrangements. So I think the spirit behind this,
 4 which is to make sure that help gets there quickly when
 5 it's needed, has been. Whether it's — I don't think
 6 it's exactly the proposition which Mark is, you know,
 7 asking questions about here.
 8 Q. Now, if we go to the foot of page 1 {CAB00012068/1},
 9 your email in response at 20.26 on 20 June, and you say:
 10 "Hi Ayaaz
 11 "Some quick thoughts in return."
 12 Then you say in point 1 {CAB00012068.2}:
 13 "Not all LFRs[sic] are the same — they vary
 14 considerably in size and skills. RED have been
 15 developing an approach to essentially identify the
 16 highest risk ones do [sic] they can be the focus of
 17 support which I agree with. The lessons from Grenfell
 18 I suspect will be that the LRF structure actually worked
 19 OK — the SCG was up and running fast and the
 20 multi-agency response was good. It's the local
 21 authority recovery element that has fallen down, and
 22 that appears to have been about leadership, which is
 23 where I would suggest we should focus any taskforce ..."
 24 Then this is in bold:
 25 "... a C3 capability that can help areas get a grip

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1 and organise for no-notice events like this plus
 2 a better mutual aid mechanism for bulk capabilities feel
 3 like the right sort of thing but obviously we need to do
 4 a proper piece of policy work.”
 5 Now, what did you mean there by a “C3 capability”?
 6 A. C3 stands for command, control and co-ordination.
 7 Q. What is that capability? Where does one find it? Who
 8 has it?
 9 A. So I’m describing here the sort of thing I think we
 10 should be thinking about, not a thing which currently
 11 exists. So what I mean is if an area is struggling and
 12 needs support in the leadership of its response, what
 13 capability would you deploy to help them, basically.
 14 Q. Right. But within that, was it your proposal that the
 15 capability would be applied or imposed, perhaps, without
 16 necessarily being invited, or would it be at invitation
 17 only?
 18 A. I mean, my proposal here is actually that we should do
 19 a proper piece of policy work to think this through, so
 20 I don’t think it’s specific on that point.
 21 Q. No, you’re right, that was your proposal.
 22 Let me put the question slightly differently: when
 23 you were setting out your quick thoughts, was it part of
 24 those quick thoughts that the C3 capability would be
 25 applied or imposed without necessarily being invited?

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1 A. I —
 2 Q. How did you see that point?
 3 A. I don’t think I had a firm view on that point in this
 4 moment.
 5 Q. It’s a point that Mr Nawab had set out with crystal
 6 clarity in his point 3.
 7 A. Yes.
 8 Q. What was your reaction to that?
 9 A. Well, I think my reaction is that we need to take
 10 a proper look at the evidence and do the policy work on
 11 it. I think, you know, it’s a reasonable point and it
 12 certainly fed into thinking, but there’s obviously
 13 a danger in not testing the conclusions that you reach
 14 in the moment properly.
 15 Q. Yes. I’m really just trying to get a feel for whether
 16 your conclusion and proposal in your own mind was the
 17 same as his; in other words, from what you had learnt so
 18 far, a pull in approach wasn’t effective and a push
 19 mechanism would be better.
 20 A. I don’t think that is exactly what my proposal is there,
 21 but clearly I’m recognising that we need some time and
 22 space to think it through properly.
 23 Q. Then let’s look at your point 4:
 24 “Triggering is about better local intelligence [in
 25 bold]. That is the job of the Resilience and

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1 Emergencies Division in RED. It needs to be bolstered,
 2 not least because it is currently canting a lot of
 3 vacancies and key posts. I would advise against
 4 multiple people called GOLD — that should be kept for
 5 the strategic operational lead. What we need is a clear
 6 LGD ready to cope and a person in the lead within [it].
 7 In the vast majority of civil emergencies we have that
 8 (think DFT on SELKIRK or DEFRA on floods). We have
 9 quite clear descriptions of what nationalises a disaster
 10 — the trick is to ensure we know when those boundaries
 11 have genuinely been reached so ... only the right things
 12 make it to that level.”
 13 Now, when you say, “What we need is a clear LGD
 14 ready to cope and a person in the lead within [it]”,
 15 what was the problem?
 16 A. So that’s not stating a problem, that’s stating the
 17 requirement for success.
 18 Q. Right. What was missing?
 19 A. I don’t think I’m describing an absence here. I think
 20 I’m asserting that the thing which is helpful in these
 21 moments is a lead government department which is
 22 prepared and a person to lead within it. So that’s not
 23 diagnosing a specific problem.
 24 Q. Well, a need is normally a response to an absence, isn’t
 25 it?

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1 A. I don’t think I completely agree with that statement.
 2 Q. You don’t need something that you have already, do you?
 3 A. But needing it doesn’t imply that you don’t have it.
 4 I’m sorry, I feel we’re getting into semantics now.
 5 I mean, I think what I can say to you is that was
 6 intended to say, “This is the thing we should focus on
 7 ensuring is the case for lead government departments”.
 8 Q. Well, let me try it slightly differently. If the lead
 9 government department had been ready to cope and had
 10 a person in the lead within it, then you wouldn’t have
 11 needed to say that you needed one.
 12 A. But this is making a general point, I think, not about
 13 this specific response, because what we’re doing is
 14 reflecting here on the lessons from Grenfell that one
 15 would learn more widely. So, I mean, there have clearly
 16 been discussions, you know, in and around this email
 17 about appointing lead officials on the recovery,
 18 for example, and I think that, you know, that was a very
 19 good move and you saw my support for that, so I’m
 20 reflecting that the learning from that is as set out
 21 here.
 22 Q. When you write there about clear descriptions of what
 23 nationalises a disaster, what were you referring to?
 24 A. I’m referring to the guidance we referred to yesterday,
 25 which sets out the framework you use to think about

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1 whether this is now at a level requiring a national
 2 response, so the element of the ConOps.
 3 Q. So page 68 of the ConOps which we looked at?
 4 A. Yes.
 5 Q. Did you consider that the Grenfell Tower fire fell
 6 within that description?
 7 A. Which description, sorry?
 8 Q. The description that this was something which
 9 nationalised a disaster.
 10 A. I don't think I've anything to add to the answers I gave
 11 yesterday, which is that, you know, in the early phases,
 12 there were questions about which side of that line it
 13 was on, but clearly it became something for which
 14 a significant central government contribution was
 15 required in the recovery phase.
 16 Q. When you wrote, "We have quite clear descriptions of
 17 what nationalises a disaster", were you saying that you
 18 don't need to worry about that because Grenfell Tower
 19 wasn't something which nationalises a disaster?
 20 A. No. I think I was saying we don't need to reinvent that
 21 framework for thinking about when government steps in.
 22 Q. Right.
 23 When you went on to say, "the trick is to ensure is
 24 ensure we know when those boundaries have genuinely been
 25 reached", was the problem that government didn't know

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1 when those boundaries had genuinely been reached?
 2 A. So I think that is reflecting the difficulty in being
 3 clear when government help was — may have been
 4 required.
 5 Q. Right.
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. And was the problem that, in the case of the
 8 Grenfell Tower response, government had not known that
 9 those boundaries had genuinely been reached?
 10 A. So I think the question is: is there a way we could have
 11 known sooner —
 12 Q. Right.
 13 A. — that additional help was required? When I look back
 14 on the paperwork, you know, based on the information we
 15 had, I think we acted as soon as it was clear that was
 16 needed. But the question is: is there a way we could
 17 have known sooner?
 18 Q. If we go up the email chain, we can see there's
 19 a response from Paddy McGuinness on 21 June at 7.50,
 20 foot of page 1 {CAB00012068/1}, this is 7.50 in the
 21 morning, and he says:
 22 "K
 23 "You have caught it well. This does look to be
 24 about failure in the locality — and I mean [is] routine
 25 work as well as crisis response. The TMO construct

