

OPUS2

Grenfell Tower Inquiry

Day 272

May 4, 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 hear another witness from the RBKC.

Yes, Mr Keating.

MR KEATING: Good morning, Mr Chairman. Good morning, members of the panel.

Could I call Laura Johnson, please.

SIR MARTIN MOORE--BICK: Thank you.

MS LAURA JOHNSON (affirmed)

SIR MARTIN MOORE--BICK: Thank you very much. Please sit down and make yourself comfortable.

(Pause)

Yes, Mr Keating.

MR KEATING: Thank you.

Questions from COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY

MR KEATING: Ms Johnson, welcome back to the Inquiry.

Thank you again for attending the Inquiry to assist with our investigations and by giving evidence.

Just a few introductory matters, and matters which no doubt you are familiar with from your last attendance at the Inquiry, but firstly, could I invite you to keep your voice up so that the transcriber, who sits to your right, can capture what you say. Also in that vein, if

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you could avoid nodding or shaking your head, as that won't be picked up by the transcript.

If you have difficulty in answering or understanding any of my questions, just let me know, and I'm sure it's my fault and I can rephrase it.

Lastly, at any stage if you need a break, do let us know. We will take a break mid-morning and mid-afternoon.

Is that okay?

A. That's fine.

Q. A few formal matters.

You have provided a number of statements to this Inquiry, and specifically in relation to the aftermath module you have provided two statements which we're just going to look at and identify.

If we could return to {RBK00035592}, please, we see the front page. That's your first statement.

If we could turn to page 26, please, it's dated 26 January 2019, and could you confirm that's your signature?

A. Yes, I can.

Q. Thank you.

Your second statement is at {RBK00057957}. That's the front page of your second witness statement, and if you could turn to page 6, please, it's dated

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12 March 2020. Again, could you confirm that is your statement, please, and signature?

A. Yes, I can.

Q. You have had the opportunity, I understand, to read those statements recently; is that correct?

A. That's correct.

Q. Can you confirm that the contents of those statements are true to the best of your belief and understanding?

A. Yes, I can.

Q. Thank you.

Background, if we could deal with that briefly, Ms Johnson.

Can you confirm that you have worked in housing for local authorities and housing associations for over 20 years, and a significant proportion of that time has been working in London for a number of local authorities?

A. That's correct.

Q. Is it right that you joined RBKC in February 2009, initially as a secondee, and you became a permanent employee as director of housing in 2010?

A. That's correct.

Q. And you held that position up until June 2017, as of June 2017.

A. As of July 2017.

3

Q. Thank you. And you no longer are with RBKC; is that correct?

A. That's correct.

Q. So during that period, over seven years you were working at RBKC -- in fact, eight years -- in the role as director of housing, could you assist us with what that role entailed?

A. Yes. My responsibilities covered homelessness and housing advice, housing finance, housing regeneration and housing development, and the relationship -- managing the relationship with RBK -- K&CTMO.

Q. Okay. So you mentioned four departments which you were responsible for managing, and is it right that you had a team of around 120 people?

A. That's correct.

Q. As of June 2017, was your line manager Nicholas Holgate --

A. That's correct.

Q. -- the town clerk/chief executive of RBKC?

A. That's correct.

Q. I'm going to turn to your role in an emergency. Okay? Let's deal with plans first.

Were you familiar with the RBKC emergency plan, which is known as the contingency management plan?

A. Yes, I had read that plan.

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1 Q. I wonder if you could assist us in clarifying some
 2 matters around other possible plans, please, which you
 3 touch upon in your statement.
 4 If we could turn to your second witness statement
 5 {RBK00057957}, please, at page 1, and if we focus at the
 6 bottom of page 1, there's a question there that you were
 7 asked by the Inquiry:
 8 "Please provide a copy of the housing resilience
 9 plan referred to at paragraph 10 of your [first]
 10 statement."
 11 We can see the answer overleaf at the top of page 2
 12 {RBK00057957/2}, and your answer is this:
 13 "I gave an incorrect name in paragraph 10 of my
 14 first statement, the resilience plan as referenced was
 15 actually called the Business Continuity Plan. The
 16 Business Continuity Plan was updated electronically. We
 17 reviewed the escalations for incidents with the
 18 Kensington and Chelsea [TMO] ... following the Adair
 19 fire and the plan was updated accordingly."
 20 And you were unable to obtain a paper copy of this
 21 plan.
 22 I will return to Adair and the lessons in relation
 23 to that in a moment, but can you assist, how did the
 24 business and continuity plan interact, if at all, with
 25 the contingency management plan in an emergency?

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1 A. So it was my understanding that we had a business
 2 continuity plan that was asked to be produced by —
 3 corporately by the emergency planning team. I cannot,
 4 to be honest with you, remember how often we updated it
 5 or how regularly it was updated. But it was a corporate
 6 request that the housing department, and indeed all
 7 departments of the council, have a continuity plan and,
 8 therefore, it would interact with the central emergency
 9 plan.
 10 Q. Was that an internal plan, in other words internally how
 11 you would operate in an emergency if there was some
 12 difficulty, or was it external?
 13 A. It was an internal plan. It was a plan produced by the
 14 housing department that set out how we would respond in
 15 the case of an emergency.
 16 Q. Okay.
 17 The second area for clarification relates to the
 18 existence of a housing contingency plan, and your former
 19 colleague Veneez Augustine — she was an RBKC
 20 homelessness team manager — refers to this in her
 21 statement to the Inquiry. Perhaps we could look at
 22 that. That's {RBK00035411/2} at paragraph 7, please.
 23 Okay, so this is her statement, and she's asked
 24 a question about policies, procedures and plans, and she
 25 says this:

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1 "During emergencies the Borough's response is
 2 coordinated through the Borough Emergency Control Centre
 3 ... There is a specific written policy setting out what
 4 to do in an emergency for several departments, including
 5 the housing department."
 6 She produces a copy of this document, the housing
 7 contingency plan, date of issue July 2012.
 8 We have a reference to that if it assists you to
 9 look at it, but was there such a document in place as of
 10 June 2017, a housing contingency plan?
 11 A. If it was the one from July 2012, that would have been
 12 the one that was in place, but I don't remember doing
 13 one more recently up until June 2017.
 14 Q. Well, let's assist you by opening that document up.
 15 It's {RBK00035406}, please. So we can identify it from
 16 page 1:
 17 "Housing
 18 "Contingency Plan
 19 "For Emergencies and Business Continuity
 20 Disruptions."
 21 At page 1.
 22 If we scroll down to page 2 {RBK00035406/2}, we can
 23 see the date at the bottom, "Issue No. 1", and that's
 24 July 2012.
 25 Perhaps we could go to page 5 {RBK00035406/5},

7

1 please, and paragraph 1.2, "Aim":
 2 "The aim of the Housing Contingency Plan is to:
 3 " ■ Support, and expand on, the RBKC Contingency
 4 Management Plan ..."
 5 If we look at 1.4, please, which is at the bottom of
 6 that page, "Training and Exercising":
 7 "This Plan will be exercised at least once annually
 8 to ensure it delivers an efficient and effective
 9 response to emergencies from the Housing Department."
 10 It mentions:
 11 "'Introduction to Contingency Management' training
 12 is available through the Council's Student Centre
 13 Training shall be offered for key staff with managerial
 14 responsibilities in the employment of this plan.
 15 "All new staff inductions will include an
 16 explanation of Housing's Contingency Plan ..."
 17 Just in relation to that at the moment, does this
 18 assist your recollection? Was this plan or this type of
 19 plan in existence in the housing department as of
 20 June 2017?
 21 A. If there was one in existence, then if there isn't
 22 an updated copy from July 2012, then it was likely that
 23 this copy was the one that was in existence at the time
 24 of June 2017.
 25 Q. And do you recall exercising a plan like this once

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1 annually to ensure it delivers an efficient and
 2 effective response to emergencies from the housing
 3 department?
 4 A. No.
 5 Q. How comfortable or confident are you now, looking back,
 6 as to whether this sort of plan was being utilised or
 7 there was awareness of this back in June 2017?
 8 A. I'm not confident that it was utilised and/or that the
 9 wider housing staff team were aware of it in June 2017.
 10 Q. And can you say why that was, that it wasn't being
 11 utilised or there wasn't that knowledge in relation to
 12 it?
 13 A. It was something that we were asked to do corporately.
 14 It would be my expectation that there would be
 15 a corporate directive that it was updated on an annual
 16 basis. That doesn't excuse the fact, as director of
 17 housing, that I also should have prompted to have it
 18 updated on an annual basis, and I didn't.
 19 So emergency planning I viewed at that time as being
 20 as part of a large corporate organisation that would be
 21 something that I would be asked to do or instructed to
 22 do by the corporate centre, and therefore I would then
 23 organise it on a departmental basis, but I did not take
 24 responsibility myself for ensuring that was in place on
 25 an annual basis.

1 Q. So we talked about the internal housing department plan;
 2 in relation to the wider RBKC contingency management
 3 plan, you said that you were aware of that.
 4 A. Yes, I was.
 5 Q. In relation to your staff, what was your view as to
 6 awareness of the contingency management plan back in
 7 June 2017?
 8 A. I don't know if my staff were aware of it. I -- it
 9 would have been available on the council's intranet, and
 10 there would have been advice and information available
 11 about it, but I am not aware of the information that my
 12 staff would have had about the contingency plan.
 13 SIR MARTIN MOORE--BICK: Can you just help me with this: were
 14 you yourself conscious of what's said in paragraph 1.4?
 15 A. Not at June 2017, no.
 16 SIR MARTIN MOORE--BICK: Well, I'm thinking of the years
 17 leading up to June 2017. What I'd really welcome your
 18 help on is whether you were aware that there was this
 19 plan which included a provision that it should be
 20 exercised annually.
 21 A. I was aware of the plan, but I wasn't familiar enough
 22 with it to know that there was a provision in there at
 23 1.4 that this needed to be exercised annually. So it
 24 was drafted, I read it, and then I didn't revisit it.
 25 So, no, I didn't take it on board that there was

1 something I needed to do on an annual basis in order to
 2 keep this plan and the training of my team up to date on
 3 that basis.
 4 SIR MARTIN MOORE--BICK: Right. Well, that's very helpful.
 5 Thank you very much.
 6 Yes, Mr Keating.
 7 MR KEATING: Thank you.
 8 Just following on from the question from
 9 the Chairman, in relation to 1.4, it says:
 10 "Training shall be offered for key staff with
 11 managerial responsibilities in the employment of this
 12 plan."
 13 In relation to training, perhaps you could assist
 14 with your training in relation to the contingency
 15 management plan: did you have any specific training?
 16 A. I had attended a training event in 2015 that was put on
 17 by the emergency planning team, but I didn't have any
 18 other formal training on contingency management
 19 planning.
 20 Q. Okay.
 21 Whilst we have this document open, let's deal with
 22 1.7, please, which is the following page, page 6
 23 {RBK00035406/6}, and it says this:
 24 "Relationships with Other Partners."
 25 It talks about the housing department delivering

1 front-line services:
 2 "This covers the following the TMO, Registered
 3 Providers (formerly known as Housing Associations) ..."
 4 Moving on to the next sentence:
 5 "All of these partners have their own emergency
 6 planning procedures in place but may call upon the
 7 Council for further assistance, and Housing Staff should
 8 consult this document in responding to any requests for
 9 assistance."
 10 I'm just going to move on to page 7 {RBK00035406/7},
 11 2.1.2, please:
 12 "The following type of scenario [a major emergency]
 13 may occur in Housing and require staff to implement
 14 contingency planning."
 15 It talks about local residents needing to be
 16 decanted on an emergency basis due to fire, gas leak,
 17 major service failure.
 18 "In this type of scenario Registered Providers,
 19 Supported Housing Providers and the TMO will be expected
 20 to follow their own emergency procedures, which will
 21 include the following types of responses ..."
 22 It sets out the responses there: attending the site;
 23 alerts to the council's contingency planning team:
 24 "Where tenants/service users need to be decanted:
 25 " ■ People should be advised to say with

1 families/friends.
 2 " ■ B&Bs/hotels can be booked.
 3 " ■ Emergency rest centres can be made available ..."
 4 Was that your understanding of the position as at
 5 June 2017?
 6 A. Yes, it was.
 7 Q. You mention in your first statement, which we don't need
 8 to look at, at paragraph 13 {RBK00035592/4} that the
 9 housing department learned a great deal from what had
 10 and had not worked with regard to emergency planning as
 11 a result of the Adair Tower fire which took place on
 12 31 October 2015; is that correct?
 13 A. Yes, it is.
 14 Q. You say your department, led by Amanda Johnson, had
 15 a meeting with David Kerry and the TMO to review
 16 procedure and improve practice in April 2016; is that
 17 correct?
 18 A. That's correct.
 19 Q. There are a couple of aspects of the minutes of that
 20 meeting which perhaps you could assist us upon, and
 21 they're at {RBK00004660}.
 22 So this is the meeting on 11 April 2016, the
 23 follow-up on the Adair Tower fire. You're not
 24 an attendee, firstly, in relation to that, so you
 25 weren't at this meeting, but it may be that you were

1 made aware of the contents of this minute in due course.
 2 Perhaps if we look at this, it may assist your
 3 recollection.
 4 If we look at page 2 {RBK00004660/2}, please, and
 5 under "Call-out of the Housing Department", in the
 6 middle of the page, second bullet point:
 7 "We have agreed that any significant incident
 8 involving RBKC (TMO managed) properties will include
 9 an alert to directly to [sic] Housing senior
 10 management."
 11 In other words, that housing will be alerted
 12 straight away.
 13 If we turn to the second bullet point at page 3
 14 {RBK00004660/3}, please:
 15 "Housing confirmed that –
 16 " ■ They can liaise with TMO to get full details of
 17 vulnerable evacuated tenants."
 18 So in relation to the first point, you mention that
 19 in your statement, that was a lesson learned, that
 20 housing needs to be informed if there's a major
 21 incident – –
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. – – and there's people who have been displaced or
 24 decanted, to use the phraseology we've heard, from the
 25 properties; is that correct?

1 A. That's correct.
 2 Q. In relation to this matter we just looked at about
 3 getting details of vulnerable evacuated tenants from the
 4 TMO, was that the case? Was that what would happen?
 5 A. Yes, because the TMO were the organisation that had the
 6 information about the tenants who lived in any
 7 particular property. We didn't have that information at
 8 the council. So they would be our first port of call to
 9 ask who lived in the property and did they have any
 10 additional information on them, about whether they were
 11 vulnerable or not.
 12 The TMO may not have that information, because
 13 obviously it's up to tenants what information they share
 14 with their landlord, but if they did, then that would be
 15 very helpful.
 16 Q. So in a situation such as perhaps Grenfell or Adair, if
 17 housing were there, they would attend and speak to
 18 a counterpart in the TMO and ask for information?
 19 A. That's correct.
 20 Q. What would be your understanding as to the source of the
 21 information the TMO would have?
 22 A. It would be based on their property database. So they
 23 have a list of all the properties that they rent and all
 24 of the tenants, and they would have a housing management
 25 system, and on that housing management system, which are

1 common to all housing organisations, they would have – –
 2 may or may not have additional information on those
 3 tenants.
 4 Q. And how, if at all, would RBKC's adult social care
 5 department fit in to this process about getting
 6 information regarding vulnerable residents in
 7 an incident where people have been decanted from
 8 a property?
 9 A. So adult social care, if they have involvement with the
 10 tenant living in that particular property, would have
 11 their own information, which would provide them with
 12 information about anybody that they had been – – they had
 13 provided services to or had involvement with. If adult
 14 social care wanted information from the housing
 15 department or from the TMO, then they would ask myself
 16 or a member of my team directly if we had information on
 17 that particular individual.
 18 Q. So two potential sources of information regarding
 19 vulnerable residents?
 20 A. That's correct.
 21 Q. If we move down, please, to the next action on the
 22 document which is in front of us, it says this:
 23 "In a future incident involving more than a couple
 24 of RBKC/TMO dwellings, the LALO [local authority liaison
 25 officer] or Contingency Planning Team [Mr Kerry's

1 department] will attend the site and form a Scene
 2 Incident Management Group along with Housing and TMO
 3 [representatives].”
 4 That’s something which was discussed as a process
 5 that would assist. Were you aware of that?
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. And do you think that would be something that would
 8 assist and improve the nature of any response?
 9 A. Yes, because there would be then a collective place
 10 where information could be ascertained about the people
 11 who were impacted by the disaster, and then collectively
 12 decisions made about how it was best to manage the needs
 13 of the people who needed to be rehoused.
 14 Q. We understand that that was not implemented as a new
 15 process by June 2017. Do you know why that was?
 16 A. Implemented in what way? As in a procedure note being
 17 drafted and/or ...?
 18 Q. It wasn’t in place or documented that this was going to
 19 be a process in the event of an emergency.
 20 A. No, I don’t know why there wasn’t a formal process map
 21 and/or addition made to the council’s contingency plan
 22 which updated it in this respect.
 23 Q. From your experiences of 14 June, and as someone who
 24 attended, as we will hear in a moment, very early on
 25 14 June, do you think a scene incident management group

17

1 would have assisted the response?
 2 A. I think on 14 June, it was such an enormous incident of
 3 such overwhelming scale that I’m not sure a scene
 4 incident management group would have made a great deal
 5 of difference, because what happened in reality was that
 6 the TMO did provide information based from people
 7 on site, they did provide it to myself and to my
 8 colleagues who were at the BECC, and so that happened,
 9 but it just didn’t happen on site at Grenfell Tower.
 10 Q. Okay. I’ll return to that comment a little bit later,
 11 but I just want to deal with a little bit more in
 12 relation to pre-fire documentation by way of assistance,
 13 if possible.
 14 Risk registers.
 15 You refer to maintaining a risk register for housing
 16 in your first statement at paragraph 11
 17 {RBK00035592/3} -- we don’t need to look at it -- but is
 18 it right that the housing risk register was not a risk
 19 register within the meaning of the Civil Contingency
 20 Act?
 21 A. I don’t know what a risk register is, to be honest with
 22 you, in the context of the Civil Contingency Act. It
 23 was a risk register that we were asked to complete
 24 corporately on a quarterly basis.
 25 Q. It may be we don’t need to look at it, I can deal with

18

1 it a little bit shorter. So it dealt with internal
 2 housing department risks in relation to matters which
 3 you had to be alive to and tried to address as best you
 4 could; is that correct?
 5 A. That’s correct.
 6 Q. One matter to note from this register -- which, as you
 7 describe, was reviewed and updated on a regular basis --
 8 was the risk in relation to the capacity of temporary
 9 accommodation; is that correct?
 10 A. That’s correct.
 11 Q. You say at paragraph 11 of your statement
 12 {RBK00035592/3} that:
 13 "... we [the department] had significant problems
 14 procuring temporary accommodation, or how we would
 15 rehouse significant numbers of people in the event of
 16 a fire, flood or natural disaster.”
 17 A. That’s correct.
 18 SIR MARTIN MOORE–BICK: Can you just give us some idea of
 19 what was on the risk register? I think it might help us
 20 and others.
 21 A. It was quite a short document which just had very
 22 high-level risks. It didn’t go into a huge amount of
 23 detail, which -- it didn’t -- with a more detailed risk
 24 register, you would expect significant description of
 25 controls and mitigations and target scores. There was

19

1 some scoring and there was some description of the risk,
 2 and there was a limited description of the mitigations
 3 that would take place. So it was contained normally on
 4 one to two pages with high-level risks, and a descriptor
 5 of the risk and a descriptor of the mitigations.
 6 SIR MARTIN MOORE–BICK: Can you give us an example of the
 7 sort of risk we’re talking about?
 8 A. So -- oh, so other risks on the risk register would have
 9 been around key features of the department, such as
 10 temporary accommodation, which was a large part of what
 11 we did, and about the financial risk of not being able
 12 to, you know, procure enough temporary accommodation at
 13 the right price and/or be able to house homeless
 14 applicants in sufficient time, or to meet our
 15 requirement with regard to moving people out of B&B --
 16 all, you know, kind of quite high-level stuff.
 17 We were doing regeneration at the time or looking at
 18 significant estate regeneration, and there would --
 19 there may well have been highlights about if we couldn’t
 20 proceed with that and ...
 21 SIR MARTIN MOORE–BICK: Yes, thank you very much.
 22 MR KEATING: Thank you.
 23 So you have mentioned the sort of general high-level
 24 risks which you as a department kept track of --
 25 A. That’s correct.