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1 looks to have been a long term failure."
 2 Did you agree with that assessment?
 3 A. I can't recall. I can't recall really understanding
 4 some of the long-term issues around the TMO, although as
 5 I said before, I think we were starting to learn that
 6 there had been, you know, challenges in the relationship
 7 with the tenants for some time, so I think probably that
 8 is what Paddy is talking about there.
 9 Q. Within the concept of failure in the locality — and
 10 I know it's not really a concept, it's just
 11 an expression he's using — did it occur to you at this
 12 time that there was a problem with the TMO being
 13 involved but not having a formal category responder role
 14 within the civil contingencies framework?
 15 A. No, because they were acting on behalf of RBKC, who were
 16 clearly a category 1 responder.
 17 Q. If we go up the chain, please, page 1, at 8.58 that day,
 18 not quite top of the chain, but you say:
 19 "Paddy,
 20 "Just to add one final point I was mulling over last
 21 night — the other thing we need to think carefully about
 22 in this work in how we align the incentives correctly.
 23 Cash-strapped local authorities would happily
 24 de-prioritise resilience work in some areas and rely on
 25 a government taskforce to do it for them. LRFs are

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1 already things that happen on top of the day job for
 2 most members. Some careful presentation will be needed
 3 to ensure we don't appear to take responsibility away
 4 from those who actually really need to grip local
 5 resilience."
 6 Are you saying, or was the sense of what you were
 7 trying to say here, that the resilience is often not
 8 prioritised by local authorities because of financial
 9 pressures?
 10 A. No, I think I'm raising a risk which arises if you
 11 create a very heavy central mechanism, that it creates
 12 a disincentive for local areas to put their time and
 13 effort into it, and that they might, if then faced with
 14 a prioritised decision, choose to do less. So it's
 15 a future risk I'm describing, not the current situation.
 16 Q. Yes, but as part of that future risk, it was relevant,
 17 presumably, that it would be cash-strapped authorities
 18 who might de-prioritise local resilience work. So my
 19 question is: does this reflect an underlying concern
 20 that resilience was something that some local
 21 authorities might wish to spend much less on if they
 22 could?
 23 A. It reflects an understanding of the risk that local
 24 authorities sometimes have to make very difficult
 25 decisions about their resources.

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1 Q. Was that a weakness, so far as you saw it, in the
2 effectiveness of the subsidiarity model?
3 A. No, I don't think so, because they retain those
4 responsibilities. I think what I'm flagging here is
5 that creating a central mechanism could undermine that
6 subsidiarity principle by giving — by putting the
7 incentive the wrong way.
8 Q. Then after the response, you received an email, I think,
9 from Peter Hill on 20 July. Now, this takes us a month
10 forward or so.
11 Let's go to that briefly, {CAB00012063/2}, and
12 I would like to go in it to the foot of page 2 and over
13 to the top of page 3. At page 2 all you see at the very
14 bottom is "From: Peter Hill", and if you turn to the top
15 of page 3 {CAB00012063/3} — now, as we do that, will
16 you confirm, I think, Peter Hill was the principal
17 private secretary to the Prime Minister at the time?
18 A. Yes, correct.
19 Q. Yes. He says to you:
20 "Katherine
21 "You may have had feedback from Cabinet discussion
22 of Grenfell on Tuesday. One of the issues raised by a
23 number of Ministers around the table was the response of
24 central Government — DCLG and CO — to the incident.
25 I spoke after Grenfell (to Paddy and Mark I think) about

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1 a light touch review of our response and recommendations
2 for action. I'm not sure where that has got to, but
3 given the discussion at Cabinet, we now need to task
4 something out from here on this. Could you speak to
5 Chris in Private Office and agree today the terms of a
6 tasking — including how much of this can be addressed in
7 the NSS capability review work and how much needs to be
8 done separately or more quickly?"
9 That's the context.
10 If you look up the chain, please, to the top of
11 page 2 {CAB00012063/2}, there is an email that comes to
12 you from Chris Gray on the same day at 16.35 and it
13 follows a conversation with you, and he says:
14 "Katharine,
15 "We've discussed.
16 "As Peter has mentioned Ministers raised significant
17 concerns at Tuesday's Cabinet regarding the capacity of
18 Local Authorities across the country to respond to civil
19 crises; from floods to fires. They also questioned
20 whether there was a greater role for central Government
21 to play in addressing this. These concerns are shared
22 by the PM.
23 "In the immediate aftermath of the Grenfell Tower
24 fire it became clear that Royal Borough of Kensington
25 and Chelsea was unable to provide adequate support for

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1 victims and the community or to run the communications
2 operation required to keep the community, the wider
3 public, and other public bodies informed as events
4 unfolded. Despite this it took a number of days before
5 they requested London Resilience Partnership GOLD
6 Command support and a number of weeks before the
7 Government established a taskforce to support and advise
8 the Local Authority. While Gold Command's leadership
9 dramatically improved the situation, the lack of any
10 central coordination in Kensington in the first few days
11 had a disastrous effect; victims did not receive the
12 urgent support they required and large amounts of
13 resentment built up in a community who felt ignored and
14 uninformed. This will take months, if not years, to
15 undo. Even once Gold Command was in place the Local
16 Authority continued to struggle to deliver the elements
17 of the response it was responsible for or to prepare
18 plans for the medium and long term response."
19 Is it right that this email from Chris Gray, who was
20 assistant private secretary to the Prime Minister at the
21 time, accurately reflects, so far as you know, the
22 concerns in Number 10 and the Prime Minister herself
23 about the response to the Grenfell Tower fire?
24 A. I would assume so, since it's written by an assistant
25 private secretary to the Prime Minister, but I think you

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1 would have to confirm that with him, I'm afraid.
2 Q. Well, I'm asking you as a recipient of the document.
3 You had no reason to think that it didn't?
4 A. I had no reason to think that that was misrepresenting
5 the views, no.
6 Q. When you received this description, did you agree with
7 it or did you take issue with any part of it in your own
8 mind?
9 A. Well — so I think it's undeniably true that the local
10 authority struggled, and we've talked about that at some
11 length. I think there are elements of it which don't
12 look quite right. So "a number of days" before support
13 was requested is two, which is — perhaps the phrase
14 implies more. So, I mean, I don't disagree with the
15 thrust of it, that there's an issue to be dealt with
16 here. I wouldn't have phrased it quite like that,
17 I don't think.
18 Q. Right.
19 Then it goes on:
20 "I have set out the key questions that the PM feels
21 need to be addressed below."
22 Then there are some six bullet points with some
23 Greek letters at the front of them, for reasons which
24 I don't really need to ask you about, but they're there.
25 I'm not going to read them out to you. We can take them