20

1 Q. -- and sought to mitigate where possible, and one of the
2 identified risks I drew out was that one in relation to
3 the significant problem of procuring temporary
4 accommodation where a significant number of people were
5 displaced.

6 Perhaps we could turn to your statement at
7 paragraph 14 of your first statement {RBK00035592/4},
8 please. Picking that up, it says:

9 "Discussions did take place about what action we
10 would need to take if we needed to house a significant
11 number of residents in an emergency situation. The
12 reality however is that the options for short, medium
13 and longer term housing is limited as the majority of
14 the Council's housing stock is occupied and rented to
15 residents. The type of accommodation the Council had
16 available for temporary accommodation for homeless
17 families would not in all likelihood be suitable or in
18 the right location in an emergency situation. We had
19 used hotels in and around the borough following the
20 Adair fire. In the event of another fire taking place
21 we would (depending on the scale) follow the same
22 procedure."

23 Is that correct?

24 A. That's correct.

25 Q. So in relation to this plan to respond to this

21

1 identified risk as of June 2017, were there agreements
2 with local hotels or providers of accommodation to cater
3 for this event?

4 A. No, there was not.

5 Q. Was there a documented plan as to how to secure hotel
6 accommodation in the event of a mass displacement of
7 residents, or was this sort of a general statement of
8 intent?

9 A. It was a general statement of intent.

10 Q. Do you think, in hindsight, it would have assisted
11 having a plan and some pre-agreement with hotels and
12 other providers of accommodation in this sort of
13 situation?

14 A. I think, in hindsight, it would have been helpful if we
15 had been able to have an agreement in place with the
16 major hotel groups about how they would assist us in
17 case of emergency. But, in reality, it depended on the
18 vacancy rate that they had at any one time, and it was
19 the summer of -- June 2017 and the occupancy rate was
20 extremely high at that point.

21 So, yes, in hindsight, I think that would have been
22 a good thing for us to do, to speak to the major hotel
23 groups in the borough and talk to them about how we may
24 manage in that scenario, and how we may pay for hotel
25 rooms in that scenario, because that was a particular

22

1 difficulty in the early days.

2 Q. We will touch upon that a little bit later this morning
3 and see where situations arose.

4 In terms of training, we've touched upon that
5 already in some of your answers this morning, and
6 perhaps I could deal with that quite briefly.

7 In terms of your training, you say this in your
8 evidence at paragraph 9 {RBK00035592/2}:

9 "I was not a trained BECC officer, nor was
10 I assigned a defined role as a Bronze, Silver or Gold
11 operative in the event of an emergency. I do not know
12 the rationale used to decide on who did or did not
13 receive emergency planning training by the Contingency
14 Planning team."

15 Was that the position?

16 A. That's correct.

17 Q. You have mentioned that you did have training in
18 September 2015 in relation to -- that was a Gold Group
19 contingency training session; is that correct?

20 A. That's correct.

21 Q. We heard that was a two-hour session.

22 A. That's correct.

23 Q. Do you recall attending any other training sessions in
24 the lead-up to June 2017 or during your time at RBKC?

25 A. No, I do not.

23

1 Q. Do you recall scenario testing exercises, such as
2 an exercise in November 2016 known as Exercise Poldark?

3 A. I do not recall that exercise. It may have been that
4 other members of my department attended, but I do not
5 remember attending.

6 Q. Perhaps a memorable name. Let me assist you a little
7 bit more with the events: a joint training exercise with
8 RBKC housing, the TMO and Octavia, held at Burgess Field
9 on 1 November 2016?

10 A. I did not attend.

11 Q. And this was -- again, just from completeness, perhaps
12 to assist everybody -- a three-hour exercise which
13 related to a gas leak leading to immediate evacuation of
14 residents, being unable to return overnight. Doesn't
15 assist your recollection?

16 A. No, I did not attend.

17 Q. No.

18 Finally, in relation to training, Exercise Babel.
19 This was a desktop exercise in November 2015, which
20 concerned a fire in a tower block and its evacuation.
21 Was that something that you were aware of?

22 A. No.

23 Q. I think as a matter of record, the housing team were not
24 invited and did not participate in that exercise.

25 A. I can only take your word for it, because I'm not --

24

1 I have no recollection of it.

2 Q. Well, from your answers, you weren't aware of it, which

3 may --

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. -- probably explain that you weren't invited.

6 A. That's -- yes, I think you can infer that.

7 Q. Yes.

8 I'm going to move on now, now we've dealt with plans

9 and risk registers, and move on to the heart of your

10 evidence, which deals with the response to the

11 Grenfell Tower fire.

12 We're going to go through certain aspects in some

13 detail, but before doing so, is it fair that from

14 14 June, over the next seven days and thereafter, you

15 and your department were deployed in significant numbers

16 and worked really long hours over those days trying to

17 assist and provide support to those people who were

18 displaced after the Grenfell Tower fire?

19 A. Yes. My department worked tirelessly over that time,

20 and were deployed in all areas of supporting the

21 residents who had been impacted by the dreadful events

22 of June 2014 -- sorry, June 2017, and were on the

23 front line of helping people in order to be able to

24 secure accommodation, attending rest centres, you know,

25 visiting, visiting people in hotels, answering calls,

1 booking hotel rooms, yes. The full suite of actions

2 that were required in order to try and find people

3 somewhere to live or somewhere to stay that was safe and

4 warm were undertaken by members of my team.

5 Q. We've got a number of statements from your colleagues.

6 You're the one live witness from the housing department.

7 But, in general terms, staff got in very early, worked

8 very late, some stayed in the office, some stayed in

9 hotels, and some travelled back some distances to where

10 they lived during that period of time.

11 A. That's correct, people worked very long hours and worked

12 tirelessly in order to be able to provide the support

13 and services that they thought were required for the

14 people who were impacted by the disaster, and worked

15 very hard.

16 Q. So within that context, and not forgetting that, I want

17 to examine certain aspects of the response, if that's

18 okay.

19 Let's deal with, first of all, how you learned of

20 the response.

21 In your first statement at paragraph 15

22 {RBK00035592/4}, you say that you became aware of the

23 fire via a phone call from David Kerry at 02.34; is that

24 correct?

25 A. That's correct.

1 Q. Just after 2.30 in the morning.

2 At that stage, what was your understanding of the

3 scale of the fire at Grenfell Tower when you were

4 contacted by David Kerry that early in the morning?

5 A. David Kerry contacted me and advised me that there was

6 a fire in Grenfell Tower. I didn't get any sense from

7 that phone call of the scale of the fire at that time,

8 and he said he would contact me -- I believe he said he

9 would contact me again, you know, kind of if there was

10 further assistance needed.

11 So at that point, at that call at 2.30 in the

12 morning, I knew there was a fire, but, from the phone

13 call, I didn't get a sentiment of the scale of it. So

14 what I did was I got up, turned on the TV news, turned

15 on the internet, in order to be able to assess, to see

16 if there was anything that I could see, you know, kind

17 of that was happening.

18 Q. Yes. From those initial actions and turning on the

19 television, is it fair to suggest, by 02.53 and your

20 first email notification to your housing team, you were

21 dealing, in your words, with a "massive fire"?

22 A. Yes, that's correct. I was watching videos on YouTube

23 of the fire starting to take hold at Grenfell. It was

24 just awful.

25 Q. And you were aware at that stage that there were

1 rest centres open, and you say in this email to your

2 team there was likely to be a need to find

3 a considerable amount of emergency accommodation.

4 A. That's correct.

5 Q. Your next update is at 04.03, and perhaps we could look

6 at that. That's {RBK00002747}. So this is an email

7 from you, the time is set out there, 14 June, 04.03,

8 sent to your team, and it says:

9 "To all,

10 "Following on from my earlier report [that's the one

11 I summarised a moment ago] the fire at Grenfell is very

12 serious and the building is destroyed and the residents

13 are very unlikely to be able to return, we shall need to

14 mobilise this morning to ensure we can assess those

15 affected by the fire and find emergency accommodation

16 that is likely to be available both short and medium

17 term.

18 "People will have no possessions and limited access

19 to funds so we need to be aware of this when assessing

20 our response.

21 "I am going up there now ..."

22 How soon did you anticipate this mobilisation would

23 take place of your housing staff?

24 A. Straight away, really. It depends on who would see the

25 email. I also did make some phone calls to key members

1 of my management team as well to make them aware. So
2 there was an email, there was phone calls, and then,
3 you know, kind of -- I live some distance from RBKC and
4 decided to travel in straight away before -- to drive
5 in, and went straight to the Town Hall, and then I knew
6 that the -- my colleagues from the housing department
7 management team would be in very soon.

8 Q. You say in your statement at paragraph 25
9 {RBK00035592/6}, I'm going to summarise:
10 "The rest centres were not within my remit, but
11 I knew I would need to send my team to the rest centres
12 as soon as possible to speak to people about emergency
13 re-housing."

14 Is that correct?
15 A. That's correct.
16 Q. Would you need any information before mobilising your
17 housing officers to those rest centres?
18 A. Well, I would need to know where they were and what
19 facilities were available at those rest centres, because
20 my role, as I understood it, was to ensure that people
21 who were coming in to those rest centres, who would be
22 utterly in shock and traumatised, were to be met by
23 someone from -- would very quickly need to know where
24 they were going to stay, if they couldn't stay in the
25 short term with friends or relatives. So it would be my

1 responsibility to make sure that my team were able to
2 assess what people's needs were and then find somewhere
3 for them to go.

4 Q. And at that stage of the morning, did you know where to
5 deploy RBKC housing officers to?

6 A. At 4 o'clock in the morning? No.

7 Q. I'll try and stick in a sort of chronological narrative.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. We'll return to that question in a moment.

10 But we know from your statement at paragraph 18
11 {RBK00035592/5} that you spoke again with David Kerry at
12 03.49 and confirmed to him that the TMO were on site,
13 including Robert Black.

14 What did you consider the role of the TMO to be that
15 morning on the Grenfell Tower site?

16 A. So I knew that the TMO would be there and I knew that
17 Robert was there already. I knew that Robert would
18 probably be arranging for other members of his team to
19 be there at the time as well, and at that point,
20 depending on, you know, kind of how serious the incident
21 was, they'd be providing information and advice,
22 possibly to the emergency services.

23 What they could do in an incident of that scale,
24 I don't know, to be honest.

25 Q. Was there any discussion between you and Robert Black or

1 anybody else at the TMO that morning as to their role?

2 A. I probably wouldn't describe it in those terms.

3 I talked to Robert Black and other members of the TMO
4 a number of times over the course of that morning, and
5 it was a case of gathering information about what was
6 taking place at Grenfell Tower at the time. I didn't go
7 to the tower, I went to the Town Hall, I went to the
8 BECC, as I considered that to be the most useful place
9 for me to go in order to be able to co-ordinate events
10 from the housing department, but I knew the TMO were
11 on site, so they were providing very useful information
12 back to me and to other colleagues to tell me what was
13 taking place at the time and who was evacuated and the
14 scale of the fire and what was taking place.

15 Q. In terms of the scale of the fire, at that stage, from
16 the information that you were receiving, how would you
17 assess the scale of the fire as being fed back to you?

18 A. At 4 o'clock in the morning?

19 Q. Yes.

20 A. As it sets out in my email, I had seen pictures on the
21 internet that the fire was extremely serious, so it was
22 my expectation that no one would be returning to
23 Grenfell.

24 Q. Okay.

25 You have touched upon it already, but you travelled

1 from your home to the Town Hall. You arrived at 05.15,
2 which is set out in your statement at paragraph 21
3 {RBK00035592/6}. Then you go on at paragraph 22 to
4 state that you were in the BECC, the borough emergency
5 command centre, co-ordinating information coming from
6 the site. You mention that that's where Robert Black
7 was based, as was Nicholas Holgate at that stage of the
8 morning; is that correct?

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. I wonder if we could have a look at your statement at
11 paragraph 24, please, of your first statement
12 {RBK00035592/6}. It's at an early part of your
13 statement where you're describing the incident, which
14 I've just summarised, that you were in the BECC at
15 paragraph 23, and you say this at paragraph 24:

16 "RBKC was not sufficiently prepared to deal with
17 a fire that was so devastating and of such a significant
18 impact."

19 Is that correct?

20 A. In my opinion, yes.

21 Q. When did you form that view that RBKC was not
22 sufficiently prepared to deal with a fire that was so
23 devastating and of such a significant impact?

24 A. I can't say with any certainty when I formed that view,
25 but it wasn't possibly right at the time, because I was

1 just dealing with the incident at the time. It was
 2 probably subsequently, when I had time to reflect.
 3 Q. So this was more an opinion which you arrived at after
 4 events, looking back, rather than as you were in the
 5 BECC that morning?
 6 A. That's correct. Whilst I was in the BECC that morning,
 7 I was just extremely busy, and so I don't think I had
 8 the time to form a view. I was just taking actions and
 9 instructing my team accordingly, and they were acting on
 10 their own initiative as well in order to be able to
 11 provide and find as much accommodation as we could for
 12 the people who were affected by the fire.
 13 Q. And that morning, early morning in the BECC, from
 14 5 o'clock through to perhaps 8, 9, 10 o'clock in the
 15 morning, how would you describe how the BECC was
 16 operating?
 17 A. I didn't know -- I have never been to -- never been in
 18 a BECC in full operation before, so I had no concept or
 19 expectations of what a BECC would do, to be honest.
 20 There was a lot of people in the BECC. There were
 21 people taking notes, there were people answering calls,
 22 it was a very busy environment. But I would say my
 23 perception at that time and subsequently when thinking
 24 about it was there was nobody leading the BECC from
 25 those very early hours of the morning and providing

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1 instruction to colleagues.
 2 Q. You say at paragraph 23, which is just in front of you:
 3 "It was not chaotic at the BECC, but equally it was
 4 not very well organised either as there was a lack of
 5 direction over tasks that needed to be undertaken.
 6 Nicholas Holgate was in meetings constantly, but it was
 7 not his role to lead the BECC."
 8 Do you still stand by those comments or is there
 9 anything else you wanted to add?
 10 A. No, I stand by those comments.
 11 Q. You mentioned:
 12 "Stuart Priestley took charge of the BECC as the
 13 morning progressed. He worked tirelessly to try to
 14 co-ordinate events from the BECC, assisted by
 15 Rebecca Blackburn."
 16 Is that correct?
 17 A. That's correct. Yes, Stuart came in and started to,
 18 you know, kind of take charge of events that needed to
 19 take place from the BECC, and Rebecca Blackburn, who
 20 worked in the emergency planning team, very ably
 21 assisted him and understood the role of the BECC very
 22 clearly.
 23 Q. If we could scroll back up to paragraph 22, again to
 24 assist you, I'm going to move on to a topic of
 25 discussions or a meeting with Nicholas Holgate.

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1 We see at paragraph 22 that you had arrived, and it
 2 says this, about four lines down:
 3 "Members of the Council's management team started to
 4 arrive at the BECC by 06:00. As a management team, we
 5 discussed what resources were needed to support
 6 survivors. We all had an input on what was required,
 7 and we discussed what services were needed. My primary
 8 role was to provide re-housing services."
 9 I'm just going to move on to paragraph 28
 10 {RBK00035592/7}. So keep that in mind, so the 6 o'clock
 11 management team discussion, and we move on to
 12 paragraph 28:
 13 "At around 06:30, there was an informal meeting in
 14 the Holland Room in Kensington Town Hall between
 15 Nicholas Holgate, Stuart Priestley, David Kerry and
 16 myself."
 17 Well, the Holland Room is the BECC; isn't that
 18 correct?
 19 A. I believe it is, yeah.
 20 Q. Yes. So we've got a reference there in the first
 21 paragraph, at paragraph 22, to a discussion as
 22 a management team, and then I just showed you
 23 a moment ago an informal meeting at 6.30 between
 24 yourself, Stuart Priestley, David Kerry and
 25 Nicholas Holgate.

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1 Were they separate or were they the same event?
 2 A. I believe they were separate, although, to be honest
 3 with you, it's five years ago and I can't remember in
 4 that level of detail. But for the people who were
 5 arriving in the BECC who were senior members of the RBKC
 6 management team, I believe what I'm referring to is
 7 an informal discussion amongst people who were there at
 8 the time about what people's roles and responsibilities
 9 would be in order to help the survivors of the fire.
 10 Q. And in relation to the first discussion as people
 11 arrived, was that with Nicholas Holgate, or was the
 12 latter informal meeting at 6.30 when he arrived?
 13 A. I don't remember whether Nicholas was there at 6 o'clock
 14 or whether he was part of that informal discussion. The
 15 second one at 6.30 clearly references Nicholas.
 16 Q. Okay.
 17 Let's focus on the second, more formal informal
 18 meeting, as you describe at paragraph 28, and in
 19 relation to what was discussed.
 20 So you have mentioned David Kerry was present, and
 21 he was the manager, as we know, of the contingency
 22 planning team and a specialist in that field. Did he
 23 give any advice to Nicholas Holgate about the incident
 24 at that stage?
 25 A. I really don't remember, to be honest.