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1 as read.
 2 My question is: what work, if any, was then done by
 3 the CCS to address the key questions posed by the then
 4 Prime Minister?
 5 A. So, as is set out at the bottom of the email, these
 6 questions, along with others, fed into the national
 7 resilience project, which formed part of the National
 8 Security Capability Review.
 9 Q. So it fed into that report, and that duly then reported
 10 in the autumn; is that right?
 11 A. It reported to the National Security Adviser in the
 12 autumn and then was published in, I think, March 2018.
 13 MR MILLETT: Right.
 14 Mr Chairman, is that a convenient moment?
 15 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, it is, thank you very much.
 16 Well, we'll take the afternoon break at that stage,
 17 Ms Hammond. We'll break there. We'll resume, please,
 18 at 3.35. And as before, please don't talk to anyone
 19 about your evidence.
 20 THE WITNESS: Of course.
 21 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right? Thank you very much.
 22 (Pause)
 23 Thank you, Mr Millett. 3.35, please.
 24 (3.18 pm)
 25 (A short break)

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1 (3.35 pm)
 2 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Right, on we go, then. Yes?
 3 THE WITNESS: Thank you.
 4 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, Mr Millett.
 5 MR MILLETT: Thank you, Mr Chairman.
 6 Ms Hammond, I want us to look at one or two of the
 7 reviews conducted after the fire by the Cabinet Office
 8 or with the input of the Cabinet Office.
 9 The first is the "Summary Grenfell Fire Response
 10 (CCS Internal Lessons)" of July 2017, and we have that,
 11 I think, at {CAB0000105}. Can we look at that.
 12 "Summary Grenfell Fire Response (CCS Internal Lessons)".
 13 Now, can you help us, who created this document?
 14 A. It would I think have been created by Peter Tallantire's
 15 team. They normally led on these kind of lessons
 16 learned processes.
 17 Q. Would this have been under your supervision or with your
 18 input?
 19 A. It would have had input from anybody involved in the
 20 response.
 21 Q. Was it reviewed or overseen by you?
 22 A. I have always been very careful not to impose my
 23 specific perspective on these reports over other
 24 people's, so my input was one input, but the team would
 25 have, you know, empowerment to draw together their

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1 views.
 2 Q. I mean, was your input one of just feeding in particular
 3 personal experiences and perhaps your own view about
 4 lessons, or was it a holistic input, editing, tidying,
 5 overseeing the production of the document?
 6 A. I would have fed in my perspective and then let the team
 7 create the document.
 8 Q. At paragraph 1 it says:
 9 "The Grenfell fire occurred on the 14th June; COBR
 10 was activated with the first meeting taking place later
 11 that day."
 12 Was that correct?
 13 A. I think, again, that's using COBR as a shorthand for the
 14 central government machinery, which is common,
 15 particularly in an internal document like this.
 16 Q. Right. We see repeated references to COBR —
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. — through this.
 19 A. All meaning the same thing.
 20 Q. Well, I wonder. I mean:
 21 "The COBR response ran through to the 25th July ..."
 22 So you say that wasn't a COBR response, it was,
 23 what, a response of people pulled together for
 24 particular purposes?
 25 A. That is referring to, I think, you know, the centrally

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1 organised ministerial meetings.
 2 Q. Right.
 3 Then in the third line:
 4 "Throughout this period CCS co-ordinated the central
 5 response through COBR ..."
 6 What was COBR in that sense?
 7 A. Again, it means the central crisis machinery. It's just
 8 a shorthand way of referring to it.
 9 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: There's also reference to
 10 a handover, in line 3, to a ministerial recovery group.
 11 That was another central body, was it, central group?
 12 A. So I think that's referring to the handover between the
 13 15th, which was the ministerial meeting, and then the
 14 body named recovery taskforce on the 16th, the Friday.
 15 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well —
 16 A. But it's — the term "COBR" —
 17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: It doesn't say that, does it? It
 18 says the COBR response ran through to 25 July, unless
 19 that's a misprint, when the handover to the ministerial
 20 recovery group took place.
 21 A. Yes. I can't quite explain that, the dates don't look
 22 quite right to me, but I'm happy to take that away.
 23 MR MILLETT: Take it away? What do you mean, take it away?
 24 A. And ask the question what's behind that. I mean, it
 25 certainly — it doesn't reflect the pattern of events

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1 that we've talked about over the last two days.
 2 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: No.
 3 While I've interrupted Mr Millett, can I just say
 4 this: I mean, this document doesn't appear to be signed
 5 by or adopted by anyone; whose document is it?
 6 A. It's a document for use within CCS. So it's an internal
 7 document for the team to use, particularly the response
 8 team when thinking about future responses.
 9 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well, what I really meant was,
 10 I would have expected someone to put his or her name to
 11 the bottom of it, so one knew who was putting this
 12 forward, but it doesn't seem to be the case.
 13 A. No. I mean, it reflects, you know, collective views
 14 gathered together, so I think that's pretty deliberate.
 15 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right, thank you.
 16 MR MILLETT: Who was overall responsible for it?
 17 A. Well, I'm director of — I was director of CCS, so it
 18 certainly sat within my responsibility.
 19 Q. Yes. But, I mean, if the CCS was asked to identify the
 20 person with overall responsibility for this document and
 21 to answer questions on it, would that be you?
 22 A. I think so, but I was not the person who drafted it,
 23 I think that's the distinction.
 24 Q. Right.
 25 Now, you told us that, notwithstanding the

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1 multiplicity of references in this document and many,
 2 many others we've seen about COBR, whatever it was, this
 3 was not a COBR response.
 4 Was the failure to activate COBR on 14 June as
 5 a result of central government consciously deciding not
 6 to go there or fundamentally misunderstanding the
 7 reality?
 8 A. I don't think there was a fundamental misunderstanding
 9 of the reality. I think the evidence that we went
 10 through in detail yesterday, I can't really add to that.
 11 It was certainly a decision to convene an ad hoc
 12 ministerial group, but I say again for the record, in my
 13 view that made no difference to the quality of the
 14 preparation or the conduct of those meetings.
 15 Q. Yes. I mean, it may be, in the sense I asked the
 16 question, it could be suggested that there was a false
 17 opposite being proposed to you, but my question, let me
 18 try it differently: was there a conscious decision not
 19 to activate COBR, but instead to go along with these
 20 cross-government meetings which bore the loose label
 21 COBR, although not in fact COBR?
 22 A. Yes, I think the evidence we talked through yesterday
 23 shows you that was a decision, yes.
 24 Q. Why was there a decision not to activate COBR per se
 25 within the ConOps, and instead have meetings of

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1 ministers exercising the same powers and procedures?
 2 What was the point of that?
 3 A. I don't think there's much I can add to my answers on
 4 this yesterday. I mean, as I said, Alastair Whitehead's
 5 succinct account of that rationale rings very true to
 6 me, reflecting, you know, the likelihood of a relatively
 7 short response phase with a relatively low level of
 8 government involvement and a much bigger engagement in
 9 recovery. That I think is the best explanation.
 10 Q. Right.
 11 Before we look at what he says — and I'm going to
 12 do that with you — can we look at page 1
 13 {CAB00000105/1}, paragraph 5, where the document says:
 14 "There were challenges in maintaining situational
 15 awareness ..."
 16 In the last part of that, there's a bold section,
 17 and it says this:
 18 "Whilst recognising the stretch on DCLG resource,
 19 arguably, CCS should have pushed harder for both a DCLG
 20 liaison officer to be embedded in the COBR situation
 21 cell and for a change in the internal DCLG clearance
 22 process ..."
 23 What was the COBR situation cell?
 24 A. So that is one of the elements of the structure in the
 25 document we looked at yesterday. So the situation cell

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1 is basically a group of officials whose key role it is
 2 to prepare information that goes into the CRIP. So
 3 their task is to ensure situational awareness in the
 4 ministerial meeting.
 5 Q. Was there a COBR situation cell?
 6 A. There was certainly a situation cell in relation to
 7 these meetings. Again, I think the COBR tag is just
 8 being used in relation to the crisis machinery.
 9 Q. You see, the COBR situation cell, and you're absolutely
 10 right, it's one of those little boxes we saw in the flow
 11 plan within ConOps; yes?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. Yes, and this document says that there was one; yes?
 14 And yet you maintain COBR wasn't activated. How is that
 15 consistent?
 16 A. Because this is describing the use of a form of
 17 structure which is referred to in that way. So this
 18 is — and, you know, I'll be very frank, there would be
 19 no incentive for me to disguise from you a COBR
 20 activation at all, and I'm absolutely not trying to do
 21 that. This is just a shorthand way of referring to
 22 a structure which commonly exists and did the same
 23 function in relation to this meeting.
 24 Q. Did the situation cell report to or appear at the
 25 meetings?