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1 Q. Do you remember anything about this informal meeting at
 2 06.30?
 3 A. I do not.
 4 Q. David Kerry in his statement — and perhaps we could
 5 look at his statement, please, his first statement at
 6 {RBK00033579}, please. If we open up that, that's his
 7 statement there.
 8 At page 18 {RBK00033579/18}, paragraph 81, he
 9 describes and logs a meeting which you attended that day
 10 at a later time, at 10 o'clock, and perhaps I could ask
 11 you about that and see if this assists your
 12 recollection :
 13 "At 10 am I attended a meeting with Laura Johnson,
 14 Robert Black of the TMO, Nicholas Holgate and
 15 Stuart Priestley at the Town Hall. Nicholas Holgate
 16 said that he was going to convene the Council
 17 Gold Group. This was effectively a handover meeting for
 18 me, and a pre-meeting before the Council Gold meeting.
 19 I gave advice at this point that this incident was
 20 bigger than any one local authority in London could
 21 manage and consideration should be given to seeking
 22 mutual aid."
 23 So in relation to that meeting at 10 o'clock, or any
 24 other discussion with David Kerry and you and
 25 Nicholas Holgate together on that morning, do you recall

1 that advice being given?
 2 A. I do not.
 3 Q. Do you accept that it would be a significant statement
 4 if the specialist in the field was saying that this
 5 incident was bigger than any one local authority in
 6 London could manage and consideration should be given to
 7 seeking mutual aid?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. Do you recall any discussions that morning about the
 10 magnitude of the incident and advice or the need to get
 11 external help?
 12 A. I don't.
 13 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Should we understand that you don't
 14 have a very good recollection of that meeting and that
 15 what's being said here might have occurred but you don't
 16 remember, or is it a case of your remembering that it
 17 didn't occur?
 18 A. I don't remember. I don't remember the detail of the
 19 meeting. So it may have — that may have been the
 20 advice that was given, but I don't remember in that
 21 level of detail. I was very focused at that time on my
 22 own tasks in hand.
 23 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes. Thank you, that's helpful.
 24 MR KEATING: If we could look at one other document which
 25 perhaps may assist your recollection of events, please,

1 and that's Stuart Priestley's log. That's
 2 {RBK00013318}, please.
 3 So this is a log which Stuart Priestley has given
 4 evidence about. It was prepared a couple of days after
 5 the incident, so not contemporaneous, but close to
 6 contemporaneous.
 7 Scroll down to the bottom of this page, please. He
 8 notes at 6.30 — so the same time that you gave as this
 9 informal meeting with Nicholas Holgate. He was at that
 10 time or soon to be Council Silver, so the person who was
 11 responsible for the tactical operation.
 12 "Meeting with: Robert Black, Laura Johnson,
 13 Nicholas Holgate, David Kerry: David provided an update
 14 as had been feedback to him by the on-site LALO and
 15 gathered from the meeting he had dialled into."
 16 That was likely to be the SCG.
 17 "DK [David Kerry] advised of the scale of the
 18 tragedy. Robert [Black] reported he had attended the
 19 site and it was very serious indeed. Nicholas [Holgate]
 20 advises he has spoken with the Leader who has agreed to
 21 fund anything necessary for the relief effort. David
 22 advised Nicholas [Holgate] of the mutual aid
 23 arrangements available via [London Local Authority Gold]
 24 and our neighbouring boroughs."
 25 So, pausing there, this is another record of

1 a meeting at which you were an attendee where it states
 2 that advice was given regarding seeking mutual aid or
 3 external assistance.
 4 Does that assist your recollection ?
 5 A. To be honest with you, no, I don't remember the details
 6 of that meeting.
 7 Q. Do you remember your superior, your line manager, the
 8 town clerk of the local authority, saying, "That looks
 9 like we can't cope", when there was that offer of
 10 assistance discussed?
 11 A. If I remembered it, I would say, but I — quite
 12 honestly, I can't remember the details of that meeting
 13 at 6.30 that morning.
 14 Q. The last part in relation to that note:
 15 "The conversation on mutual aid at that point
 16 ceased."
 17 So your evidence is that you've got no recollection
 18 of this?
 19 A. I don't have a recollection of the detail of that
 20 meeting. I know it took place, but I couldn't tell you,
 21 quite honestly, what was said in that meeting.
 22 Q. Do you have any recollection of how Mr Holgate was that
 23 morning when you saw him come in to the BECC, and during
 24 this informal meeting you noted in your statement at
 25 6.30?

1 A. Extremely worried. It was a terrible, terrible
 2 incident, and, you know, extremely worried is probably
 3 the only way I could put it.
 4 Q. In relation to this topic, not going behind your
 5 evidence, but this topic of seeking external assistance,
 6 you've described the magnitude of the incident; did you
 7 think at that stage there was the need for RBKC to get
 8 external assistance?
 9 A. I don't remember considering that at that point in time.
 10 As I said, I was very -- at that point, just very
 11 focused on making sure that the housing department were
 12 doing everything they possibly could in order to book as
 13 many hotel rooms as we possibly could, and to think
 14 about how we could then get up to the Grenfell Tower
 15 area in order to be able to provide people with that
 16 information and move people on. I don't remember
 17 consciously thinking about what else or who else should
 18 be helping us at that point in time.
 19 Q. So the final point really in relation to this is that
 20 you acknowledged and are aware that this was an incident
 21 of magnitude.
 22 A. Absolutely.
 23 Q. From your email, you describe a substantial number of
 24 displaced people whose homes were destroyed in the most
 25 traumatic circumstances.

1 A. That's correct.
 2 Q. And on any basis, is it the case that there was a huge
 3 challenge that you as a housing department faced that
 4 morning by 6.30?
 5 A. That's correct.
 6 MR KEATING: Let's move on to the next topic, which is
 7 deployment of housing staff.
 8 SIR MARTIN MOORE--BICK: Before we do --
 9 MR KEATING: Yes.
 10 SIR MARTIN MOORE--BICK: I'm sorry, I keep interrupting.
 11 MR KEATING: No, please do.
 12 SIR MARTIN MOORE--BICK: Just help me with this: there
 13 obviously was a meeting at 6.30.
 14 A. Yes.
 15 SIR MARTIN MOORE--BICK: But you don't have much of
 16 a recollection of it.
 17 At that stage, did it cross your mind whether you
 18 had enough people in your department to carry out all
 19 the functions which were going to have to be performed
 20 over the next, let's say, 12 hours?
 21 A. No, it didn't cross my mind at that point. I wasn't
 22 thinking: I've got 120 people, how am I going to divide
 23 them up? I was thinking: I have got a team of
 24 homelessness and housing advice officers who are well
 25 equipped, because that's what they do day to day, is

1 find people accommodation; how do we deploy them and how
 2 do we book as many rooms as we can, how do we find as
 3 much accommodation as we can, and how do I get those
 4 people on site in order to provide that link to get
 5 people into the hotels? That was as far--reaching as my
 6 thinking was going at that point in time.
 7 SIR MARTIN MOORE--BICK: Right. I ask the question because
 8 had you thought at that stage that you were going to be
 9 shorthanded, questions about mutual aid would have had
 10 more significance, but if it wasn't present to your
 11 mind --
 12 A. I had no concept at that time, having never been
 13 involved in an emergency of this scale or this type
 14 before, you know, how long this was going to go on for
 15 and how wide it was going to be. All I could see were
 16 the pictures on the news in the BECC about that tower.
 17 So in subsequent days, we did ask for help and said
 18 we needed more people, but at that point in time it was
 19 just about how we could deploy our resources to help.
 20 I wasn't thinking more broadly at that point in time.
 21 I wasn't thinking strategically, I was thinking in terms
 22 of a series of actions that needed to be taken in the
 23 moment.
 24 SIR MARTIN MOORE--BICK: All right. Thank you very much.
 25 Yes, Mr Keating.

1 MR KEATING: Just really following on from that answer, you
 2 were quite candid in saying that you were focusing on
 3 actions, but you weren't thinking strategically, and you
 4 also said earlier on that this was such an enormous
 5 incident of an overwhelming scale.
 6 Was it the position that you and perhaps some of
 7 your colleagues were just overwhelmed by the magnitude
 8 of the incident at that stage?
 9 A. I don't think I was overwhelmed by it. I was aware of
 10 the scale of it, and was breaking it down into a series
 11 of tasks that the housing department could undertake in
 12 order to be able to help manage the outcome from that.
 13 But I -- I didn't freeze or stop or, you know, kind of
 14 decide that I couldn't manage. I decided that there
 15 were a number of actions that needed to be taken at that
 16 time, in that moment, in order to be able to provide
 17 assistance immediately to the people who were affected
 18 by the fire. But I wouldn't say I was overwhelmed by
 19 it. I'd said I was -- responded in a very practical
 20 fashion about what I considered to be the best way to
 21 help.
 22 Q. The final point in this is that you didn't freeze or
 23 stop, as you describe it, but did you stop to think
 24 strategically at that stage?
 25 A. I didn't stop to think, I -- at 6.30 in the morning,

1 I didn't stop to think strategically . I did
 2 subsequently as the day went on, but at 6.30 in the
 3 morning, it was about corralling the resources available
 4 to me in the housing department in order to be able to
 5 provide that response. As the day wore on and, indeed,
 6 on the next day, then I definitely started to think
 7 about how to manage in the broader sense for the short,
 8 medium and long term for the people who needed to be
 9 rehoused.

10 Q. If we could look at an email, please, which you sent at
 11 07.41. That's {RBK00001026}, and we're now dealing with
 12 the topic of deployment of housing staff. We see the
 13 second email is from you, it's at 07.41 to Robert Shaw
 14 in your department, copying in other members of staff,
 15 regarding "What is needed?":
 16 "We shall be organising a team to send to the two
 17 rest centre[s] to assess the displaced people's housing
 18 need[s] and arrange alternative accommodation for them.
 19 "Amanda phoning around commercial hotels now to find
 20 vacancies.
 21 "We are also setting up a protocol for those people
 22 in hospital who will be discharged and need to be read
 23 rehoused."
 24 Does that summarise the role of the housing officers
 25 who attended the rest centres at that stage, that they

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1 were going to attend to assess the needs of those, as
 2 termed here, displaced peoples and arrange alternative
 3 accommodation for them?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. When were they deployed, on your account?

6 A. I don't -- I think there's a record that they were
 7 deployed some time later in the morning at around
 8 10 o'clock and made it up to the rest centres at around
 9 10.30, because they needed to walk from the Town Hall up
 10 to the Clement James Centre and Rugby Portobello Trust,
 11 because of the -- you know, obviously because of the
 12 limitations of being able to get public transport or
 13 a taxi.

14 Q. So in the region of 10 o'clock they were deployed?

15 A. That's correct.

16 Q. And then, because of the transport difficulties , they
 17 went on foot --

18 A. That's correct.

19 Q. -- to the centres.

20 We saw earlier on that email at 04.03 where you
 21 recognised the need to mobilise members of the housing
 22 team to get to the rest centre --

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. -- and I asked you questions about that. Why was there
 25 a delay of about six hours for their actual deployment

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1 to the rest centres?

2 A. I didn't know which rest centres to send them to. So
 3 I didn't know which centres were being used, which
 4 particular community facilities in that location were
 5 the best two centres to send them to. Between 4 o'clock
 6 and 7 o'clock, 8 o'clock, 9 o'clock, staff were still
 7 arriving in the Town Hall, so it wasn't until a point in
 8 time in the early morning that I had sufficient staff in
 9 order to be able to send two groups of sufficient
 10 numbers in order to be able to go to those rest centres,
 11 and I think I was waiting for clarification in terms of
 12 numbers we could send and where was the best place to
 13 send them to.

14 Q. So two reasons, summarising your evidence.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. One, clarification regarding rest centres or knowing
 17 where they were; and, secondly, sufficient staff
 18 arriving .

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. In relation to the location of the rest centres, on your
 21 account you were in contact with the TMO that morning --

22 A. That's correct.

23 Q. -- in the BECC. Did it not become apparent from your
 24 arrival around 5.30/5.15, up until 10 o'clock, where
 25 those rest centres were?

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1 A. At that time, there was a number of different locations
 2 where the local community had opened their doors, as
 3 they would, and helped people, so it was my
 4 understanding that there were a number of different
 5 places where the community were providing assistance
 6 from and to. But at that time I wasn't aware of what
 7 was a formal rest centre that was being operated that
 8 would provide that focus about where everybody would go
 9 or be able to tell people to go to that location. So it
 10 was a very, very fluid situation , and I was reacting to
 11 the information that was being provided to me.

12 Q. You say at paragraph 33 of your statement
 13 {RBK00035592/8}, which I can summarise:
 14 "Amanda Gill took two teams, about 10 a--piece, to
 15 the St Clement James Centre and Rugby Portobello Trust."
 16 Is that correct?

17 A. That's correct, yes.

18 Q. Did you consider that deploying two teams of ten members
 19 at that point was sufficient in light of the amount of
 20 displaced people from the tower and the surrounding
 21 areas?

22 A. That was the staff I had available to me and those were
 23 the two rest centres that I understood were in
 24 operation, and then I sent a further team to the Westway
 25 when I understood that that sports centre became

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1 available and was also considered to be a rest centre,
 2 so a third team was then made available.
 3 At that point I didn't really have a -- obviously
 4 I knew how many people lived in Grenfell Tower, and
 5 I was familiar with how many people lived in the
 6 local -- in the locality, but I went with the resources
 7 that I had available to me at that time.
 8 Q. So, "That's all I had"?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. Do you think, bearing in mind the numbers involved, that
 11 was sufficient at that stage?
 12 A. Based on the information that came back later in the
 13 day, then there was clearly a need for more at that
 14 time, but that's what we had at the time and that's what
 15 we sent up and believed -- in order to be able to
 16 provide information to people and place them into
 17 accommodation.
 18 Q. And at that stage in the morning, was it the case that
 19 there was a real lack of information regarding the
 20 number of people who were at the various rest centres?
 21 A. Yes, there was no central -- there was no collation of
 22 information that was saying: there's 40 people at this
 23 church and there's 10 people at this centre and there's
 24 20 people over there. There was no co-ordination of
 25 that event.

1 And, of course, it was extremely fluid. People were
 2 coming out of the tower or coming out of the local
 3 estates, and some people were obviously heading straight
 4 to a rest centre because they needed that kind of advice
 5 and information and/or just to kind of process what was
 6 happening to them, whereas other people may well have
 7 gone to stay with friends or neighbours or relatives on
 8 the estate and, you know, found somewhere else. So it
 9 was a very, very fluid situation in terms of the number
 10 of people who I believe were accessing the support on
 11 the Lancaster West Estate at that time.
 12 But I wasn't there, so it's very difficult for me to
 13 say, but that was my understanding.
 14 Q. I understand.
 15 What was the process of how those who were displaced
 16 by the fire were able to access emergency accommodation?
 17 So if someone was at a rest centre, what would happen?
 18 A. So they would -- when my two teams went up to meet them,
 19 then the teams would take their names, take their
 20 information, ask them for details of their family
 21 composition, and then there was a team in the Town Hall
 22 that were booking hotels and arranging accommodation,
 23 and then the team in the Town Hall would let the team at
 24 the rest centres know what was available, give them the
 25 names of the hotel that they needed to send them to, and

1 then arrange for transport to take them to those hotels.
 2 Q. In relation to taking details at the scene, at those
 3 rest centres, we've got the benefit of Amanda Gill's
 4 statement as well, but is it the case that there wasn't
 5 internet access and those needs were written down on
 6 placement forms, rather than electronically?
 7 A. That's correct. It wasn't done on the internet or on
 8 a SharePoint site. It was done via officers writing
 9 down people's names, understanding -- trying to
 10 understand how many rooms or how many beds they needed,
 11 taking down phone numbers, taking down information from
 12 them, and then phoning that through to the Town Hall in
 13 order to be able to match what we had available to us to
 14 the families' needs.
 15 Q. So the information would then go to the individual in
 16 the Town Hall, who was the team in the Town Hall --
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. -- which was --
 19 A. Was booking accommodation.
 20 Q. Yes. And how would the Town Hall part of the housing
 21 department communicate the accommodation to the person
 22 who was displaced? How would they know?
 23 A. So they were phoning or emailing the team on site,
 24 letting them know what accommodation we had available.
 25 They were keeping -- the team in the Town Hall were

1 keeping a spreadsheet of all of the hotel rooms that we
 2 booked and the size of the hotel rooms and where they
 3 were, and then when they were notified by the team at
 4 the rest centres of the requirements, they matched them
 5 to those rooms, they phoned them or emailed them and let
 6 them know, and then the team at the rest centre then let
 7 the person know where they were going.
 8 Q. Okay. We'll explore the outcome in relation to that
 9 process a little bit later in the morning, but in
 10 relation to other rest centres, you mentioned that staff
 11 later went to the Westway when that became --
 12 A. That's correct.
 13 Q. -- known to you; is that correct?
 14 A. That's correct.
 15 Q. Housing staff.
 16 Were you aware that the TMO staff were at
 17 rest centres other than the Clement James Centre, Rugby
 18 Portobello Trust and the Westway?
 19 A. I don't recollect, to be honest.
 20 Q. A TMO staff list which we have shows that from 5.30 to
 21 2 o'clock on 14 June, TMO staffed five rest centres, and
 22 that includes two which we haven't mentioned this
 23 morning: the Methodist church and the Latimer Christian
 24 Centre. So there's TMO officers at those rest centres,
 25 but is it the case that no housing officers were

1 deployed to those rest centres?
 2 A. That's correct.
 3 Q. How was it anticipated that those displaced people who
 4 came from the tower and the surrounding areas who went
 5 to those rest centres would receive assistance with
 6 emergency accommodation?
 7 A. To be honest, I don't know. We were sending available
 8 staff to the rest centres that we had been made aware of
 9 which were, I suppose, designated as the official
 10 rest centres. There was a fairly good line of
 11 communication between the TMO and RBKC housing, and it
 12 may well have been that officers from the TMO were
 13 alerted to the fact that RBKC housing officers were
 14 going to the Clement James and to the Rugby Portobello
 15 and then could pass information on to them.
 16 At that time, to be honest, I wasn't aware of all
 17 the different rest centres that were available. I knew
 18 that there was two. These seemed to be the most
 19 centrally organised ones. I'm going to send people
 20 there because that seems the most logical place to send
 21 people in order to provide advice and assistance.
 22 Q. You mentioned the number of staff you had, and that was
 23 perhaps, is it fair to say, a factor as well, the
 24 available staff to you that morning to deploy to these
 25 various rest centres?