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1 A. The situation cell prepared the CRIP which was used at
 2 the meetings, and people in the CCS response can perform
 3 different roles, so it's very likely that some of the
 4 people working in the situation cell would also then
 5 have been part of the secretariat for the meeting.
 6 Q. Right.
 7 Now, can we go to Alastair Whitehead's statement,
 8 please. That's at {CAB00014857/4}, paragraph 15. Now,
 9 the question he's asked, I should show you this:
 10 "For the purposes of paragraphs 1.7–1.8 at Annex B
 11 of 'Responding to Emergencies: The UK Central Government
 12 Response, Concept of Operations' ('ConOps') ..."
 13 We've seen this, just pausing there, Ms Hammond,
 14 haven't we? That's the coloured chart. The question
 15 is:
 16 "... please set out what 'level of emergency' No. 10
 17 understood the Grenfell Tower fire to be categorised as
 18 on 14 June 2017 and the reasons why? Who made this
 19 decision? These categories include ..."
 20 Then they're set out.
 21 His answer is this:
 22 "I cannot be certain now, 4 years after the event,
 23 but I do not recall that there was an explicit
 24 declaration of the categorisation of the fire in
 25 accordance with the levels set out in ConOps. I have

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1 been involved in the response to several other incidents
 2 and do not recall there being a declaration of the
 3 categorisation of those incidents. My understanding is
 4 that the levels in ConOps are broad and indicative, and
 5 that each incident requires careful evaluation based on
 6 a range of factors with the level of incident being
 7 subsequently demonstrated by the nature of the
 8 Government's response to it."
 9 Just pausing there, I think that encapsulates the
 10 evidence you were giving us yesterday and today,
 11 I think; yes?
 12 A. Yes, I would agree with that Alastair says there.
 13 Q. Yes. Then he says this:
 14 "Not activating COBR will in itself have been a key
 15 indicator for local responders of the likely form of
 16 central government engagement in the initial stages, but
 17 it is important to note that no national assistance was
 18 requested."
 19 Do you agree that not activating COBR will have
 20 indicated to local responders that there would be
 21 limited central government engagement?
 22 A. I wouldn't put it like that, no. I think I would agree
 23 that not using that label would indicate that there
 24 weren't likely to be, you know, immediate decisions
 25 required from central government, because obviously if

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1 they were — if there were, then we'd very likely use
 2 that label quite quickly. So I think it indicates, as
 3 I said before, that the central government role in that
 4 very immediate, you know, 48-hour response phase was
 5 likely to be much less than in the more extensive
 6 recovery phase.
 7 Q. Yes. Is what we get from this that actually what you
 8 were doing was de facto operating COBR, but just not
 9 calling it COBR, because if you called it COBR, that
 10 would indicate that local responders might expect
 11 central government engagement in the initial stages?
 12 A. I think that is not a correct characterisation of the
 13 rationale, but, as I said before, the processes followed
 14 are the same, essentially.
 15 Q. Well, that's the point. The processes followed are the
 16 same, your internal documents call it COBR because it's
 17 the same, and yet you were at pains and you have been at
 18 pains to make it clear that this was not an activation
 19 of COBR, and I'm putting to you that the logic of not
 20 activating COBR publicly was because you didn't want to
 21 indicate to RBKC that central government might come in.
 22 A. No, I don't think that is the logic. I don't think any
 23 part of that rationale was about RBKC. It was
 24 reflecting our understanding of what might be required
 25 from central government at that time.

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1 Q. Why wasn't COBR activated on 15 or 16 June in its full
 2 public sense, "We are activating COBR", when it became
 3 clear that there were significant issues, as we've been
 4 through?
 5 A. Because on 16 June, the Grenfell ministerial recovery
 6 taskforce was formed. It was clear that the issues that
 7 were arising, you know, could be dealt with very
 8 effectively under that banner. It was only at the
 9 meeting on the 15th that the really significant concerns
 10 about RBKC fully crystallised, as we went through
 11 earlier.
 12 Q. Yes, so why not activate COBR then on the 16th?
 13 A. Because we had a prime ministerially—chaired ministerial
 14 recovery taskforce which could do the job, which, as
 15 I said, was more under the job — under the heading of
 16 recovery, perfectly well.
 17 Q. Now, let's then look, in light of that, to
 18 {CLG00008533}. Now, this is a contemporaneous document.
 19 It's an email from Melanie Dawes to the late
 20 Jeremy Heywood on 16 June, this is the Friday, at 19.49
 21 on that evening, subject, "Are u coping?" The reason
 22 it's the subject is because, in the second email, it's
 23 the sole subject comment of the email from
 24 Jeremy Heywood to Melanie Dawes.
 25 She comes back — she doesn't answer his question,

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1 but she says:
 2 "By the way — the new gold command is clear that
 3 this is more complex than 7/7. One clear lesson: should
 4 have had a PM—chaired COBR on Weds."
 5 Do you agree?
 6 A. No.
 7 Q. You don't agree with Melanie Dawes?
 8 A. No, that doesn't match my assessment, no.
 9 Q. Why not?
 10 A. For the reasons that I've already given. The evidence
 11 we had at the time didn't indicate that a significant —
 12 there was a significant requirement from central
 13 government, and even if it had done, we had already
 14 drawn together ministers in exactly the same way as we
 15 would have done for a COBR meeting, so it's not clear to
 16 me what difference it would have made.
 17 Q. Was it the case that, despite being told about the
 18 unprecedented nature of the fire, central government
 19 underestimated the magnitude of the disaster, which
 20 informed their hands—off approach in the first few days
 21 until, perhaps, the Friday?
 22 A. I definitely wouldn't agree with the term "hands—off
 23 approach". I mean, you had groups of ministers being
 24 brought together on a daily basis, monitoring very
 25 actively events on the ground.