1 A. I don't know if availability of staff, to be honest, was
 2 a limiting factor in where I sent people, because there
 3 was eventually three teams. I think it was, to be
 4 honest with you, more where the rest centre was
 5 identified which then targeted the resources
 6 accordingly, rather than sending people to lots of
 7 centres.
 8 Q. In terms of this theme of capacity of staff and numbers
 9 of those who were displaced, you indicate in your
 10 statement by 17.48, so nearly 6 o'clock that afternoon
 11 on 14 June, evening, the number of potential residents
 12 evacuated in the cordoned area was 845. That was
 13 communicated to you.
 14 By that stage, did you consider you had sufficient
 15 housing officers present at the rest centres in light of
 16 the number of people we're discussing?
 17 A. I don't remember consciously thinking of the number of
 18 staff I had at the rest centres and correlating it with
 19 the 845 people that were inside or outside of the
 20 cordon.
 21 Q. Okay.
 22 I'm going to move on to hotel bookings, which you
 23 have touched upon, and how there was somebody back at
 24 the Town Hall who was undertaking those bookings.
 25 You mention in your statement it was recognised at

1 an earlier stage that there would be a need for
 2 a substantial number of hotel bookings, and that's set
 3 out in your statement at paragraph 25 {RBK00035592/6},
 4 that when your team arrived at the Town Hall, they
 5 started to book hotels immediately; is that correct?
 6 A. That's correct.
 7 Q. Was there a criteria for selecting hotels booked at that
 8 stage?
 9 A. We were looking for hotels that were three star and
 10 above, and we were aiming for them to be in the borough
 11 or in boroughs that adjoined RBKC, because the intention
 12 was that if people were displaced and had to be placed
 13 into a hotel, that they needed to be as close as
 14 possible -- to RBKC as possible, because people needed
 15 to be near their support network, so they would need to
 16 be near doctors, schools, you know, advice and
 17 information, and the intention was not to place them at
 18 a distance which would cause them significant
 19 disadvantage in being able to get back to RBKC.
 20 Q. So that was the stated intention at that early stage.
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. You mention at paragraph 27 of your statement
 23 {RBK00035592/7}:
 24 "We initially just googled all hotels in the area,
 25 and started calling around, firstly in RBKC [within the

1 local authority] and then moving out into other central
 2 London boroughs."
 3 Is that correct?
 4 A. That's correct.
 5 Q. Was it the case that it was difficult to block book
 6 accommodation on the scale needed on 14 June?
 7 A. That's correct.
 8 Q. You used the phrase "pre-emptive booking" in your
 9 statements, but was it really just a scramble to book as
 10 many rooms as you could that morning?
 11 A. That's correct.
 12 Q. Again, something which you mentioned a little bit
 13 earlier this morning, but I just want to explore it now
 14 in a bit more detail: were there issues in relation to
 15 processing payments for those hotels booked on 14 June
 16 and thereafter?
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. Perhaps we could have a look at paragraph 87, which may
 19 assist you, of your statement, please {RBK00035592/24}:
 20 "The payment of hotels was difficult. We didn't
 21 have sufficient credit using the payment methods we had.
 22 There was an initial raising of credit limits on the
 23 corporate cards at on [sic] the morning of the 14th."
 24 Pausing there, even in those early hours before the
 25 initial raising of the credit limits of corporate cards,

1 was it the case that there were problems at the outset
 2 in terms of booking the number of rooms you required?
 3 A. To be honest with you, I don't remember in that level of
 4 detail, and I wasn't doing the phoning around, but I've
 5 clearly said in my statement that there were some hotels
 6 that wanted payment in advance and it became more
 7 difficult as time went by. So we were phoning, we were
 8 asking for room availability, we were -- we thought
 9 that, you know, as a local authority, phoning around
 10 with our corporate -- you know, kind of corporate
 11 financial strength, that it wouldn't be queried with us
 12 about payment, but it was.
 13 Q. Yes. You say here:
 14 "However, some hotels wanted payment in advance and
 15 as the week went on, we were maxing out the payment
 16 cards and not able to guarantee payments. Some hotels
 17 then started refusing to take people."
 18 In relation to that problem which developed, as you
 19 say, as the week went on, was that difficulty with
 20 payment confined to making new bookings or did it lead
 21 to the termination of any existing bookings that you
 22 were perhaps seeking to extend or roll over?
 23 A. I don't know that level of detail, to be honest with
 24 you, or I don't remember it now.
 25 The hotels had existing bookings. It was a very

1 busy period in London at that time, as it usually is in
 2 the summer, so hotels had bookings and could only take
 3 bookings for a certain period of time, and then some
 4 hotels said -- wanted payment upfront, and it just --
 5 not all hotels operate in the same way. But I couldn't
 6 say with certainty that it caused the termination of
 7 some rooms because of the payment difficulties. I don't
 8 have that level of detail or, if I did, I don't remember
 9 it now, five years later.
 10 Q. The final point in relation to this topic is:
 11 "It took until the following week to speak to the
 12 Chief Executives at some of the hotels to agree to take
 13 people again. That caused us considerable difficulties.
 14 Some members of the team went as far as paying on their
 15 personal bank accounts to secure rooms."
 16 Is that correct?
 17 A. That's correct.
 18 Q. So the position was during 14 June and thereafter,
 19 because of payment difficulties, members of your team
 20 were using their own credit cards on occasion to pay for
 21 rooms?
 22 A. That's correct. I was staggered, to be honest with you,
 23 that anybody watching the news and seeing the dreadful
 24 events unfolding could question whether we -- the
 25 payment for rooms for survivors of the Grenfell Tower

1 fire, but it did take intervention at the highest level
 2 in order to be able to secure that agreement by hotels
 3 in the capital in order to be able to take people.
 4 Q. So there was two aspects to this: one, the hotels and
 5 their various approaches --
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. -- but also the RBKC processes.
 8 Were there efforts internally to try to extend the
 9 credit cards and facilities?
 10 A. Yes. So the matter was raised about the difficulty with
 11 hotel bookings, and there was extension -- there were
 12 extensions on corporate credit card limits, and asked --
 13 I remember distinctly asking on the Saturday after the
 14 fire, when -- at Westminster that there needed to be
 15 intervention raised at the highest level with senior
 16 people in hotel groups in order to be able to lift this
 17 blockage, because it was a very, very unnecessary
 18 problem, in my view, that, you know, could be resolved
 19 by just some common sense, to be honest with you.
 20 No hotel was not going to get paid, and I understand
 21 it was not their problem, and it was our problem to
 22 resolve, but with their help, and I would have hoped
 23 that basic humanity would have said that they would have
 24 said, "Yes, these are the rooms, we'll sort out payment
 25 with you and we'll keep a log", but that wasn't the case

1 in all cases.
 2 Q. In terms of a lesson learned, having perhaps
 3 an agreement in advance with hotels and a plan in
 4 relation to that may perhaps have avoided such
 5 a problem?
 6 A. It may well have helped if we had had an agreement in
 7 advance with somebody like the Hilton Group that there
 8 could be -- you know, kind of there was a process in
 9 place for that. I do understand that hotels have their
 10 own payment processes and systems and the managers of
 11 individual hotels probably can't deviate from that
 12 without very senior management intervention, so, yes, it
 13 probably would have helped in advance to have those
 14 payment systems set up in advance. But I think the
 15 scale of this was issue meant you could have had that
 16 arrangement with the large Copthorne hotel just off
 17 Kensington High Street, you could have made that
 18 arrangement with one hotel, but actually the scale of
 19 this meant we were booking multiple rooms in multiple
 20 hotels across the capital, so it probably wouldn't have
 21 been possible to have that arrangement in place with the
 22 sheer scale of hotel rooms and the sheer number of
 23 hotels that we were booking.
 24 MR KEATING: Thank you.
 25 Mr Chairman, is that a convenient moment?

1 SIR MARTIN MOORE–BICK: Yes, thank you very much.
 2 Well, we said we'd have a break during the morning,
 3 and you know the way we work, so we are going to stop
 4 there. We are going to resume, please, at 11.35, and
 5 I have to ask you, please don't talk to anyone about
 6 your evidence or anything relating to it while you're
 7 out of the room. All right?
 8 Thank you very much. Would you go with the usher,
 9 please.
 10 (Pause)
 11 Thank you very much. 11.35, then, please.
 12 MR KEATING: Thank you.
 13 SIR MARTIN MOORE–BICK: Thank you.
 14 (11.20 am)
 15 (A short break)
 16 (11.35 am)
 17 SIR MARTIN MOORE–BICK: Good, ready to carry on, Ms Johnson?
 18 THE WITNESS: Yes.
 19 SIR MARTIN MOORE–BICK: Thank you.
 20 Yes, Mr Keating.
 21 MR KEATING: Thank you, Mr Chairman.
 22 I want to stay with this theme of hotel
 23 accommodation, if we can, for a moment, and deal with
 24 the topic of length of bookings.
 25 Is it right that there were particular issues during

1 those seven days with the length of bookings that could
 2 be made at hotels?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. You have touched upon that in your statement, which we
 5 had in front of us, at paragraph 88, please
 6 {RBK00035592/25}. It's touched upon at the top of
 7 paragraph 88, about the sheer volume of rooms, the fact
 8 that it was the summer, and other events which were
 9 happening in West London and Central London; is that
 10 correct?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. "It was difficult trying to keep each family in the same
 13 room when hotels already pre-booked those rooms for
 14 future dates."
 15 A. Yes.
 16 Q. "No residents were told they would have to leave for any
 17 other reason than pre-bookings on their rooms. We
 18 didn't know how long they would or could be there for."
 19 A. That's correct.
 20 Q. You raised the issue of families moving rooms with the
 21 BECC at Gold meetings and with Nicholas Holgate.
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. What was the response when you raised the issue of
 24 families having to move rooms because of lack of
 25 availability ?

1 A. I don't remember, to be honest.
 2 Q. You mentioned in your statement here that you raised it
 3 at Gold meetings and with Nicholas Holgate. Can you
 4 recall whether there was a specific response when you
 5 raised the issues in relation to hotel accommodation?
 6 A. I think there was a desire to speak to more senior
 7 people in the hotel groups to see if there could be any
 8 latitude extended to RBKC in order to be able to secure
 9 the rooms and arrange for payment to be made and that
 10 not to be a problem.
 11 Q. So issues with payment, issues with availability , issues
 12 with the length of a booking due to availability .
 13 Were alternative accommodation, such as serviced
 14 accommodation, considered to meet the different needs of
 15 those requiring accommodation, such, perhaps, as
 16 families?
 17 A. We were looking at all types of accommodation that were
 18 available to us. So some hotels have apartments rather
 19 than just rooms. We were receiving huge numbers of
 20 offers from different organisations, and we were logging
 21 all of those offers and having a look at whether they
 22 were reasonable or suitable or available for any period
 23 of time in order to be able to accommodate people who
 24 needed to be housed in an emergency scenario.
 25 Q. Dealing with those offers of accommodation, and we'll

1 perhaps turn to that in a short while, but was it the
 2 case that a decision was made really to focus on hotel
 3 accommodation?
 4 A. Yes, we were stuck with hotel accommodation as being
 5 something that was readily available and in the
 6 locality .
 7 Q. We have your statement open now. I wonder if we could
 8 go back, please, to page 10 {RBK00035592/10} and
 9 paragraph 39.2, please. This is where you summarise the
 10 11 o'clock RBKC Gold Group meeting.
 11 You had mentioned when we were at paragraph 88
 12 raising issues regarding hotel accommodation. Let's
 13 deal with this, please. It's at 39.2:
 14 "Block bookings of hotels have been made until
 15 Monday as a short-term solution."
 16 Was the effect of booking hotels that Wednesday,
 17 14 June, up until Monday as a short-term solution that
 18 there was a cycle of having to rebook rooms again and
 19 again?
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. As a result of that, because of the issues we've
 22 mentioned, in a number of cases, a significant number of
 23 cases, displaced residents who were in hotels would then
 24 have to move to another hotel.
 25 A. Yes. I mean, depending on the availability of the rooms

1 in that hotel, who would obviously have received
 2 a number of advance bookings for their hotel room, if
 3 they had availability then we could continue to extend
 4 the residents' stay in that hotel, but if they did not
 5 have availability, then we needed to find them
 6 alternative accommodation.
 7 Q. Well, let's look at that a little bit more, please.
 8 If we turn to {RBK00027735}, this is an internal
 9 document. It's called a "Grenfell residents action
 10 plan", dated 15 June, a document created by your team,
 11 and it's the action points from a 9 o'clock briefing
 12 meeting on 15 June involving your team; is that correct?
 13 A. That's correct.
 14 Q. If we focus on "Accommodation", we see:
 15 "77 households currently placed in commercial hotels
 16 and 4 need to be moved today — alternative accommodation
 17 already found — more expected to approach."
 18 If we move to the third point:
 19 "Some bookings cannot be carried over to the weekend
 20 [ie to the Monday] and need to find alternative
 21 accommodation for 24 households."
 22 About a third of the amount of people who had been
 23 placed at that stage. So, as we said, a significant
 24 amount of those initially placed had to be re-placed in
 25 other hotels; isn't that correct?

1 A. That's correct.
 2 Q. Would you accept that this was highly disruptive and
 3 negatively impacted those that had been placed in those
 4 hotels initially?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Did the housing team clearly communicate to residents
 7 that there was uncertainty about the length of their
 8 current bookings?
 9 A. It would depend on whether we had telephone numbers for
 10 the people who were in those particular accommodation.
 11 It was a very fluid situation, so we were talking to the
 12 hotels all the time. Obviously people who left the
 13 tower, some left with phones, some left with absolutely
 14 nothing. We did visit — we did attempt to visit
 15 everybody in the hotels who we'd placed on the Thursday
 16 to talk to them about the placement and the — and what
 17 was going to happen over the next few days. But
 18 obviously people weren't in, and so we, you know, kind
 19 of — we weren't able to speak to everybody on those
 20 visits that we undertook on that Thursday.
 21 Q. So it's a number of factors: it's the recognition that
 22 those who left the tower had lost everything and may not
 23 have a telephone number —
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. — a recognition that attempts were made to visit but

1 no one was there, and using the hotel as a go-between.
 2 Do you accept, within that context, that a number of
 3 those affected who were placed in hotels were unsure of
 4 how long their bookings were due to last?
 5 A. Yes.
 6 Q. Perhaps we could have a look at {RBK00020037/2}, please.
 7 If we could scroll down, please, to the bottom of that
 8 page, we see an email at 06.49, and this is from
 9 Councillor Judith Blakeman. It's sent on the morning of
 10 15 June to the BECC, copied to Mr Holgate, and it says
 11 this:
 12 "I have received an enquiry from a Grenfell Tower
 13 family currently housed in a hotel in Earl's Court.
 14 They tell me that they have no idea if they will still
 15 be there tonight, they have nowhere else to go, are very
 16 worried and need some reassurance.
 17 "Can you please let me know what is to happen to
 18 families currently in the hotels? I suspect this will
 19 not be the only enquiry we will receive unless they are
 20 given full information as soon as they get up."
 21 If we scroll up {RBK00020037/1}, it was confirmed in
 22 the emails — the top of the page, an email you sent to
 23 your colleague, and the contact information for someone
 24 who would like a call about what's happening, that was
 25 William Thompson; is that correct?

1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. Do you accept there were occasions where the first time
 3 a placed person or family in a hotel would learn they
 4 needed to check out was when the hotel informed them,
 5 and there wouldn't be information from RBKC?
 6 A. Yes, that may well have been the case, that the hotel
 7 spoke to the family and advised them that they wouldn't
 8 be able to stay.
 9 Q. Another way of phrasing it is that they were told they
 10 need to leave, rather than they can't stay; isn't that
 11 correct?
 12 A. I don't know what the hotels said to the people who were
 13 in the hotels.
 14 Q. Yes. But you would accept it's not ideal that somebody
 15 in that situation is informed that their accommodation
 16 is no longer there and they need to leave or they cannot
 17 stay?
 18 A. Absolutely, which was why we attempted to visit
 19 everybody on the Thursday, because they were being
 20 placed there in an emergency situation on the Wednesday,
 21 when we were just trying to make sure that those people
 22 had somewhere safe to stay overnight on the Wednesday
 23 night.
 24 Q. Yes.
 25 A. And so the intention was to go out and knock on

1 everybody's door, or to contact people by phone if we
 2 had their numbers, in order to be able to let them know
 3 what the situation was and to give them information
 4 about how they could contact the housing department for
 5 more information.
 6 Q. An example we looked at was on the night of 14 June.
 7 Let's go to {RBK00002735/2}, please. There is
 8 an email at 06.27. So this is from Andrew Carter, who
 9 is the head of service, housing option services, and
 10 this is an email to you on that Saturday. "Urgent
 11 booking extension needed" is the subject:
 12 "Dear all
 13 "This man told us he has to check out of the
 14 Metropole Hilton Edgware Road tomorrow. He wants to
 15 know if it will be extended."
 16 That's Mr Farshid Karficheragh -- hopefully
 17 I pronounced that correctly -- and this is somebody from
 18 Grenfell Tower.
 19 Can you explain why it seems to be those who were
 20 in -- the residents, an example here, who were in the
 21 hotels were either being told by the hotel or were
 22 contacting the housing department asking them about
 23 their booking and the fact that they were being told to
 24 check out?
 25 A. I don't know why the hotels were informing them that

1 they needed to check out. What we were doing in RBKC
 2 was to book as many rooms for as long as possible, and
 3 then we were probably reviewing the information about
 4 how long we had those rooms for at the time. But we
 5 were both placing people and managing the placement of
 6 people at the same time.
 7 Q. Yes.
 8 Let's scroll up in that thread, please, to the next
 9 email, and it probably follows from your answer. This
 10 is your email that evening, on Saturday at 7.19, and you
 11 say to your colleagues:
 12 "I'm afraid I don't know who's on bookings but
 13 whomever is would you mind contacting the hotel and
 14 extending the hotel room booking and get the hotel to
 15 let him know."
 16 Why would someone not try to ring this person
 17 individually and explain the position, having some
 18 direct contact, rather than going via the hotel?
 19 A. I don't know if that person actually had a phone. We
 20 were still -- lots of people, as you can imagine, lost
 21 everything, and we were in the process of arranging
 22 mobile -- to give mobile phones to everyone who was
 23 affected by the fire, and in order -- we didn't have --
 24 even if people did come out and did have their phone, we
 25 didn't necessarily have an up-to-date number for them.

1 So the information that we took on the day of placing
 2 someone in the fire may or may not have included their
 3 phone number, if they had one. We may or may not have
 4 had details from the TMO's database, but they may or may
 5 not have been up to date because people either didn't
 6 have their phones or they changed their phone number or
 7 we hadn't got an emergency phone to them.
 8 So I had made the assumption there that -- I'd asked
 9 my team if they could extend the hotel booking, and
 10 I had made the assumption there that it was probably the
 11 quickest and most efficient way to let -- to ask the
 12 hotel to update that particular person that his room was
 13 going to be extended.
 14 Q. In general terms, would it have been better to say at
 15 the outset, "We've booked this room for three nights and
 16 we'll try to extend it"? Was that the information that
 17 was going out, or was it, "This is your room", and there
 18 was uncertainty that followed?
 19 A. I'm not entirely sure, because I wasn't speaking to the
 20 residents directly, about what information exactly we
 21 were giving people, but we were booking hotel rooms,
 22 continuing to book hotel rooms, and then trying our very
 23 best to maintain people in those same hotel rooms for as
 24 long as possible.
 25 Whether we could contact each one of those persons

1 in those hotel rooms individually in order to let them
 2 know what we were doing, that's something that we did do
 3 on the Thursday -- we tried to do on the Thursday. But
 4 whether we had that information to hand to constantly
 5 have that rolling conversation with somebody, I suspect
 6 we did not.
 7 Q. We discussed a lot of the circumstances which you were
 8 operating in, and was it the real position, actually,
 9 that you, your department -- specifically your
 10 department -- were overwhelmed with the volume of
 11 bookings and rebookings that had to be made in those
 12 first few days?
 13 A. I would say it was overwhelming, yes.
 14 Q. I want to move on to the provision of accommodation --
 15 emergency accommodation, of course, we're focusing
 16 upon -- and the eligibility criteria, and what was in
 17 place and arrived at on 14 June.
 18 You set this out at paragraph 47 of your first
 19 statement, and perhaps we could open that up, please
 20 {RBK00035592/12}. This is what you say in your
 21 statement at paragraph 47, and then perhaps we can
 22 examine this a little bit further:
 23 "By the night of 14 into 15 June, all Grenfell Tower
 24 residents whom the Council were made aware needed
 25 emergency accommodation were found hotel rooms.

1 77 households were placed in 102 hotel rooms that night.
 2 Anyone from Grenfell Tower who asked for a place were
 3 offered hotels immediately and without question. 20 or
 4 so people stayed overnight at the Westway Sports Centre.
 5 As far as I was aware, they had all been offered hotel
 6 accommodation, but wanted to stay.”
 7 Is that the correct position?
 8 A. That was my understanding.
 9 Q. Does it remain your understanding?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. You may be aware that RBKC, in their opening submissions
 12 to this module, have said that the council acknowledges
 13 that there’s evidence of a small number of
 14 Grenfell Tower residents not being told about this
 15 option, ie hotel accommodation, in circumstances where
 16 they should have been. Do you accept that concession
 17 which RBKC have made?
 18 A. Yes.
 19 Q. We have mentioned already the number of displaced
 20 residents generally from the evacuated properties within
 21 the police cordon, and we know that by the afternoon of
 22 the 14th a number of 845 residents were unable to return
 23 to their homes. We have heard that those properties,
 24 amongst others, were known as the walkways, comprising
 25 of Hurstway Walk, Barandon Walk and Testerton Walk. Is

1 that correct?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. What was the advice given to that group of residents,
 4 those within the umbrella of the walkways, not the
 5 tower? What advice were they given in relation to the
 6 provision of emergency accommodation on 14 June?
 7 A. I don’t remember, but in — but I believe they were told
 8 if they — they asked them if they could stay with
 9 friends and family in the first instance, that would be
 10 very helpful.
 11 Q. I’m just going to summarise what you say — in fact, we
 12 have the statement here. Let’s scroll down, please, to
 13 paragraph 49, and overleaf {RBK00035592/13}, please, the
 14 last four lines :
 15 “We said in the first instance that those living in
 16 the finger blocks should try to stay with friends and
 17 family. If they didn’t have anywhere to go, we offered
 18 them hotels. Most of them did go to friends and family
 19 until the situation became clearer.”
 20 I’m just going to examine that a little bit more
 21 closely and assist you with some documentation.
 22 Do you recall, by the afternoon of 14 June, the
 23 position that displaced residents from the wider cordon,
 24 the walkways, would be provided emergency hotel
 25 accommodation only if they were elderly or vulnerable?

1 A. I think we were trying to prioritise people in order to
 2 be able to find them accommodation. I don’t — I can’t
 3 remember exactly how many flats were in the three finger
 4 blocks, but in terms of our priority , it was for people
 5 who had nowhere to go and those residents whose homes
 6 had been destroyed by the fire. So in terms of order of
 7 priority , we were looking to house those people who were
 8 vulnerable or had nowhere else to go.
 9 Q. Let’s assist your recollection with {RBK00018898},
 10 please. This is an email sent by you on 14 June at
 11 13.46, and this is to Emma Strugnell, who was in the
 12 media and communications team, “Accommodation”:
 13 “We are directing people who are [a]ffected by the
 14 fire to the three emergency rest centres.
 15 “We are providing emergency accommodation for people
 16 impacted in Grenfell Tower ...”
 17 Then in the third paragraph, the fourth line :
 18 “We are advising people to go to the emergency
 19 rest centres advise the Housing staff who they are if
 20 they are old or vulnerable in anyway will seek to
 21 provide you with emergency housing, for everyone else we
 22 are waiting to see if they will be allowed to return to
 23 their homes or emergency rest centre accommodation will
 24 be needed.”
 25 Does that assist in terms of the history , the timing

1 of the advice given to your members of staff?
 2 A. Yes, it was. Yes, it was the advice given to the
 3 members of staff when trying to find a considerable
 4 number of properties in a very short period of time, we
 5 put in place a system whereby we sought to help those
 6 who were most vulnerable in order to be able to provide
 7 them with accommodation.
 8 Q. Do you consider that advice to your staff to cascade, do
 9 you think that decision and advice was clearly
 10 communicated to residents in the wider cordon on
 11 14 June?
 12 A. I don’t believe there was any mechanism to advise
 13 residents in the wider cordon of that advice. I believe
 14 if people approached us, we were able to advise them of
 15 that, but there wasn’t a mechanism in order to be able
 16 to disseminate that information more widely.
 17 Q. One mechanism would be using social media channels, such
 18 as Facebook or Twitter, and putting messages out there.
 19 Do you know if that was done?
 20 A. I don’t.
 21 Q. You talked about prioritisation of offering
 22 accommodation, but was it actually the other way around,
 23 that there was a decision to limit the offer of hotel
 24 accommodation really because of the number of displaced
 25 people?

1 A. The sheer volume of people that may require
 2 accommodation, there's a necessity in order to be able
 3 to prioritise them in order to be able to target at
 4 those that are the most vulnerable or unable to find
 5 anywhere else to stay.
 6 Q. And it's touched upon there in your email which we just
 7 read out that you were waiting to see if those who were
 8 in the wider cordon would be allowed to return to their
 9 homes. So at that stage, was there a hope or
 10 expectation that those who were displaced in the wider
 11 cordon would be allowed to return to their homes on the
 12 night of 14 June?
 13 A. Yes. I didn't know the condition of their properties at
 14 that time, and I didn't know how long the police would
 15 have that cordon in place. So it would appear from the
 16 email sent at 1.45 on the 14th that it was my hope that
 17 the cordon would be lifted and those people would be
 18 able to go home.
 19 Q. This is a cordon which was operated by the
 20 Metropolitan Police Service. Can you tell us what was
 21 done in relation to obtaining advice from the
 22 Metropolitan Police Service regarding the relaxation of
 23 the cordon?
 24 A. I wouldn't have been responsible for contacting the
 25 Metropolitan Police myself. I believe that would have

1 been information that would have come through the BECC
 2 or through other channels within the local authority.
 3 I would have waited to have heard advice from the
 4 Metropolitan Police about what their decision was on the
 5 cordon. That was not my decision and I did not have
 6 an open channel of communication with the
 7 Metropolitan Police.
 8 Q. If we could turn to {RBK00031298/3}, please. This is
 9 a long email chain. If we could go to page 3 of this
 10 document, please, to 14.50, there's an email at 14.50,
 11 and that's an email from Robert Shaw. It's to you and
 12 other people in your department, "Who we are
 13 accommodating — latest". 14 June, 14.50, and it says
 14 this:
 15 "We are aware that residents in surrounding blocks
 16 have been evacuated ..."
 17 Attaches a map of the area, includes the addresses
 18 which — I have summarised some of those already.
 19 Scroll down:
 20 "If residents of the cordoned area remain evacuated,
 21 it is likely they will be accommodated in a rest centre
 22 as it is likely to be only for one night UNLESS they are
 23 older, vulnerable etc. We WILL accommodate these.
 24 "This is for your information only at this stage.
 25 I will update you as to any changes."

1 Then a further email within this thread, if we move
 2 up to 15.51, please, in the email thread, which is on
 3 page 2 {RBK00031298/2}. This is Mr Shaw again at 15.51,
 4 you're copied in:
 5 "Hello
 6 "An update:
 7 "We will also accommodate the following who live in
 8 the cordoned area:
 9 "Families with children.
 10 "Older persons.
 11 "Vulnerable persons.
 12 "If you are at one of the rest centres and
 13 identifying people for placement, please make sure you
 14 identify their vulnerability along with all the other
 15 info.
 16 "Many thanks
 17 "Rob."
 18 So it appears from this by that stage that the
 19 eligibility criteria had been extended to include
 20 families with children; is that correct?
 21 A. Yes.
 22 Q. Was there any reason why they were not included in the
 23 initial eligibility criteria?
 24 A. I don't remember.
 25 Q. You can't remember whether it was an omission or

1 a deliberate decision by prioritisation not to include
 2 them?
 3 A. I don't remember, but my — I would expect it was
 4 an omission rather than something that was a deliberate
 5 decision not to place people with families and children
 6 in that first cohort, and what Rob was doing was making
 7 that clearer.
 8 Q. So this email we're looking at is 15.51, so near
 9 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Were there efforts by RBKC
 10 to update those who were affected who may have been in
 11 contact with housing officers prior to that time about
 12 the change in eligibility criteria for accommodation?
 13 A. I'm sorry, I don't really understand your question.
 14 Q. I'll rephrase it. I'm sure it's my fault.
 15 So it's 15.51. The criteria has been extended to
 16 include families with children.
 17 A. Yes.
 18 Q. This is mid-afternoon.
 19 In relation to those displaced people who had
 20 families, who may have been in contact with a housing
 21 officer at any time up until that change in policy, was
 22 there contact made with them to say, "Well, things have
 23 changed, there now is accommodation available"?
 24 A. Not to my knowledge, no.
 25 Q. If we follow this thread up, please, to the bottom of

1 page 1 {RBK00031298/1}, back to this email, thank you
 2 very much, we see at the bottom of page 1, from
 3 Ryan Bird, Wednesday, 14 June, 16.21, that's the email
 4 in the thread we're looking at, at the bottom of page 1,
 5 and if we turn over to page 2 {RBK00031298/2}, it says:
 6 "Hello,
 7 "Do TA ..."
 8 Is that temporary accommodation?
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. "... know that we are placing none Tower?"
 11 Does that mean non-tower?
 12 A. I presume so.
 13 Q. I will read it again so it makes some sense:
 14 "Do [temporary accommodation] know that we are
 15 placing [non-]Tower?
 16 "They [temporary accommodation] are telling our team
 17 not.
 18 "Please clarify ."
 19 Then if we go back to page 1 {RBK00031298/1} and
 20 follow this thread, we see that at 16.23, Amanda Gill,
 21 your colleague:
 22 "Yes I have spoken to Rachael.
 23 "Westway is going to be the overnight rest centre."
 24 The last thread that I want to focus on is if you
 25 just scroll up a little bit more, please, Ryan Bird

1 again at 16.32:
 2 "Thanks.
 3 "Many helpful but confused folk here.
 4 "Lots of information but little of it entirely
 5 accurate."
 6 Was it the case that, as a result of confusion
 7 internally about the eligibility criteria, that a number
 8 of those who met that criteria were initially not
 9 provided with temporary emergency accommodation on
 10 14 June?
 11 A. It was a very fluid situation, with two teams who had
 12 been sent up to two rest centres, and a third team then
 13 sent to the Westway, in order to be able to manage the
 14 numbers of people that were approaching.
 15 We were dealing with the police cordon, which, in
 16 the Town Hall, we weren't aware of where it was and how
 17 it was impacting on people, so in the first instance the
 18 message was to the people placing: place the people from
 19 the tower. As it became more obvious as the day went on
 20 where the police cordon was and who was impacted by it,
 21 then we adjusted, and meant that we would then place
 22 people who were affected by the wider cordon because we
 23 did not know when that cordon was going to come down.
 24 But it may be the case that some people who had
 25 approached earlier in the day may have been given

1 information that meant that by later in the day, we had
 2 changed our stance, but it was a very, very fluid
 3 situation of not knowing who was going to be able to
 4 stay out of their home and who was going to be able to
 5 go back, and I think it's entirely reasonable to expect
 6 changes in decision to have taken place over the course
 7 of that day as the situation became crystallised.
 8 Q. Okay. So a lot in there. You gave your reasons why
 9 matters developed as they did. But is it right that you
 10 accept that that did occur, that there may have been
 11 people who were not informed?
 12 A. There may have been some people who initially were
 13 informed that they would not have been placed, but by
 14 later in the day, then that would have been the
 15 decision, that they would have been placed.
 16 Q. You said it's entirely reasonable to expect changes in
 17 decision to have taken place over the course of the day
 18 as the situation became crystallised. Would you also
 19 accept it's entirely reasonable to expect that
 20 the council communicate those changes of decisions so
 21 that people understand that matters have developed?
 22 A. Yes, I would accept that there was a need to communicate
 23 to the people who were impacted by the fire and the
 24 events about who we were going to place and for how
 25 long. How we were going to communicate with them is

1 somewhat more difficult. You mentioned social media
 2 but, as you'll be aware, lots of people left the tower
 3 or left their accommodation with absolutely nothing, so
 4 access to social media, I should imagine, wasn't perhaps
 5 as prevalent as it is if you were leaving your home and
 6 had the ability to take things that you wanted to take
 7 with you.
 8 Q. I'm just going to touch upon a couple of examples of the
 9 confusion in the circumstances which you have explained
 10 to us existed at that time.
 11 There is something called a crisis support team
 12 which was operating for RBKC; you're aware of that part
 13 of the department, is that correct?
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. Perhaps you would accept from me that there was a report
 16 that there was a 84-year-old man who had been evacuated
 17 and was from the walkways, but notwithstanding his
 18 contact with housing, he was considered at that stage
 19 not eligible for accommodation; would you accept that
 20 there were occasions where people were simply given the
 21 wrong information?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. A further example was Hicham Cherbika, who was
 24 a resident from Grenfell Walk, who lived there with his
 25 wife and three children, and he states this. I'm going

1 to summarise, but paragraph 33 of his statement,
 2 {IWS00001305/5):
 3 " ... at 2PM, I went back to the Tower and I started
 4 hearing that the Westway was open and they were
 5 providing emergency shelter and support.
 6 "34. I went to there, to Westway, but at first, they
 7 did not let me in because I was not from the Tower.
 8 "35. They did not know that Grenfell Walk residents
 9 had been affected by the fire too. I explained that
 10 I lived in Grenfell Walk and that I had lost my house
 11 and everything inside. We had been evacuated and
 12 couldn't return. I told them that all I wanted was some
 13 powdered milk for our baby son ..."
 14 He added {IWS00001305/6} that two days later he
 15 contacted the council again:
 16 "Nobody from the Council contacted us to tell us
 17 about the hotel accommodation until we contacted them."
 18 So an occasion where somebody who had a family who
 19 was from the surrounding area, although very close to
 20 Grenfell Tower, who wasn't provided accommodation, and
 21 do you accept that he should have been contacted?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. Was the approach of RBKC, because of the circumstances
 24 you were operating in, that those who needed assistance
 25 really had to come to the rest centre or come to you as

1 an organisation to get assistance?
 2 A. Yes, they needed to make themselves aware that -- they
 3 needed to make themselves aware to us that they needed
 4 assistance, on that first day particularly .
 5 Q. We have heard of something called the Project Athena
 6 interview, an account which -- an internal interview
 7 provided by RBKC, and you touch upon this. I want to
 8 perhaps summarise it. The question was this -- in fact,
 9 let's open it up so it aids your recollection ,
 10 {RBK00029012/8}, please, and the last question.
 11 Thank you.
 12 We see that the person who is asking questions says:
 13 "It wasn't you your [sic] responsibility to speak
 14 with everyone and make sure they have somewhere, rather
 15 it was for them to come to you?"
 16 Then if you could turn overleaf {RBK00029012/9},
 17 please, you say:
 18 "Yes. Reactive. Not proactive. But TMO had called
 19 around everyone to see where everyone was, in their list
 20 of tenants. The scale of who needed what only became
 21 clear over the next few days."
 22 You accept reactive not proactive at that stage as
 23 perhaps a fair description of what you had to do; is
 24 that correct?
 25 A. Yes, that's correct .

1 Q. I wonder if we could turn, please, to {RBK00019778},
 2 please. This is in relation to information and key
 3 messages, and communicating with those who were
 4 displaced and affected by the fire .
 5 This was drafted -- I can summarise the information
 6 we have -- around 2 o'clock on 14 June and circulated to
 7 RBKC staff, TMO staff, and staff from the Westway, and
 8 we can tell from emails that this was circulated between
 9 14.43 and 15.12.
 10 Are you familiar with this document, "Key Messages"?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. If we look at the bottom of the document, under
 13 paragraph 6, "Housing Plan":
 14 " ■ If you are a Grenfell Tower resident then please
 15 go to one of the above rest centres or the Town Hall and
 16 we will provide you with emergency accommodation.
 17 " ■ If you are a resident of any of the other blocks
 18 that have been evacuated due to the fire then please
 19 also go to the rest centres and make yourself known ...
 20 We are awaiting an update ...
 21 " ■ If any residents of the evacuated blocks are
 22 vulnerable or elderly we will seek to provide you with
 23 emergency accommodation. However we would encourage
 24 people to stay with friends and family in the first
 25 instance until we have further information."

1 So that was the information, "Key Messages",
 2 an internal document shared amongst RBKC, TMO and those
 3 at the Westway.
 4 Do you know -- you probably touched upon this
 5 already -- whether that information was circulated
 6 elsewhere to those who were affected using social media
 7 channels or the websites of RBKC?
 8 A. I don't know.
 9 Q. Are you able to say that those displaced residents who
 10 may be vulnerable or where English was not their first
 11 language, do you know whether there was any
 12 consideration regarding their needs and communicating
 13 with them?
 14 A. I don't know.
 15 Q. I want to deal with a topic of reports of those in the
 16 walkways where certain residents were sleeping rough, ie
 17 having nowhere to sleep.
 18 Were you aware that there were reports late on
 19 14 June of displaced residents sleeping rough?
 20 A. I wasn't aware that anyone was sleeping rough. There
 21 was no need for anybody to sleep rough because the
 22 Westway was open and available for people to stay there.
 23 Q. So you weren't aware at the time?
 24 A. No.
 25 Q. And you say that there was no need?