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1 Q. All right. Let me rephrase the question, then, if you
 2 don't like "hands—off". Okay, let's try this: do you
 3 accept that, as of the Friday evening, a clear lesson to
 4 be learnt was that the disaster was of such a magnitude
 5 that it would have justified a PM—chaired COBR on
 6 Wednesday, the day of the fire?
 7 A. No, I don't, because I — even with the benefit of
 8 hindsight, when I look back, I can't identify a decision
 9 that was not taken by the group of ministers that came
 10 together that would have been taken by something with
 11 a COBR brand on it.
 12 Q. Now, let's go back, if we can, to the internal lessons
 13 learnt document at {CAB00000105}. I read the first part
 14 of this paragraph to you, but let's just look at it in
 15 full. It says:
 16 "There were challenges in maintaining situational
 17 awareness and the CRIP, in particular engagement with
 18 DCLG and the timeliness of information were raised as
 19 key issues. The agreed DCLG process for clearing key
 20 data did not work; returns consistently failed to meet
 21 reporting deadlines, and there were issues with the
 22 quality of data once received. Often returns were
 23 incomplete, data tables did not add up or conflicting
 24 data was provided. Financial support figures being a
 25 case in point where different figures were quoted by

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1 DCLG and DWP Ministers at a number of COBR meetings."
 2 First, what was the agreed DCLG process for clearing
 3 key data that's referred to here?
 4 A. I can't recollect, I'm afraid. I would have to go and
 5 ask colleagues about that.
 6 Q. Well, I think you're doing yourself an injustice.
 7 Can we go to your third statement, please, page 28
 8 {CAB00014816/28}, and at paragraph 73, you say:
 9 "I believe that the reference to the 'agreed DCLG
 10 process for clearing key data' refers to issue with
 11 verifying information about financial support provided
 12 to victims. Although it falls outside the 7—day period
 13 specified by the Inquiry, I attach ... an e—mail chain
 14 ... This demonstrates that there was confusion about the
 15 basis on which these figures were being provided.
 16 DCLG's preferred process was that information cleared by
 17 Recovery Gold should be used, rather than information
 18 provided by the Department for Work and Pensions."
 19 Now, my question, which perhaps is better directed
 20 to this paragraph, is: what was the agreed DCLG process
 21 that you're addressing here?
 22 A. So I think my understanding of the process is drawn from
 23 the email chain which is exhibited and it's set out
 24 here, which is that the information should be — only
 25 information which had been cleared by Recovery Gold,

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1 that is to say Mr Barradell, should be used in the CRIP,
 2 rather than the DWP numbers, and clearly those numbers
 3 had not been consistent at all points. So that's my
 4 understanding, but it's based on that email chain.
 5 Q. When did you or, to your knowledge, your department
 6 first become aware that there were problems with the
 7 agreed DCLG process for clearing key data, such as those
 8 set out in this paragraph, the paragraph of the internal
 9 review?
 10 A. I think, as we've covered, there were challenges from
 11 the early stages of this response in being completely
 12 clear about numbers of tenants, for example. This
 13 particular process is about the financial grants which
 14 were provided to families and to individuals, so
 15 I'm afraid I'd have to refresh my memory on exactly when
 16 that began and when those issues began.
 17 Q. Now, let's go back to the internal review document,
 18 please. That's {CAB00000105/1}, paragraph 5 in the bold
 19 section. We have covered this already to some extent,
 20 where it says:
 21 "... arguably, CCS should have pushed harder for
 22 both a DCLG liaison officer to be embedded in the COBR
 23 situation cell and for a change in the internal DCLG
 24 clearance process to improve quality and timeliness of
 25 information."

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1 Is it right that you haven't been able to locate any
 2 correspondence to indicate that the CCS asked for a DCLG
 3 liaison officer to be embedded in the situation cell?
 4 A. I think that's correct, yes.
 5 Q. So is it right that rather than CCS not pushing hard
 6 enough for a DCLG liaison officer to be embedded, it
 7 appears that, actually, the CCS didn't push at all?
 8 A. It's hard to be sure, because obviously large amounts of
 9 contact between CCS and DCLG would have been taking
 10 place on the telephone, so there may have been a request
 11 through that means, which — of which I would have no
 12 evidence. I think all I can say is we can't find
 13 an email chain evidencing that request.
 14 Q. Do you accept that the CCS should have pushed harder for
 15 a DCLG liaison officer to be embedded in the COBR
 16 situation cell?
 17 A. Yes. I mean, I have no reason to disagree with the
 18 findings of this report, no.
 19 Q. Right.
 20 On page 2 {CAB00000105/2}, if we go to "Next Steps",
 21 it says:
 22 "Subject to views, the intention is to pick up the
 23 recommendations as part of the refresh of our COBR
 24 operating procedures and crisis management training
 25 material."

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1 Now, first, was there, in fact, afterwards,
 2 a refresh, as it's put, of the COBR operating procedures
 3 and crisis management training material?
 4 A. I'm afraid I can't recollect, but I will very happily go
 5 back and ask my colleagues.
 6 Q. Right. What was wrong with the COBR operating
 7 procedures, not least since COBR wasn't triggered?
 8 A. So the COBR operating procedures here is referring to
 9 the ConOps, and it would be really normal, after any
 10 lessons learned exercise, to draw those lessons back
 11 into the doctrine. So in the case of, you know, the
 12 point you were just exploring, you might add to the
 13 ConOps a suggestion that if there were data problems,
 14 a liaison officer be embedded, for example. Continuous
 15 improvement process.
 16 Q. But if ConOps wasn't operated, but a sort of ghost
 17 version instead, what was the point of reviewing the
 18 actual written operating procedures for improvement?
 19 A. So it's not the case that a ghost version of ConOps was
 20 operated. That is the framework of doctrine used to
 21 inform how the central response operates, whether or not
 22 it has a COBR badge on it.
 23 Q. Just to go back, then, on COBR, if a full COBR
 24 activation would not have made a difference, what's the
 25 point of COBR?

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1 A. I think, Mr Millett, there's not much I can add to my
 2 questions on this to you yesterday. I mean, the point
 3 of COBR is it's a mechanism to bring ministers together
 4 to ensure quick decisions are made in a crisis. It's
 5 not the only means of achieving those things, but it is
 6 an effective one. The brand in particular has got,
 7 you know, resonance, both — or particularly in the
 8 public eye, actually, because it is often used to
 9 describe the activation of government in support of
 10 a response. But, you know, in practical terms, you can
 11 achieve some of the same things, you know, through
 12 a less formal structure. I think that is true.
 13 Q. So are you able to give us an idea of what sort of
 14 emergencies would attract an actual COBR trigger, where
 15 the government says, "We are triggering COBR" —
 16 A. Well, I —
 17 Q. — and one which doesn't?
 18 A. I can give you some examples from my experience. So
 19 serious flood events, for example, which have
 20 significant consequences, COBR has been triggered for
 21 those. That would be one example.
 22 Q. Why for those and not for Grenfell?
 23 A. For the reason I gave before, that usually in that
 24 kind — in an event — in a large magnitude flooding
 25 event, it's clear pretty early on that central

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1 government decision-making in the response phase is
 2 going to be required.
 3 Q. And that wasn't, you say, clear at Grenfell?
 4 A. So I think you can see from the evidence that in the
 5 first couple of days, the response phase, you know,
 6 effectively led by the police and the fire service and
 7 the ambulance service primarily, they were not asking
 8 for support or assistance, so there was no reason in
 9 that moment to, you know, deploy the COBR label. But
 10 having said that, if they had done so in that moment,
 11 the group that was assembled would have been able to
 12 provide it.
 13 Q. And you've used the word "brand" or "label", as if that
 14 is what COBR is. I mean, is that right, that COBR isn't
 15 actually anything different from the response as you
 16 have been at pains to repeatedly in answer to my
 17 questions point out, but actually it just has a public
 18 resonance, so that government decides whether or not it
 19 should brand a particular response COBR or non-COBR?
 20 A. Well, I do think the same effect can be achieved through
 21 other means, that's right. It's not just a brand,
 22 you know, it's something which, you know, has strong
 23 common understanding, and that is on occasion very
 24 useful, and, as I said yesterday, it can be very useful,
 25 you know, in galvanising activity where that has been