1 A. No, that's right .
 2 Q. In relation to that, from your perspective, as somebody
 3 who's worked for many years in a housing department,
 4 somebody who's very senior at RBKC, would it cause you
 5 concern to hear, in the wake of such a serious incident,
 6 that there were people who were displaced, affected by
 7 the fire , sleeping rough?
 8 A. Of course.
 9 Q. If we could turn to {RBK00029413}. This is the BECC
 10 log. It's in a spreadsheet, so it may take a little bit
 11 of time to open up. We are going to go to row 228, and
 12 between us we're going to navigate through this. It
 13 might take a little bit of time. It's at the far left ,
 14 please, scroll down to row 228.
 15 So at column A, we see the log number, and this is
 16 log 58, and it records on 14 June at 23.30:
 17 "Red Cross ... contacted to say that Red Cross staff
 18 who are walking from RPC [Rugby Portobello, one assumes]
 19 to Westway centre have seen people sleeping on the
 20 streets who don't appear to know about Westway being
 21 a relief centre overnight.
 22 "Jack Duncton has asked Red Cross to share more
 23 precise information re location and flag it with
 24 David Carey."
 25 And that's a reference there, at 23.40, that

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1 volunteers had spotted rough sleepers on Verity Close.
 2 I'm just going to follow that through, as you said
 3 that you weren't aware of that at the time, and see if
 4 any of this assists your recollection .
 5 We move up to the next row, which is row 227,
 6 log 59. This is Jack Duncton again.
 7 Do you know who Jack Duncton is?
 8 A. No.
 9 Q. " ... contacted onscene LALO to let police know that
 10 there are potentially people sleeping out on
 11 Verity Close ... "
 12 Are you familiar with Verity Close?
 13 A. Yes.
 14 Q. " ... and have asked police to go and check the area and
 15 go to the Westway Sports Centre."
 16 If we turn to row 222, which is log 64, please, this
 17 is at 00.45, from Guy Cullum, LALO. Item 2:
 18 "He has spoken to a police officer on the cordons
 19 regarding people sleeping outside on Verity Close. The
 20 police said they don't have the capacity to send an
 21 officer . The police are winding down, officers have
 22 been sent home."
 23 Finally, in relation to this, from row 213, please,
 24 log 73, so this is 01.30, 15 June, so overnight:
 25 "Guy Cullum LALO has been in touch to say that have

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1 not come across people sleeping on the street around
 2 Verity Close. The police are standing down their day
 3 shift . David Kerry contacted SUEZ ..."
 4 Is it the cleaning part of the organisation? Is
 5 that correct?
 6 A. I believe so.
 7 Q. " ... to inform them about anti Council feeling ... "
 8 And other matters which don't relate to this topic.
 9 You mentioned that you weren't aware of these
 10 reports at the time; correct?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. It appears that the report in the BECC wasn't isolated,
 13 and the TMO, who were, as you mentioned, making contact
 14 with residents , and indeed walkway residents, also
 15 recorded the following on 15 June.
 16 In relation to that, what I'm going to do is I'm
 17 going to summarise their log. Perhaps you would accept
 18 it from me, this is what came back from their
 19 information.
 20 A named individual from Barandon Walk was sleeping
 21 in the park with his dog, and it appears the reason why
 22 was the concern for where his pet would go.
 23 Were you aware of that?
 24 A. No.
 25 Q. Another named individual from Barandon Walk was recorded

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1 as sleeping under the flyover . He stated he required
 2 accommodation and it was noted by the TMO officer that
 3 his mother will assist him to call RBKC. Maybe
 4 a suggestion of vulnerability .
 5 Again, were you aware of that?
 6 A. No.
 7 Q. The last example I'd like to refer to you is a named
 8 female resident from Testerton Walk, who had two sons
 9 who were not adults. She was recorded to have stayed in
 10 her car on 14 June, and over to the night of the 15th,
 11 and was advised to go to the Westway.
 12 Again, it probably flows from your previous answers
 13 that you weren't aware of this?
 14 A. No, I wasn't aware of those individual cases.
 15 Q. So regular contact with the TMO. This, if there were
 16 reports of homelessness, would be something of real
 17 concern. But it wasn't brought to your attention?
 18 A. It wasn't brought to my individual attention, no.
 19 Q. In relation to this ring-around, for want of a better
 20 word, that the TMO were doing on 15 June, some of that
 21 contact also referred to a named resident not having
 22 much luck with the temporary accommodation number, which
 23 must be a reference to the housing line; is that
 24 correct?
 25 A. That's correct .

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1 Q. Was that housing line operating 24 hours or was it
 2 limited?
 3 A. I don't remember. We did put a shift system in place
 4 quite quickly, but I don't know from 14 June to 15 June.
 5 We did have it manned from, I believe, 8 o'clock in the
 6 morning until 10 o'clock at night, but I don't believe
 7 it was manned overnight.
 8 Q. There were also entries when this call—around was made
 9 where other tenants were staying with friends, and it
 10 was indicated that they required accommodation as they
 11 could only stay there for the short term.
 12 So drawing that together, from that information,
 13 would you now accept that there were a number of
 14 displaced walkway residents, some with families, some
 15 potentially vulnerable, who had nowhere to stay for that
 16 first night on 14 June, and perhaps some of the later
 17 nights?
 18 A. Yes.
 19 Q. Do you accept that that was, in part, a consequence of
 20 this passive approach by RBKC, and poor communication
 21 regarding the eligibility criteria, both internally and
 22 externally, regarding temporary accommodation?
 23 A. I don't accept that it was our passive approach, because
 24 we were being extremely active at that time. By saying
 25 it was passive, you give the indication that we weren't

1 actually doing anything in order to be able to house as
 2 many people as possible.
 3 Q. Yes.
 4 A. But we were, we were doing a great deal in order to be
 5 able to house people who approached us.
 6 I do accept, from the evidence that you have put
 7 before me, that there were people who unfortunately did
 8 not receive the level of care that they should have done
 9 on that night of 14 June and, therefore, unnecessarily
 10 slept in their car or who slept out, but should have, if
 11 they could have known about it, been housed in the
 12 Westway overnight and then subsequently received the
 13 offer of emergency accommodation.
 14 Q. Can I move on —
 15 A. I just want to say, I do not know, though, based on the
 16 evidence that you've provided, as to whether any of
 17 those three people that you've provided as evidence had
 18 the ability for us to contact them. So I don't know
 19 whether, even if we had been proactive, we would have
 20 had the ability to phone all of those people in order to
 21 be able to let them know what was available for them.
 22 Q. "Proactive" is perhaps a better word than "passive", in
 23 fairness to you, but in terms of being proactive, we
 24 know from the information I provided to you that there
 25 was a ring—around, so all these people who were

1 contacted were contacted by telephone. So these were
 2 perhaps people who were contactable.
 3 A. Well, in any housing management scenario, you have
 4 telephone numbers for people who live in your
 5 accommodation.
 6 Q. Yes.
 7 A. Whether those telephone numbers are up to date and
 8 whether you're able to get hold of people as part of
 9 that ring—around, as I believe there's a subsequent
 10 entry, is that it's not always possible to get hold of
 11 people or have up—to—date numbers and/or email addresses
 12 for them, because tenants are not obliged to give you
 13 their personal information, and nor should they if they
 14 don't want to.
 15 Q. I'm going to move on to another topic, please, which is
 16 the consideration given to allow those walkway residents
 17 who were displaced in the wider cordon to return to
 18 their homes.
 19 You indicate in your statement at paragraph 60
 20 {RBK00035592/15} that on 15 June, you had:
 21 "... no idea as the day wore on whether 850 people
 22 in the wider cordon could go home or whether we may need
 23 emergency accommodation for those residents too. It was
 24 not until quite late in the day that people could start
 25 returning to their homes in the wider cordon."

1 Is that correct?
 2 A. Yes.
 3 Q. Can you recall how it was decided that those in the
 4 wider cordon, such as the walkways we've discussed,
 5 could return to their home?
 6 A. It was not my decision, so I do not know what decision
 7 was taken by the Metropolitan Police on lifting the
 8 cordon to allow people to return home.
 9 Q. Well, there's probably two factors there. Number 1 is
 10 the cordon; if there is a cordon where people aren't
 11 allowed to enter, that's beyond your control; correct?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. Then, when the cordon is lifted or relaxed or reduced,
 14 is then the decision whether it's appropriate or
 15 suitable for those people to return to the
 16 accommodation; isn't that correct?
 17 A. Yes. So the appropriateness would have been based on
 18 the information received from the people who were on the
 19 ground about the condition of those blocks.
 20 Q. And who were those people?
 21 A. So the TMO —
 22 Q. Yes.
 23 A. — were on the ground and assessing the condition of the
 24 three finger blocks.
 25 Q. You mention at paragraph 61 of your statement

1 {RBK00035592/15} that the TMO were on site and they were
 2 doing assessments on 14, 15 and 16 June of the
 3 accommodation, and you state at paragraph 61 of your
 4 statement that it was their responsibility to check the
 5 accommodation.
 6 A. That's correct.
 7 Q. That was your understanding?
 8 A. That's correct.
 9 Q. Did the TMO express any concerns to you, as head of
 10 housing or RBKC Gold, regarding safety concerns or wider
 11 reservations at that time regarding allowing residents
 12 to return to their homes in the walkways during those
 13 first three days?
 14 A. I don't remember.
 15 Q. We could perhaps assist you with your recollection. If
 16 you could turn to {TMO00869990}, please. We've seen
 17 this before. It's a statement from Teresa Brown, who
 18 I'm sure you know very well, or knew very well at the
 19 time.
 20 A. Yes, I do.
 21 Q. Good working relationship with her?
 22 A. Yes, she is an excellent officer.
 23 Q. She was director of housing for the TMO.
 24 If we turn to paragraph 45, please, which is page 9
 25 {TMO00869990/9}, I'm just going to read it out:

1 "I recall on 15 June having discussions with
 2 Stuart Priestley from RBKC BECC who had advised that
 3 consideration was being given at that time to return
 4 residents evacuated in the surrounding areas of the
 5 Tower. I recall discussing the possible impact on
 6 residents if this went ahead advising that if residents
 7 returned home they would have no gas/boiler, and
 8 consequently no hot water or cooking facilities, as the
 9 surrounding areas ran off the Tower's heating/hot water
 10 services. We also needed to repair damaged doors where
 11 the police had forced entry and I [Teresa Brown]
 12 suggested that returning residents should not be rushed
 13 back until we could ensure proper provision of
 14 services ..."
 15 And she gives examples how the door entry system
 16 also needed to be re-routed.
 17 Were you informed of that advice by Teresa Brown,
 18 that returning residents on 15 June should not be rushed
 19 back?
 20 A. I don't recall whether I received that information, but
 21 I do recall receiving information about the condition of
 22 the finger blocks and about the work that needed to be
 23 undertaken in order to be able to make those -- the
 24 accommodation -- to fix the doors, to fix the door entry
 25 system, to check for smoke damage, to check for flood

1 damage, and to effect the repairs that needed to take
 2 place. And I was also very aware that the boiler for
 3 the finger blocks was in the basement of Grenfell Tower
 4 and, therefore, there would need to be an emergency or
 5 an alternative boiler system put in place in order to be
 6 able to allow people to return.
 7 Q. So on 15 June you had an awareness of these factors in
 8 relation to heating, hot water --
 9 A. Yes.
 10 Q. -- and in relation to likely damage to some of the
 11 properties within the cordon and the walkways?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. If we scroll down, please, to paragraph 48 of her
 14 statement, please {TMO00869990/9}. So she mentioned
 15 earlier on speaking to Stuart Priestley, and Ms Brown
 16 from the TMO says this:
 17 "At approximately 8pm on the 15 June, I was
 18 contacted by the BECC and asked to meet Police
 19 Inspector Bean at the Kensington Leisure Centre. This
 20 was to inspect the finger blocks area to examine whether
 21 all the areas that needed boarding up before residents
 22 returned were secure."
 23 I will skip a little bit:
 24 "I was advised on that inspection that the intention
 25 of Gold group [that would be RBKC Gold group] was that

1 finger block residents should be returned as soon as
 2 possible."
 3 Pausing there, were you aware of that, that the
 4 advice from RBKC Gold was that finger/walkway residents
 5 should be returned as soon as possible on 15 June in the
 6 evening?
 7 A. Yes, because I was hopeful that we wouldn't have to --
 8 that there was -- that we would want to try and have
 9 people to be able to go home again as soon as they
 10 possibly could.
 11 Q. Ms Brown continues at paragraph 48:
 12 "I repeated my concerns about it being premature due
 13 to the lack of gas/heating etc, doors needing securing.
 14 Fire exits from the 300 blocks provided access directly
 15 onto Grenfell Walk ..."
 16 She gives a number of other reasons why.
 17 She telephoned Sacha Jevans, who is also from the
 18 TMO, isn't that correct?
 19 A. Yes, that's correct.
 20 Q. From site, from the location, who had the same
 21 reservations.
 22 "She said she [Sacha Jevans] would call
 23 Laura Johnson."
 24 I'm going to read the rest of the sentence:
 25 "Sacha [Jevans] called me back shortly after and

1 said that Laura said we had to go with the Gold group
 2 decision."

3 So, in relation to that, did you have a conversation
 4 with Sacha Jevans where she relayed the reservations of
 5 the TMO, and specifically Teresa Brown at the scene,
 6 that it was premature, because of the condition of the
 7 property, for residents to be returned back to the
 8 walkways?

9 A. I don't recall the conversation, but if Sacha and Teresa
 10 said the conversation took place, then it will have
 11 done.

12 Q. Finally, "we had to go with the Gold group decision",
 13 specifically, do you recall saying that?

14 A. No, but if Sacha says that I said that, then I'm quite
 15 sure that I did.

16 Q. If concerns were expressed by the TMO regarding the
 17 state of the accommodation and it being premature, do
 18 you think those concerns should have been taken into
 19 account and heeded?

20 A. Yes, and I'm sure they were, in the context of -- set in
 21 the context of trying to find the sheer volume of
 22 accommodation for people that was required in London at
 23 that time. So the alternative is either people can go
 24 home and realise that it's far from perfect and there
 25 are faults with it, or that they can stay in

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1 an emergency rest centre, and I think, you know, kind
 2 of -- it's a very difficult decision to take when you're
 3 looking for hundreds and hundreds of units of
 4 accommodation in a very busy capital city where there
 5 isn't hundreds and hundreds of empty units of
 6 accommodation to provide people with, that sometimes you
 7 have to make very difficult decisions, which is about:
 8 are people going to be able to go home, even though the
 9 accommodation is not as perfect as we would like it to
 10 be?

11 Q. In the description we have heard you used the phrase
 12 "not as perfect", but there were issues regarding
 13 whether it was habitable, really; isn't that correct?

14 A. Yes, in terms of -- if it was not habitable then -- and
 15 if the feedback was that it's just not habitable, flood
 16 damage, fire damage, then nobody would have been made to
 17 go back. But if there was an issue of unfortunately not
 18 having hot water, heating being less of an issue because
 19 it was June, then it may have well been considered that
 20 it was reasonable for people to return home until that
 21 hot water provision could have been put in place. And
 22 I know that the TMO worked over the weekend of that
 23 weekend to ensure that all the doors were fixed and the
 24 door entry was fixed, and then there was a period of
 25 time over the following few days where an emergency

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1 boiler provision was put in place.

2 Q. In relation to this phrase "Gold Group decision", so
 3 RBKC Gold Group decision -- and we know that that group
 4 met twice on 15 June, and we will see the minutes in due
 5 course -- but it's a decision which doesn't appear to be
 6 minuted within those meetings.

7 Do you recall -- and I know you may have given this
 8 answer already -- at any stage outside those meetings
 9 any contact with members of RBKC Gold regarding this
 10 decision?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Would you expect, as director of housing, to participate
 13 in such a decision?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. So is it likely, actually, logically, that you probably
 16 did participate in that decision but don't recollect it
 17 now?

18 A. I think it highly likely that there was a discussion
 19 that took place about what would happen if a further 300
 20 people could not be returned to their properties or
 21 could not go home, and what we sought to do in order to
 22 make -- in order to try to make those properties
 23 available for people if they wanted to go back. It may
 24 well be that lots of people -- and it's my understanding
 25 that lots of people didn't go back, but it was about

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1 being able to lift the cordon and enable people to go
 2 home, should they want to, and people would make that
 3 choice. Some people would decide to go back and some
 4 people would decide not to go back.

5 Q. You mentioned 300, and I don't want to mislead you.
 6 When it refers to the 300s, I think it's like one of the
 7 walkways.

8 A. Yes, it is, yes.

9 Q. It's the numbers which are attributed to them, and for
 10 short they're referenced as the 300s, or perhaps the
 11 400s.

12 A. Yes, I understand that.

13 Q. I think we will touch upon in a moment the numbers of
 14 displaced people, so I don't want you to be misled about
 15 that figure.

16 A. No, no, I understand that there was around 845 people,
 17 families, who were in that wider area.

18 Q. Yes.

19 Let's look at that last RBKC Gold meeting on the
 20 15th at 15.30, which is {RBK00020448/1}. You're in
 21 attendance, we see you there in the second line of
 22 attendees.

23 "Response priorities", we see that:
 24 "... 49 people in commercial accommodation from
 25 Grenfell Tower [on 15 June].

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1 " ■ Placed 103 people in total. Maybe placing more
 2 as further request come in."
 3 At this stage, this is before the telephone contact
 4 with Sacha Jevans later on, on 15 June at 8 o'clock, and
 5 it says this:
 6 "If the cordon is not lifted, then have over 800
 7 people to find places. Will need to seek help from
 8 Government."
 9 Can you help in relation to what that means, "Will
 10 need to seek help from Government"?
 11 A. Well, if there's --- there would be no way that the
 12 borough would be able to source accommodation for 800
 13 people. That is an enormous amount of people, who live
 14 in a very small geographic area, who would need either
 15 a rest centre or somewhere to stay overnight, and
 16 there's just no way that RBKC would have that capacity
 17 and/or I believe that probably number of units were
 18 available in London on that night. So it would become
 19 something that we would need help from government in
 20 order to be able to do.
 21 Q. I understand the reasons as you set them out, but what
 22 sort of help do you think was envisaged the government
 23 could provide, central government could provide?
 24 A. I think in that statement I mean we would need to
 25 contact government and make them aware that it wasn't

1 just the people from Grenfell Tower who needed to be
 2 rehoused, but there was a wider and bigger problem with
 3 the people in the wider estate who needed to be found
 4 accommodation, either for a short period of time or
 5 a medium period of time, and what assistance could they
 6 offer. I don't work in government so I'm not sure what
 7 they could have said to me.
 8 Q. You are director of housing, as we have mentioned
 9 a number of times. It's the second day of the RBKC
 10 response. There is a lot of negative coverage of the
 11 response, which you touch upon and which is mentioned in
 12 other statements, and criticisms of the council at that
 13 stage; isn't that correct?
 14 A. Yes.
 15 Q. You mention how hard your team is working. But looking
 16 at the scale of the task you faced, did you not think
 17 that RBKC needed more assistance?
 18 A. Looking at it in hindsight, after the event, then
 19 clearly more assistance would have been extremely
 20 helpful. At that time, I would say it was very much in
 21 the housing department: head down, let's just keep
 22 going, we need to be booking hotels, rebooking hotels,
 23 placing people as they approach, logging all of the
 24 offers that we're receiving, seeing how useful they are,
 25 and then seeing how we can help the people who are

1 approaching us.
 2 Q. You were asked questions earlier this morning regarding
 3 the morning of 14 June and any advice which David Kerry
 4 gave to the chief executive/town clerk of RBKC that this
 5 was too big, effectively, for RBKC and to seek external
 6 help, which I've summarised.
 7 Were you aware on 14 or 15 June of the assistance
 8 that could be provided to RBKC, such as the London Local
 9 Authority Gold resolution?
 10 A. No, I wasn't.
 11 Q. Do you recall any discussions with Nicholas Holgate or
 12 at these meetings amongst RBKC leaders as to activating
 13 the London Local Authority Gold on 15 June?
 14 A. No, I don't recall a discussion about that.
 15 Q. So we've just been looking at the afternoon of 15 June,
 16 and just perhaps to track the numbers of those who were
 17 being placed, to use a clinical term, hopefully not
 18 an insensitive term, if we could turn to {RBK00020703}.
 19 So this is highlighted, and that's the way it's
 20 provided, it's not highlighted by us, so ignore the
 21 highlighting, and these are the minutes of the group
 22 meeting at 10 o'clock that day. You are there, we can
 23 see from page 1.
 24 If we see the top of page 2 {RBK00020703/2}, under
 25 paragraph 4:

1 "... Strategic Priorities
 2 "Looking after those immediately affected
 3 " ■ 109 families have [been] placed in commercial
 4 accommodation, 30 families are from the finger
 5 blocks ... "
 6 And then it says, third bullet point:
 7 "Some families did return to their homes last night.
 8 There is no hot water and heating in the re-occupied
 9 blocks. The TMO are looking to install temporary
 10 boilers. There were broken doors, debris and flooding
 11 which the TMO are working on resolving. RB ..."
 12 Robert Black; is that correct?
 13 A. Yes.
 14 Q. "... to advise the BECC once the temporary boiler is in
 15 place.
 16 " ■ LJ [you] to supply the number of families
 17 evacuated from [Grenfell] Walk."
 18 Is that correct?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. Then if we go down, please, to the seventh bullet point,
 21 which says:
 22 "LJ confirmed ..."
 23 So still in that section --- have you got that, "LJ
 24 confirmed"?
 25 A. Yes, I do.

1 Q. "... she has sufficient hotels to accommodate up to 20
 2 families. She will house the vulnerable or those with
 3 children without hot water but others will have to
 4 manage."
 5 Is that correct?
 6 A. Yes.
 7 Q. Was that the view, that you're doing the best you can,
 8 but other people will just have to get on with it,
 9 they'll have to manage? That's correct?
 10 A. Yes.
 11 Q. What was the timeline for installing these temporary
 12 boilers?
 13 A. The -- I don't know, to be honest with you, I don't
 14 remember.
 15 Q. Is it fair to say that it took a significant period of
 16 time, probably more weeks than days, to install
 17 temporary boilers?
 18 A. I think it did take longer. It was first spoken about
 19 as the situation became apparent about the lack of hot
 20 water in the finger blocks, and then an assessment
 21 needed to be made of, in engineering terms, how
 22 difficult or how easy it was in order to hook up
 23 a temporary solution, and that situation again was quite
 24 fluid as the TMO and Westminster, who were assisting,
 25 worked out what the solution was.

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1 Q. A fluid situation, a complex situation.
 2 A. Very complex.
 3 Q. And one which, perhaps, in fairness, was envisaged to
 4 last a considerable period of time, even at that stage.
 5 A. I couldn't say with any certainty that there was
 6 a timeline placed on how long it would take to put the
 7 temporary boiler solution in place. I had no view at
 8 that point whether it would take hours or days or weeks.
 9 Q. In relation to those who were returned to their homes,
 10 in the walkways, who didn't have hot water or heating,
 11 or gas to cook, putting aside it being June and being
 12 warm, but just actually being able to cook, what
 13 alternative provisions were made for those people?
 14 A. So we were looking to put in place providing people with
 15 financial assistance, I believe, in order to be able
 16 to -- so that they could go and get food elsewhere, and
 17 I believe there were showers available in the sports
 18 centre.
 19 Q. So that being the Westway?
 20 A. The Westway and/or they -- the Kensington Academy(sic)
 21 Leisure Centre. But I believe actually at that time it
 22 was still being used by the police.
 23 Q. Yes, probably the Westway.
 24 A. Probably the Westway, yes.
 25 Q. I'm just going to move on to another topic, actually

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1 probably staying in the same theme about the numbers of
 2 households and people being accommodated.
 3 I'm going to summarise what you say at paragraph 50
 4 of your statement {RBK00035592/13}, saying that:
 5 "We still had many people approaches us on day 2
 6 and 3 [Thursday and Friday, 15th and 16th] which
 7 included Grenfell Tower residents as well as people from
 8 the finger blocks [walkways] who required re-housing."
 9 As those numbers increased, was it the case that it
 10 was a real struggle to keep up with the increase in
 11 demand?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. So we have heard already that, by the end of 14 June, 77
 14 households were provided with hotel accommodation, 20
 15 stayed in a rest centre. We have touched on that
 16 already. But by 20 June, the 12 o'clock RBKC Gold Group
 17 meeting minutes, which I can summarise -- it's
 18 {RBK00017570} -- reported that a total of 250 households
 19 had been placed, with 125 from Grenfell Tower and
 20 Grenfell Walk, and 112 from the broader cordoned area.
 21 So lots of numbers there, but really from the first
 22 day, 77 households, and by day 6, approximately day 7,
 23 it increases to 250 households, and amongst those, 112
 24 from the broader cordoned area. Does that sound
 25 correct?

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1 A. Yes.
 2 Q. So a significant amount of people in the wider cordon
 3 area in the end were placed in temporary accommodation.
 4 A. That's correct.
 5 Q. And by temporary accommodation, we mean hotels.
 6 A. That's correct.
 7 Q. I've got time to deal with offers of accommodation,
 8 which you mentioned earlier on this morning, receiving
 9 offers of accommodation, and perhaps I can deal with
 10 that in short.
 11 Is it correct that, from 14 June onwards, RBKC
 12 received a substantial number of offers of accommodation
 13 from members of the public, other local authorities,
 14 housing associations, charities, businesses, and indeed
 15 hotels?
 16 A. Yes.
 17 Q. Was it the view of RBKC's housing team, led by you, that
 18 hotel accommodation was the most appropriate option in
 19 terms of location and compliance, in terms of the
 20 cleanliness, fire safety and other standards?
 21 A. Yes. The accommodation that was being offered -- very
 22 generously, I have to say -- by lots of people who
 23 obviously had seen the news and were horrified by what
 24 was taking place, was, you know, kind of overwhelming in
 25 terms of people's kindness, and I must say that, that it

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1 was, you know, kind of -- it was -- you are quite
 2 humbled by what people offer in those kind of
 3 circumstances. But to stay -- to have someone who's
 4 highly traumatised to come and stay in your house in
 5 a spare bedroom didn't really feel like the right
 6 solution for me, when what people probably needed was
 7 a self-contained room and their own bathroom and the
 8 ability to, you know, try and think about what had just
 9 happened.

10 In the case of accommodation that was offered by
 11 other registered providers and/or by other councils,
 12 these would be accommodation that was unfurnished in
 13 existing social housing blocks, and so it wasn't just
 14 a case of being able to say to somebody, "You can go
 15 and -- we've got a flat for you in -- on the 10th floor
 16 of a block in Wandsworth". That really didn't feel like
 17 the right solution either, because they would be
 18 unfurnished accommodation, may not be the right size for
 19 that family, and may not be where that family wanted to
 20 be, and so that was very much accommodation that needed
 21 to be considered in the medium term as an alternative,
 22 but not in the short term, where people needed clean
 23 bedding, a warm place to stay, their own bathroom, and
 24 the ability to be as close as possible as they could to
 25 RBKC.

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1 Q. So you have set out in your statement and your answer
 2 the rationale and why the decision was made and focusing
 3 on hotel accommodation. You also mentioned the humbling
 4 and overwhelming response from members of the public.
 5 A. People are very, very kind.
 6 Q. And those offers, is it right, from members of the
 7 public, were made by both phone and email to RBKC?
 8 A. That's correct.
 9 Q. Was there an issue with the volume of offers, with
 10 managing those offers and the receipt of offers?
 11 A. There was a huge number of offers and I believe that we
 12 acknowledged every single offer that was received, maybe
 13 not on the same day or the next day, but we did have
 14 a process in place whereby myself or my colleague
 15 acknowledged the very kind offers that people had given
 16 us, and we started to log all of those offers on the
 17 second -- on the 15th, we had a separate team who were
 18 looking at logging all of the offers and the suitability
 19 of those offers, in the context of: people won't be able
 20 to stay in hotels for longer term, and we need to start
 21 thinking about where people are going to move to in the
 22 medium term.

23 I'm also aware, because, as you've mentioned, I was
 24 the director of housing at RBKC for eight and a half
 25 years, the very low number of vacancies or voids that we

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1 get in our housing stock on an annual basis. So K&C
 2 used to do around 400 lettings a year, on average, and
 3 60% of those were bedsits and one beds. Now, I'm aware
 4 of that situation when I'm receiving offers from other
 5 providers. I'm also aware of the mix of families and
 6 the different family types that people -- will need to
 7 be accommodated, and I know that we just won't be able
 8 to accommodate everybody who has been displaced by the
 9 Grenfell fire within RBKC.

10 Q. So as kind as those offers were, in particular from
 11 members of the public, they were never going to be
 12 utilised for the reasons you've expressed?
 13 A. They won't be suitable. They were extremely kind and
 14 extremely well meant, and perhaps in different
 15 circumstances we would have been able to use them, but
 16 in this instance, it was my belief -- and it's still my
 17 belief -- that hotel accommodation was probably the best
 18 place to put people in this scenario.
 19 Q. In relation to that decision about offers of
 20 accommodation from the public, was this decision
 21 communicated to the public via the media communications
 22 team or an automated message, perhaps, on the housing
 23 line, that, "Thank you, but we don't require any offers
 24 of temporary accommodation"?
 25 A. I don't think there was a message sent out. If there

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1 was -- there's a fine balance to strike in that
 2 situation, isn't there, of being very grateful for
 3 people's very kind offers, and then appearing not to
 4 want them. You know, there's a balance to be struck
 5 between being grateful for those offers, and some of
 6 them could have been extremely useful, and then turning
 7 those offers away.

8 So there's a balance to be struck about how you
 9 receive people's offers.
 10 Q. I'm going to move on and make a start on a new section,
 11 which is really the adequacy of the emergency
 12 accommodation which was provided to those affected in
 13 those first seven days, which is the framework for the
 14 immediate aftermath we are exploring.

15 You mention that Rachael Dalton, who was part of the
 16 housing team, was in charge of the team which matched
 17 the needs of those requiring accommodation with
 18 available accommodation; is that correct?

19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. On your account, there was an effort to match needs with
 21 what was available.
 22 A. Yes, that's correct. We were looking at family
 23 composition and type and hotel, and people were making
 24 us aware of any disabilities or vulnerabilities, and
 25 trying our best to try and match that.

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1 I admit that we probably did not get it right in
 2 every circumstance, but, as I said, there was a lot of
 3 people coming in and we were booking a lot of rooms and
 4 trying to get people into somewhere as quickly as
 5 possible, to make sure that they were safe and were
 6 accommodated.
 7 Q. Was any consideration in those early days given to the
 8 floor the accommodation would be on, placing somebody,
 9 for instance, in a high floor in a hotel?
 10 A. I don't think probably in the first few days that that
 11 was a consideration, but I think that became
 12 a consideration as it went on, as it became more
 13 apparent to us how traumatised people were and how,
 14 quite rightly, they just couldn't face being, you know,
 15 kind of in a flat, or in a higher floor -- floored
 16 accommodation, balanced against: this is what we've got
 17 available, you know.
 18 Q. Yes. In those first few days, you accept that it became
 19 apparent some residents were placed in the upper floors
 20 of high-rise hotels, and there was feedback that that
 21 was traumatising?
 22 A. Yes, and quite understandably so as well.
 23 Q. At what stage do you think there was this recognition
 24 and change in the placing of those who were
 25 understandably traumatised in lower floor hotel

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1 accommodation? Can you say?
 2 A. No, not with any great certainty. I would say that we
 3 started to receive feedback from people and then started
 4 to react to that. I wouldn't say in the first instance
 5 it was a consideration that we said, "We are not booking
 6 any towers -- hotel towers", but as it became aware --
 7 as we became aware of it, then we started to adjust our
 8 booking policy.
 9 Q. In fairness to you, you said in the first few days there
 10 wasn't a consideration, and perhaps consistent with
 11 an email which I can summarise. 18 June, so the
 12 weekend, 09.48, Rachael Dalton -- I'm just going to give
 13 the reference, {RBK00031672} -- to members of the
 14 housing team, setting out a number of tasks, and says
 15 this:
 16 "Quick thoughts, that you're probably all already
 17 working on. We need to go through all the extensions
 18 today and move those on the higher level floors."
 19 So, as you say, first few days, not a consideration,
 20 and then thereafter efforts made to move those
 21 affected --
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. -- where possible.
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. In the first seven days, did those assigning hotel

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1 rooms, such as Rachael Dalton's team, take into account
 2 the specific needs of those affected, such as
 3 adaptations for mobility issues, or facilities for
 4 cooking, or the provision of appropriate sleeping
 5 facilities for those with young children?
 6 A. I think we tried to. I'm not sure that we got it right
 7 on every occasion, and I know there were families who
 8 subsequently came back to us and said there weren't
 9 sufficient beds in the room. When we were made aware of
 10 it, we moved people. But we were certainly trying in
 11 the first instance to provide people with the
 12 appropriate size of accommodation that they needed.
 13 Q. So your evidence, in summary, is: "Yes, we tried" --
 14 A. We tried, but we probably didn't get it right in every
 15 scenario.
 16 Q. And perhaps a bit more than that, perhaps an acceptance
 17 that you didn't get it right, and to assist you, I'm
 18 just going to refer to some examples in general terms,
 19 because the Inquiry's heard extensive oral and written
 20 evidence of the experience of those who were placed in
 21 hotel accommodation in those first few days, references
 22 to families placed in one room which was far too small
 23 for a number of family members; allocations that did not
 24 take into account that there was an infant child,
 25 including one family placed in a room with no cot or

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1 other baby facilities; and the needs of those with
 2 disabilities, such as the family of Mohammed Rasoul, who
 3 we have heard live evidence from, and his elderly
 4 father, who, on his account, had not been taken into
 5 account or sufficiently catered for.
 6 With those examples, do you accept that, in those
 7 first seven days, there was actually a significant
 8 number of those placed who did not have their needs
 9 sufficiently or appropriately catered for?
 10 A. I couldn't say whether this phrase "significantly", but
 11 there were certainly a number of families who wouldn't
 12 have had the correct size of room and/or had the
 13 facilities available to them, and we amended that over
 14 the coming days and weeks as the situation changed. But
 15 we did our very best to try and place people somewhere
 16 in a very difficult situation, and we didn't get it
 17 right in every occasion, and for that I can only
 18 apologise, because it certainly wasn't the intent.
 19 Q. Really on the last part of this section, and then we'll
 20 perhaps pause, is that: do you accept that a number of
 21 people who were placed in hotels in those early days
 22 were actually not provided transport to the hotels and
 23 had to make their own way?
 24 A. I'm not -- to be honest with you, I don't remember what
 25 the transport situation was. On the first day, we

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1 attempted to get taxis to take people from the site to
 2 their hotels. This was extremely difficult to do,
 3 because there was obviously an enormous number of
 4 emergency vehicles, but there was also a huge media
 5 scrum which was preventing us from getting taxis
 6 through, and a huge number of representatives from the
 7 media who were desperate to speak to people who were
 8 bereaved and who had been through that awful experience,
 9 and we were also trying to protect people from having to
 10 undergo that interrogation.
 11 So on the first day, I know we attempted to get
 12 people taxis. I can't honestly say that I remember on
 13 subsequent days what provision we made for people to be
 14 able to go to the hotels.
 15 Q. But those difficulties -- we have heard evidence from
 16 Mr Al-Karad who, on 15 June, attended the Westway to
 17 seek temporary accommodation. He received a phone call,
 18 and he had to rely on the kindness of a stranger to get
 19 a lift to a hotel in Earl's Court, for example. Do you
 20 accept that there were situations where people didn't
 21 get transport arranged by RBKC?
 22 A. I accept that. I'm sure that my team, if they could
 23 have arranged a taxi, would have arranged a taxi, but
 24 that probably didn't happen in all cases.
 25 MR KEATING: Mr Chairman, is that a suitable moment?