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1 slow to take place. That wasn't the case here, from
 2 government departments.
 3 Q. Let's go to {CAB00014827}. I'd like to turn to
 4 a slightly different topic on this document, which is
 5 discussion was Number 10.
 6 This is a note:
 7 "OFFICIAL SENSITIVE.
 8 "Key points from discussion with No. 10."
 9 Now, I should tell you that this is a note drafted,
 10 we believe, by Peter Tallantire. Is it something you've
 11 seen before, Ms Hammond?
 12 A. I have seen it before this hearing, yes.
 13 Q. Right. Am I right that it was written by
 14 Peter Tallantire?
 15 A. Yes. I think what it is is the contemporaneous note
 16 that he made for himself of his discussion with
 17 Number 10 officials in the course of preparing the
 18 cross-Whitehall lessons learned document.
 19 Q. Right. I think we can date this to August 2017; would
 20 that be right?
 21 A. That timescale would fit, yes.
 22 Q. Right.
 23 He records a number of points, and the first is:
 24 "Took too long for RBKC to ask for help."
 25 And you can see what is said there.

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1 But if you look at the third paragraph down, he
 2 says:
 3 "Unclear and unsatisfactory division of
 4 responsibility between John Barradell for victims in the
 5 Tower and RBKC for everyone else. Not clear how this
 6 worked in practice and whether it added to
 7 confusion/poor information flow. Why was this
 8 distinction created and by who?"
 9 Are you aware of what led to that distinction?
 10 A. As I said to you earlier today, to my mind there was no
 11 distinction. I understood John to be responsible for
 12 both, and Peter is obviously recording here a perception
 13 relayed to him by officials in Number 10.
 14 Q. Yes. When did you first become aware that that
 15 distinction existed? I asked you that question before,
 16 but I'm asking it again now, given we have a date for it
 17 being clear at least to Number 10 and Peter Tallantire
 18 in the CCS.
 19 A. I don't recollect. I don't recall it being an issue
 20 during the activation and the response. This is
 21 obviously a review of it afterwards.
 22 Q. Do you agree or did you agree, did you perceive, that
 23 that inevitably led to differential treatment as between
 24 affected residents, between those in the tower on the
 25 one hand and those in the walkways and other buildings

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1 on the other?
 2 A. No, I didn't, because I understood John to be
 3 responsible for both groups.
 4 Q. And then paragraph 7, which says "Data", which is
 5 three-quarters of the way down your screen, it says:
 6 "... there was no grip on the data centrally or
 7 locally. Seemed unable to provide stats on housing (eg
 8 offers made) or to present and track it in a consistent
 9 and accessible way. Significant capability gap in both
 10 RBKC and DCLG."
 11 I think you agree with that conclusion, or don't
 12 you?
 13 A. So I'd certainly agree there were some data challenges,
 14 and those are well recorded. I think this is -- you
 15 know, this is how that played out in the perception of
 16 Number 10, so, you know, legitimate from their point of
 17 view.
 18 Q. Legitimate from their point of view because it's in
 19 a Number 10 document, but it's a Number 10 document --
 20 or, rather, it's a CCS document taking points of
 21 discussion from Number 10.
 22 A. It --
 23 Q. Does it reflect the CCS understanding as well at the
 24 time?
 25 A. So the CCS understanding was certainly that there were

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1 issues with the data, and we've been through that. This
 2 is the Number 10 presentation of that issue. The CCS
 3 one is obviously captured in other ways. But I think
 4 the points are, you know, fundamentally very similar,
 5 that there were challenges in being precise on some of
 6 these important data points.
 7 Q. Then:
 8 "Impossible to contact people in DCLG, so hard to
 9 get answers quickly/at all!"
 10 That's the Number 10 experience relayed to
 11 Peter Tallantire; did it reflect yours?
 12 A. No, I don't think so.
 13 Q. "Added to pressure on private offices as they were used
 14 as conduits. Better info management structures
 15 critical. Lack of phone numbers and email addresses
 16 that were answered!"
 17 That was Number 10's experience; was it yours?
 18 A. No, and I think you've seen a number of examples of,
 19 you know, emails sent by me being responded to by DCLG
 20 officials.
 21 Q. "Should have augmented DCLG Private Office -- capable
 22 people, one of best out of crisis, but out of depth here
 23 and couldn't handle volume of info flowing through."
 24 That was Number 10's impression; was it yours?
 25 A. I had no impression of DCLG private office in this

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1 period. I wouldn't have been interacting with them
2 directly .
3 Q. Are you able to explain why, at least on some of these
4 points, Number 10's impression was rather different from
5 yours?
6 A. Well, I think everybody involved in a particular
7 incident, you know, sees it from their distinct
8 perspective with their, you know, set of
9 responsibilities in mind. That's why these lessons
10 learned processes draw in lots of inputs and look for
11 commonality and themes between them.
12 Q. What was Number 10 seeing that you weren't which, so far
13 as you can understand it, would lead them to these
14 conclusions but not you?
15 A. Well, clearly they're engaging with different parts of
16 the department, perhaps, so the Number 10 private office
17 would be engaging directly with DCLG private office in
18 a way that I wouldn't be doing, so that would give them
19 a different perspective, for example.
20 Q. But your role was one of co-ordination, yes, between
21 government departments and Number 10?
22 A. So my — CCS's role is one of co-ordination of the
23 response. Private offices obviously are directly in
24 response — in support of ministers or senior officials ,
25 and they would be interacting with Number 10, you know,

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1 continually. That's a completely normal way that
2 government business is done.
3 Q. Then it says:
4 "DCLG (MD) reassured JJH that all okay and had all
5 the staff they needed, but evidently not the case!"
6 Is that your experience?
7 A. I ... so there are definitely some concerns which you've
8 alluded to that were contemporary with my understanding
9 at the time about the capacity in RED, which was
10 a relatively small team, hence the recommendation that
11 they should be added to. I don't think I ever had any
12 reassurance or sought it from Melanie, who I think is
13 the MD referred to here, about that.
14 Q. Right.
15 What I'm really just seeking to get a handle on is:
16 if the CCS was doing its role of liaison as you have
17 explained, why it is that Number 10 had these
18 impressions as set out in this document, as reflected to
19 Peter Tallantire, but you didn't? I mean, why is that?
20 A. Because everybody has different sources of information,
21 you know, depending on their role, and they're
22 interacting with different people on different topics.
23 We were obviously very focused on co-ordinating the
24 response. We wouldn't, you know, just to pick
25 an example, be focused on briefing for Prime Minister's

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1 Questions, which is referred to further below, in the
2 same way that Number 10 would have been. That would
3 have informed their experience; it wouldn't have
4 informed mine. We have different roles.
5 Q. So was Number 10 closer to the facts than the CCS, the
6 particular facts as set out in the precise paragraphs
7 I've read to you?
8 A. Well, I think these are views rather than facts and, as
9 such, I don't think you can be closer to them or
10 otherwise.
11 Q. I'm just seeking to understand the discrepancy between
12 the reflection — conclusions, let's call them that —
13 in this document and your own conclusions on the same
14 problems.
15 A. Well, there are some points of commonality here,
16 of course there are. So, you know, the first point,
17 I think I would agree that RBKC, had it known it was in
18 difficulty sooner, should have asked for help sooner.
19 But there are elements of this which just reflect
20 different roles.
21 Q. Now, I think it's right that in September 2017, CCS
22 produced a document called "Grenfell Tower tragedy —
23 Lessons for the central response"; do you recall that?
24 A. Yes, I think that is the cross-Whitehall lessons learned
25 conclusions.

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1 Q. Let's go to that, {CAB00014768}.
2 Am I right in thinking that it was intended to
3 capture wider cross-government lessons for the future
4 operation of the central response?
5 A. Yes, that's right, and I think the document we were just
6 referring to would have been one of the conversations
7 which fed into this document.
8 Q. Yes.
9 Am I right also that Peter Tallantire led on this
10 project? But, given your role, did you review the
11 report or oversee the process?
12 A. So Peter led on drawing it together and, as I said
13 before, I would not have interfered to impose my views.
14 He would have shown me the report once it was drawn
15 together.
16 Q. Now, if you look at this first page of the document,
17 under "Timeline", it starts with the identification of
18 the fire by the National Security Secretariat
19 watchkeepers around 1.30 from social media, and then
20 halfway through the paragraph it says:
21 "This information informed a discussion with No.10
22 as to the central government response and led to the
23 decision by 10am to convene a ministerial meeting that
24 afternoon (4pm), chaired by the Minister of State for
25 Policing and the Fire Service, to review the situation

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1 and consider the need for further central government
2 assistance."

3 Just pausing there, I think we can agree that's
4 clearly a reference to the 4.00 pm 14 June meeting
5 chaired by Nicholas Hurd; yes?

6 A. Yes, I think that's correct.

7 Q. Yes.

8 Then it goes on:
9 "Those present, alongside those government
10 departments directly involved, included the Mayor of
11 London, the Chief Executive of the Royal Borough of
12 Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), and the
13 Metropolitan Police."

14 Now, we know that Nicholas Holgate was not present
15 at that meeting.

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. And therefore that is an error. Are you able to explain
18 how that error came to be made in this report?

19 A. I mean, I think it is, as you say, an error. My
20 assumption would be that, you know, perhaps
21 a recollection of the 15th had been transposed on to the
22 14th, but I don't think I can help further than that.
23 But I do agree that is incorrect.

24 Q. Is it an error that — well, let me take it in stages.
25 Did you review this document? Did it come to you

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1 for review?

2 A. Yes, I would certainly have read it. I'm afraid I must
3 not have spotted that at the time, otherwise I would
4 have corrected it.

5 Q. Yes. How carefully did you review it?

6 A. Well, I would have read it thoroughly, with a particular
7 focus on actions that needed to be taken. I think
8 I would not have checked it back against all of the
9 records of the meetings in a forensic way.

10 Q. If we go to page 2 {CAB00014786/2}, the report says at
11 paragraph 11, at the foot of your screen, foot of
12 page 2:
13 "As is often the case in the early stages of an
14 emergency, there was confusion over the situation on the
15 ground, in particular the number of households displaced
16 in the surrounding area and the vulnerability of many of
17 those affected. This was not helped by the apparent
18 inability of the [RBKC] to get sufficient trained people
19 out on the ground to assess the situation, or to
20 appreciate or anticipate their needs. The situation was
21 compounded by reassurances from the council's senior
22 leadership that they were on the job and a reluctance to
23 accept offers of help despite offers from London
24 authorities and central government. As a result, there
25 appeared to be a significant discrepancy between the

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1 situation as generally understood in Whitehall for the
2 first 24–36 hours, and that facing the local community.
3 The full scale of the problems only became clear across
4 Whitehall following the Community Secretary's visit to
5 the scene on Friday 16 June and the subsequent
6 discussion in COBR."

7 Now, do you agree — well, let me put it this way:
8 sitting there now, do you disagree with any part of what
9 I've just read to you?

10 A. No, I think that is consistent with what the evidence
11 shows.

12 Q. Was it consistent with your experience to date in
13 September 2017?

14 A. I'm sorry, I don't quite understand that question.

15 Q. Well, your answer was that you thought it was consistent
16 with what the evidence shows —

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. — which is a judgement on the evidence. What I'm
19 asking you is for your recollection yourself, and what
20 I've put to you: is it consistent with how you remember
21 things yourself as at September 2017, looking back on
22 it, from that date to the June?

23 A. I mean, I can't recall what my views were in
24 September 2017, I'm afraid, but I don't see reason to
25 take issue with it.

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1 Q. If we go to page 4 {CAB00014768/4}, paragraph 17, it
2 says:
3 "It was sensible to convene a ministerial meeting on
4 the Wednesday afternoon, and to involve key partners
5 from the London responder community. With the benefit
6 of hindsight, this might have been chaired by a more
7 senior minister, as recommended by Cabinet in the
8 aftermath of the flooding of 2014–15. However, to have
9 made a real difference, ministers and officials needed
10 a much better understanding of the real situation on the
11 ground, particularly the scale of the need and the lack
12 of effective support from the statutory agencies."
13 Again, is there anything in that with which you
14 would disagree?

15 A. I think the final point is the key one there. So
16 I wouldn't disagree that it could have been chaired by
17 a more senior minister, and that would have been,
18 you know, within the bounds of normal, certainly. But
19 the second point is the key one, that it's difficult to
20 see what would have been different, based on the
21 information available at the time.

22 Q. There is a reference there to a recommendation made by
23 Cabinet in the aftermath of the flooding in 2014/2015.
24 What was that recommendation?

25 A. Oh, I can't recall, I'm afraid. I'd have to go back and

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1 look at the documents.
 2 Q. Right. Were you aware on 14 June that a recommendation
 3 had been made two to three years previously that
 4 a senior minister should chair an aftermath meeting?
 5 A. I can't remember, I'm afraid.
 6 Q. Would it have made a difference? I know that these
 7 counterfactuals are very difficult questions, but did
 8 you in September 2017 perceive that it would have made
 9 a difference if the Home Secretary had been available to
 10 chair the first ministerial meeting on 14 June, as this
 11 note suggests?
 12 A. I don't think I did, and that's because, as I said
 13 before, I can't identify something that wasn't done
 14 because a more senior minister wasn't in the chair.
 15 Q. Paragraph 18, under "Public Communications", says this:
 16 "The failure to understand the local community, or
 17 the poor support provided to those affected, fed through
 18 into the Government's public and parliamentary handling
 19 with no coherent central government media strategy in
 20 place until some days after the fire."
 21 Do you disagree with any of that?
 22 A. I don't have reason to second—guess that judgement, no.
 23 Q. Sitting there in September 2017, what impact did you
 24 think that that had on the response?
 25 A. Well, I think this is fundamentally talking about public

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1 perception of the response, rather than the decisions
 2 and the actions that were taken.
 3 Q. Yes, my question was: what impact do you consider that
 4 that had on the response? Is the answer none?
 5 A. Yes, I don't think this is about impact on the response
 6 per se, I think it's about the public perception of that
 7 response, would be my instinct.
 8 Q. So let's just focus, then, on the precise words at the
 9 very beginning of that sentence:
 10 "The failure to understand the local community, or
 11 the poor support provided to those affected, fed through
 12 into the Government's public and parliamentary
 13 handling ..."
 14 Are you saying that the failure to understand the
 15 community and the poor support provided to those
 16 affected had no impact on the response of central
 17 government?
 18 A. No, I'm not, to be clear, I was taking that sentence as
 19 a whole, which is citing that failure to understand or
 20 provide support — the consequence of that was felt in
 21 the media strategy. So I would agree that that in its
 22 totality, you know, did not have an impact on the
 23 decisions taken in the response, but I would agree that,
 24 you know, the absence of high-quality immediate support
 25 had a material impact, particularly on the people

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1 directly affected.
 2 Q. Now, there are 11 recommendations made in this report,
 3 which I think we can see from page 4 onwards. They're
 4 just appearing at the foot of your screen, and we can
 5 scroll down to the foot of the page. I'm not going to
 6 take you through all of them, but you might like just to
 7 look at (ii):
 8 "There should be a presumption until shown otherwise
 9 that even large, well run organisations will struggle to
 10 cope with a major no-notice emergency, and are likely to
 11 require sustained support and communication to a large
 12 displaced community. Smaller, poor performing
 13 organisations are even more likely to fail."
 14 What was it about the Grenfell Tower fire incident
 15 in particular that led to that self-discovery?
 16 A. Well, I think the recognition that the challenges in the
 17 RBKC response were, you know, not known — it was not
 18 known in advance that they would find it so difficult to
 19 manage an event of this type, which was, you know,
 20 within the planning assumptions we expected local areas
 21 to be able to deal with.
 22 Q. Right. I mean, cast your eye down the recommendations.
 23 (iii):
 24 "... mechanism in place to ensure crisis managers
 25 are aware of any significant concerns within government

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1 over the effectiveness of a significant local
 2 responder."
 3 (iv) deals with category 1 and 2 organisations
 4 should have robust crisis management structures that are
 5 flexible and scalable, et cetera.
 6 (v) is about staffing.
 7 Over the page {CAB00014768/5}, two-way communication
 8 between the Cabinet Office and DCLG; review into the
 9 support provided to victims in an emergency; COBR
 10 Secretariat; checklist; chair's brief, et cetera. I'm
 11 going to assume you're familiar with the detail of
 12 those.
 13 My question on them is: why were all of these needs
 14 for recommendation not revealed by previous incidents or
 15 by training exercises carried out by local forums?
 16 A. Well, some of them may have been. I mean, after every
 17 response, there's a set of — it's a discipline after
 18 every response to look back against, you know, what
 19 should have happened, what went less well, and think
 20 about what would address that in the future. So some of
 21 these things, you know, may have been identified in
 22 other responses, but this is recording the fact of their
 23 appearance in this event and, therefore, the importance
 24 of making sure they're addressed going forwards.
 25 Q. Well, one can understand that, after an incident, there

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1 is a lessons learned process.
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. My question is — let me try it differently: what was it
 4 about the Grenfell Tower fire incident that revealed the
 5 need for these recommendations? Can you put your finger
 6 on it?
 7 A. Well, I think the ... it's very difficult to answer that
 8 question simply. I mean, this is an accumulation of all
 9 of the experiences of many people in that response, so
 10 that's what leads to these recommendations.
 11 Q. Now, finally, in your first statement, let's go to
 12 page 24 {CAB00014764/24}, paragraph 85. And this was
 13 your first statement, not your second or third, it's
 14 fair to point out.
 15 A. Yes.
 16 Q. But in paragraph 85, you say this, in answering the
 17 question:
 18 "Was the response adequate and if not, in what
 19 respects was it inadequate?
 20 "85. Overall, I believe that CCS responded well,
 21 promptly and appropriately to the Grenfell fire. I have
 22 commented on this as part of my response to 13b above."
 23 Looking back now, and having reviewed further
 24 material from the time, partly as a result of your
 25 second and third statements and partly as a result of

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1 giving us the assistance that you have over the last day
 2 and a half, for which we're grateful, do you consider
 3 that CCS's response to the Grenfell Tower fire was
 4 adequate?
 5 A. Yes, I do, based on the information that we had at the
 6 time, I would stand by that statement.
 7 Q. Do you have any further observations on the adequacy of
 8 the response delivered by central government more
 9 widely?
 10 A. Well, only to say that I would endorse, you know, the
 11 carefully gathered and compiled lessons that were put
 12 together afterwards.
 13 MR MILLETT: Mr Chairman, is that a convenient moment?
 14 We've come to the end of the prepared questions.
 15 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: The usual break?
 16 MR MILLETT: Yes.
 17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes.
 18 Well, Ms Hammond, you probably know that, although
 19 Mr Millett's reached the end of his questions, as he
 20 thinks, we have to give a little break now so that he
 21 can consider the position, and also so that others who
 22 are following the proceedings from other places can
 23 suggest questions that may need to be put to you.
 24 THE WITNESS: Of course.
 25 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: So we'll break for ten minutes.

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1 Would that be enough, Mr Millett, 4.40?
 2 MR MILLETT: Yes. 4.40.
 3 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes.
 4 MR MILLETT: Yes.
 5 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right.
 6 We'll break now until 4.40, and then we'll see
 7 whether there are any more questions for you.
 8 THE WITNESS: Thank you.
 9 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.
 10 (Pause)
 11 Thank you very much. 4.40, then, please.
 12 Thank you.
 13 (4.28 pm)
 14 (A short break)
 15 (4.40 pm)
 16 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Right. Well, we'll see if there are
 17 any more questions for you, Ms Hammond.
 18 Yes, Mr Millett.
 19 MR MILLETT: Yes, Mr Chairman.
 20 Ms Hammond, I only have one further question for
 21 you, and it's question reserved for witnesses of
 22 particular responsibility, and it's this: you, in the
 23 process of doing all your witness statements, have gone
 24 through a huge number of previous events a long time
 25 ago, and during the course of the last one and a half

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1 days we have covered a lot of ground. You may also have
 2 heard the evidence given earlier in this module, and
 3 particularly from the families and the bereaved.
 4 Looking back on all of that material, and looking back
 5 on your time in those days after the fire, is there
 6 anything that you yourself would have done differently?
 7 A. Well, I think I would draw on the lessons we learned at
 8 the time, and the thing I take away is the need — the
 9 continual need always to probe that when people say they
 10 don't need help, they do in fact mean it. So I guess
 11 that's what I would have done differently.
 12 MR MILLETT: Well, thank you very much. It only remains for
 13 me to thank you very much for coming to the Inquiry and
 14 assisting us with our investigations, we're extremely
 15 grateful to you, and so thank you very much indeed.
 16 THE WITNESS: Thank you.
 17 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Indeed we are grateful. Thank you
 18 very much indeed for giving up quite a lot of time to
 19 help us with our investigations. It's particularly
 20 interesting and useful for us to have some insight into
 21 the workings of government, otherwise we just get the
 22 documents, which often don't really give us the picture
 23 that we really need to obtain. So we are particularly
 24 grateful to you for coming along. Thank you very much
 25 indeed. And now, of course, you're free to go.

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1 THE WITNESS: Thank you. My pleasure, and I wish you every
2 success in concluding your inquiry.
3 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you.
4 THE WITNESS: Thanks.
5 (The witness withdrew)
6 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you, Mr Millett. Well, that
7 must be it for today.
8 MR MILLETT: It is.
9 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: But we shall have another witness on
10 Monday next week; is that right?
11 MR MILLETT: We do. I think it's David Bellamy on Monday
12 morning.
13 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes, I believe so.
14 MR MILLETT: He will be taken by Ms Malhotra of counsel.
15 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Good. Thank you very much.
16 Right. Well, we stop there, then, and we shall
17 resume at 10 o'clock on Monday morning, please.
18 Thank you very much.
19 (4.45 pm)
20 (The hearing adjourned until 10 am
21 on Monday, 23 May 2022)
22
23
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