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1 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, thank you very much.
 2 Well, there you are, it's time we stopped now for
 3 a break for lunch. So, as I say, we'll stop there.
 4 We'll resume, please, at 2 o'clock. As before, please
 5 don't talk to anyone about your evidence while you're
 6 out of the room. All right?
 7 THE WITNESS: Thank you.
 8 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.
 9 (Pause)
 10 Thank you very much. 2 o'clock, then, please.
 11 Thank you.
 12 (1.00 pm)
 13 (The short adjournment)
 14 (2.00 pm)
 15 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right, Ms Johnson, ready to
 16 carry on?
 17 THE WITNESS: Yes.
 18 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Good, thank you.
 19 Yes, Mr Keating.
 20 MR KEATING: Thank you, Mr Chairman.
 21 I'm going to move on to a separate topic, please,
 22 Ms Johnson, which is staff visits to hotels, something
 23 you referred to a couple of times this morning.
 24 In relation to staff visits, RBKC staff visits, were
 25 they housing officers or social workers or a combination

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1 of both, or was it just housing officers?
 2 A. On the Thursday after the fire, it was just housing
 3 officers.
 4 Q. Okay. So let's deal with that. It's on 15 June, the
 5 Thursday, and housing officers being sent to hotels.
 6 You mentioned before that they were tasked to check on
 7 residents.
 8 Was that to assess their needs for short and
 9 long-term housing, or was it a welfare check?
 10 A. It was more of a welfare check, really, to be honest,
 11 just to see how they were and to ask if they needed
 12 anything. If we were missing any information on the
 13 family composition, then we could have taken it at that
 14 time. But people were rehoused -- well, offered
 15 emergency accommodation in very difficult circumstances,
 16 so it was an opportunity just to see how people were.
 17 Q. Perhaps we could open your first statement, please,
 18 {RBK00035592/17}, at paragraph 67.
 19 We see there:
 20 "I arrived at the Town Hall [on the 16th] ... We had
 21 a morning briefing with senior officers from the Housing
 22 team. Feedback from officers was that many families
 23 weren't in their rooms when officers attended on
 24 15 June, so it wasn't a very successful endeavour. We
 25 had put a letter under their door saying we had come to

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1 see them, and how to contact us, if they were not in."
 2 Is that correct?
 3 A. Yes.
 4 Q. According to Amanda Gill, your colleague, in her
 5 statement, prior to RBKC officers being deployed on
 6 15 June to attend hotels, the council was made aware
 7 that residents of Grenfell had called a meeting for that
 8 afternoon at Rugby Portobello Club and actually had
 9 requested RBKC to attend.
 10 In relation to that, there was a view to send
 11 housing officers out to the hotels to do a welfare
 12 check, as you described it, but you also were made aware
 13 in the housing department that there was a meeting going
 14 on at the Rugby Portobello Club. Was consideration
 15 given to likely unavailability of a number of residents
 16 before officers were sent to the hotels?
 17 A. Yes, which is why we gave people -- why we sent them
 18 with a letter to slide underneath the door. I'm not
 19 sure I related the two events together, to be honest
 20 with you, at the time, of the meeting of residents at
 21 Rugby Portobello and people not being in their rooms.
 22 Q. In relation to the letter, a number of residents who
 23 have provided evidence refer to not receiving any such
 24 letter under their door. Are you confident that letters
 25 were placed under all of the doors of the residents who

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1 were placed in hotels?
 2 A. I've said we put a letter under the door, and if my
 3 colleagues said they put a letter under the door, then
 4 I have no reason to think that they didn't.
 5 Q. We will return to that in due course.
 6 We've heard that this borough and North Kensington
 7 was rich in diversity. Was the letter that was provided
 8 in advance translated into various languages spoken by
 9 residents from that locality?
 10 A. I don't believe so. I believe it was just in English.
 11 Q. So in relation to what we just read about the feedback,
 12 that this was not a very successful endeavour to make
 13 contact with those affected residents placed in hotels,
 14 was there further attempts by RBKC to visit the
 15 residents after 15 June?
 16 A. I was only responsible for the operation up until Sunday
 17 the 18th, so I don't know if there was any further
 18 attempts made after that weekend.
 19 Q. Okay. So we were talking about Thursday the 15th.
 20 A. Yeah, so there wasn't on the Friday or on the Saturday.
 21 Q. Okay, and on the Sunday you say that you --
 22 A. I was stood down from being in charge of the operation.
 23 Q. So for that period, if somebody wasn't met or seen or
 24 contacted face-to-face on 15 June, it was unlikely that
 25 there was any contact on the 16th or 17th?

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1 A. Unless they contacted us, or unless we were aware that
 2 they wished to speak to us.
 3 Q. I want to turn to -- you talked about placement of
 4 hotels, looking at RBKC and surrounding boroughs, and
 5 one of those boroughs, of course, neighbouring boroughs,
 6 was the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham; isn't
 7 that correct?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. Displaced residents from RBKC were placed in hotels in
 10 that borough; isn't that correct?
 11 A. Yes.
 12 Q. Kim Smith, who was the chief executive, and still is
 13 chief executive of the London Borough of Hammersmith and
 14 Fulham, in her evidence, which I'm going to summarise,
 15 she has provided a statement to the Inquiry, she became
 16 aware on 16 June 2017 that displaced RBKC residents had
 17 been placed in their borough, and we will see in
 18 a moment, in an email, concerns were raised with her
 19 regarding a particular Grenfell Tower displaced resident
 20 who needed support. That reference is {LBH0000001/16},
 21 paragraph 63.
 22 In relation to RBKC residents placed in the London
 23 Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, can you recall
 24 whether, actually, Hammersmith and Fulham were informed
 25 residents had been placed in their borough, in hotels in

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1 that borough?
 2 A. I did not tell London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
 3 that we had placed people in their borough, but we were
 4 part of a tri-borough arrangement.
 5 Q. Yes.
 6 A. So RBKC had a number of linked services with Hammersmith
 7 and Fulham and Westminster City Council, and so although
 8 I hadn't taken responsibility for contacting Hammersmith
 9 and Fulham to let them know, Hammersmith and Fulham may
 10 have known because of the links with adult social care,
 11 which was a tri-borough service, I believe.
 12 Q. In relation to housing, that was solely RBKC, it was
 13 a sovereign service; isn't that right?
 14 A. Housing was a single-borough service. Adult social care
 15 and children's services were both tri-borough services.
 16 And social workers at this point, by the 15th, were
 17 starting to be mobilised to make links with people who
 18 had been placed in accommodation.
 19 Q. Well, let's move to {RBK00021897/2}, please, and the
 20 bottom of the thread at page 2. So we see
 21 Gerry Crowley, the property and place manager at London
 22 Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham, and an email to
 23 Kim Dero, Kim Smith, who got married, and others on
 24 19 June 2017.
 25 If we could go down, please {RBK00021897/3},

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1 thank you:
 2 "We have been in touch with [Kensington and Chelsea]
 3 this morning and I can confirm that they have placed
 4 tenants from Grenfell Tower in a total of 26 commercial
 5 hotels of which 3 are located in the following
 6 [Hammersmith and Fulham] hotels."
 7 Then they're listed.
 8 If we move down to, "In the meantime", that
 9 paragraph:
 10 "... we have visited all three hotels today and
 11 spoken with hotel management, tenants and support
 12 staff."
 13 The date is 19 June, three days later. So:
 14 "... we have visited all three hotels today and
 15 spoken with hotel management, tenants and support staff.
 16 We have found inconsistent levels of service being
 17 provided to tenants at the hotels, for example, the
 18 families at the Ibis have an open tab with regards to
 19 food and bar, the Holiday Inn families have been
 20 provided with £500 and have access to breakfast. My
 21 main concern is for the tenants residing at the
 22 Premier Inn in Hammersmith. There are 12 families who
 23 not been contacted by K&C since placement almost 6 days
 24 ago. We were the first to visit them at the hotel.
 25 They have no idea regarding what happens next and have

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1 not been provided contact details for K&C. They receive
 2 2 meals per day — breakfast and dinner but have not
 3 received any cash subsistence.”
 4 So in relation to that and those 12 families which
 5 were placed in Hammersmith and Fulham, do you accept
 6 that, six days later, they haven't been contacted or
 7 visited by RBKC?
 8 A. Yes.
 9 Q. Accepting your involvement and responsibility in terms
 10 of controlling certain matters changed on the Sunday of
 11 the earlier week, which would have been 18 June, this is
 12 19 June, but can you explain how this occurred, how so
 13 many days had passed and how those people were left with
 14 no support?
 15 A. I don't know what day they were placed. So this email
 16 indicates that they were placed on the 14th. If they
 17 were there, we would have attempted to visit them on the
 18 16th or the 15th. If they weren't there, then we would
 19 have hopefully put a letter underneath the door,
 20 although I don't have an audit trail to say how many
 21 letters were put in, put under, and then Friday and
 22 Saturday my officers did not then do another
 23 phone—around, nor did they not (sic) do a visit of
 24 people in those hotels, so I can't comment on what
 25 happened from the Sunday after that.

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1 Q. So in relation to the leaflet, it says here in stark
 2 terms they've "not been provided contact details for
 3 [Kensington and Chelsea]", which suggests no leaflet was
 4 placed underneath the doors.
 5 A. Yes, it does. It suggests quite strongly — and I have
 6 no reason not to believe it — that those families were
 7 placed and then they hadn't heard from us again and they
 8 had not contacted us either.
 9 Q. Just the last part, "and they had not contacted us
 10 either", what makes you say that?
 11 A. Because they said they had had no contact with
 12 Kensington and Chelsea, so I would presume that if they
 13 had spoken to Kensington and Chelsea, that they had
 14 phoned us, then they would have relayed that message
 15 back to the people from Hammersmith and Fulham to let
 16 them know that they had actually spoken to K&C and were
 17 aware of the payments we were making and/or how long
 18 they were able to stay in that particular hotel.
 19 Q. Do you acknowledge that this shouldn't have happened and
 20 leaving these families in this position was
 21 unacceptable?
 22 A. Yes, I acknowledge it must have been extremely difficult
 23 for those families to be left in that state of limbo,
 24 not knowing what was going to take place next.
 25 Q. "Abandoned" is a word that the Inquiry has heard to

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1 describe how those placed in hotels felt. Do you
 2 accept, both at hotels within the borough and outside
 3 the borough, that communication and contact with those
 4 people in hotels was deficient?
 5 A. Yes. I acknowledge that we could have done more to
 6 contact those families in those hotels to make sure that
 7 they knew what was taking place. As I said, it was
 8 a very pressurised environment, with people constantly
 9 approaching and us constantly booking, and perhaps we
 10 didn't give enough attention — not perhaps; we didn't
 11 give enough attention to the people who had been placed
 12 and giving them information and updates about what they
 13 could expect.
 14 Q. Thank you.
 15 I'm going to move on to another subtopic, which is
 16 the provision of food.
 17 Once residents were placed in hotels, you set out in
 18 your statement at paragraph 84 {RBK00035592/23} that
 19 RBKC had an arrangement with some hotels which gave
 20 either full board, half board or just breakfast to the
 21 residents that were staying there. Is that correct?
 22 A. Yes, it depended on the services that that hotel
 23 provided.
 24 Q. Yes. But there was an effort to provide food when there
 25 was a placement made?

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1 A. If there was — if the hotel provided food, then we
 2 asked the hotel to provide food to the residents that
 3 had been placed there, but obviously lots of hotels only
 4 provide limited services.
 5 Q. In relation to dietary requirements of residents,
 6 bearing in mind, as I said, the rich diversity of the
 7 area of North Kensington we're dealing with and the time
 8 of year it was, during Ramadan, were there any
 9 arrangements made with those hotels for specific and
 10 religious dietary requirements?
 11 A. I don't remember us making that specific request when we
 12 were booking the hotels on 14 June. We were very aware
 13 of the wide cultural diversity in Grenfell and we knew
 14 that a lot of people, of course, were fasting at that
 15 time. To be honest, I don't remember what we said to
 16 those hotels at that point in time about dietary
 17 requirements, but we were aware that not all hotels
 18 would be able to provide a full board service, nor would
 19 they be able to provide food that necessarily people
 20 wanted to eat. You know, people have a wide —
 21 you know, kind of wide dietary requirements and likes
 22 and dislikes, and children, of course, eat at different
 23 times and want to eat earlier, so that's why we started
 24 to mobilise very quickly trying to provide people with
 25 money in order so that they could both feed — you know,

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1 go out and get food for themselves, but also, you know,
 2 kind of buy basic services and needs.
 3 Q. RBKC, in their opening submissions to this module of
 4 the Inquiry {Day263/130:11}, have stated that:
 5 "The council admits that it should have done more in
 6 the immediate aftermath to make people from diverse
 7 backgrounds feel as comfortable as possible, in
 8 particular Muslim residents who were observing Ramadan
 9 at the time. The council acknowledges that many
 10 survivors who stayed in hotels were not provided with
 11 Halal food."
 12 Do you accept that?
 13 A. Yes, we would have been reliant on the hotels in order
 14 to be able to make that provision, and if they couldn't
 15 make that provision, then unfortunately those people
 16 wouldn't have been able to receive the food that they
 17 wanted.
 18 Q. You have provided and exhibited a spreadsheet in your
 19 statement at LG/26 -- we don't need to look at it, it's
 20 {RBK00001858} -- and that shows the arrangements with
 21 hotels which were in place as of 18 June, and it shows
 22 that of the 15 hotels named, only four provided
 23 breakfast, lunch and dinner, and five provided breakfast
 24 and dinner. So there was a reasonable proportion which
 25 were limited in what they could provide.

1 Again, you accept that; that was the best you could
 2 do in terms of the hotels that were available?
 3 A. Yes, better to get a room in a hotel than not to get
 4 a room, and if they provided full board, that was great,
 5 but if they didn't, then it was just best to get a room.
 6 Q. So in relation to those which are not full board, you
 7 mentioned that there was a need and a recognition for
 8 financial support to allow those who were in those
 9 hotels to be able to purchase food for themselves?
 10 A. Yes. I'm very aware -- and I've worked in the field of
 11 social housing for a very long time. I've always done
 12 this job because I've wanted to help people to provide
 13 good quality accommodation on low incomes, and I'm very
 14 aware of how people live from -- you know, live on very
 15 low incomes and it's very difficult to manage your
 16 budget, and I know that people will have left Grenfell
 17 and they won't have had any money in their own bank
 18 accounts, and will have lived from pay cheque to pay
 19 cheque, or from kind of benefit to benefit, and people
 20 do eke out their meals on the basis that they have
 21 bought enough to last the week, and there is no way that
 22 they can afford something different to that, and that's
 23 just in the normal course of events. So if you have
 24 something like this, where you have a disaster, and
 25 where people can no longer access their own food and no

1 longer -- and don't have any money and can't go to work,
 2 then it's important that we provided them with
 3 a financial resource so that they could, you know,
 4 provide food for themselves.
 5 Obviously it's very difficult in hotels because they
 6 don't, as a rule, have cooking facilities, so, you know,
 7 kind of the longer that goes on, the more difficult it
 8 becomes for people staying there in order to be able to
 9 eat the food that they want without having to rely on
 10 restaurants or takeaway services, which nobody wants to
 11 do in the longer term.
 12 Q. Well, I'm going to focus, if I may, just on the short
 13 term and the immediate aftermath. We've heard about the
 14 longer-term difficulties and experiences of those who
 15 were bereaved, survivors and residents in evidence
 16 earlier on in this module.
 17 So in relation to financial assistance, you mention
 18 at paragraph 84 of your statement {RBK00035592/23},
 19 which I'll summarise again, but I'll read to you a few
 20 excerpts:
 21 "We arranged money for those households to buy meals
 22 which were not provided ... There was a policy
 23 established on what food people could have in hotels and
 24 what they would get money for. There was a generous
 25 food allowance per household."

1 So in relation to this policy which you refer to at
 2 paragraph 84 of your statement, do you recall when that
 3 policy was put in place?
 4 A. No, it would have been -- it was very quickly put in
 5 place, but I can't remember whether it was on the 14th
 6 or 15th. It was a discussion that took place with
 7 Gold Group, or it may have taken place with finance
 8 colleagues, about how we were to distribute cash and how
 9 we were to give people money so that they could make
 10 provision for themselves.
 11 Q. So we've explored the different types of hotels and that
 12 some had less facilities in terms of food available, and
 13 you've recognised the need for financial support and
 14 you've mentioned the arrangements which we'll explore in
 15 a little more detail. But do you accept that in the
 16 first seven days, which we're exploring, numerous
 17 residents were still left without sufficient food or
 18 funds in those hotels?
 19 A. If the hotel didn't have full board and the residents
 20 didn't know about the financial provisions being made,
 21 then yes, they would have found that difficult.
 22 Q. Another theme which emerges from the evidence we've
 23 heard from those who were in those hotels and
 24 experienced matters in the first seven days is that many
 25 were unaware of what was available to them at the

1 hotels.
 2 Do you consider that there was an issue regarding
 3 communicating what was available to them at the hotels?
 4 A. Yes, I mean, I suppose I would have expected people in
 5 the hotels to ask the hotels what was available to them
 6 and be given that advice and information. Bearing in
 7 mind that we placed people into hotels on the 14th and
 8 15th very quickly, we probably didn't have the
 9 information -- a full suite of information available to
 10 us to give, you know, people that breakdown.
 11 But I completely accept the fact there was a failure
 12 of communication for us to follow that up with people
 13 placed in hotels --
 14 Q. Yes.
 15 A. -- about exactly what was available and exactly what
 16 they could have.
 17 Q. Okay.
 18 Let's look at {RBK00009799/2}, please. It's
 19 an email at 18.08 on 17 June. We may need to scroll
 20 down a little bit. So it's at the bottom of that page.
 21 So we see Fergus Coleman, 17 June, 18.08, and he is
 22 of HOS -- is that housing office staff? What would HOS
 23 stand for?
 24 A. Yes, something along those lines.
 25 Q. I believe he's head of affordable and private sector

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1 housing, WCC, so he's Westminster City Council.
 2 A. So it's likely to stand for housing options service.
 3 Q. Okay. In housing, Westminster, we've got the date,
 4 we've got the time, 17 June, which is the Saturday, and
 5 it's an update provided by him, and I want to draw out
 6 a few things from the latest update at 17.45.
 7 This update is derived from assessments which are
 8 being undertaken, and those must be assessments for
 9 accommodation; is that correct? Temporary
 10 accommodation.
 11 A. I don't know because I wasn't copied in to this email.
 12 Q. No, but I'm going to ask you to use your expertise from
 13 being 20 years in this field to help me in the
 14 environment, that there were HOS staff undertaking
 15 assessments, and is it likely that these assessments
 16 were in relation to temporary accommodation?
 17 A. Yes, I can only presume that, because this is the first
 18 time I've seen it.
 19 Q. Of course, in fairness to you. Let's look at the
 20 document and you can familiarise yourself with it.
 21 The last bullet point:
 22 "HOS officers have reported that the experience of
 23 doing the assessments has been very distressing."
 24 If we can turn overleaf {RBK00009799/3}, please, top
 25 bullet point:

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1 "Feedback from officers returning from assessments
 2 is that many of the residents are very distressed. Some
 3 have had no food or water and have no funds, others have
 4 been told that their hotel booking expires after today
 5 and they have not confirmation that they can stay after
 6 tomorrow."
 7 In bold:
 8 "▪ From the feedback I am receiving I would strongly
 9 recommend that there needs to be welfare support
 10 officers on site at the various hotels to offer guidance
 11 and reassurance and to deal with immediate welfare needs
 12 not just housing needs.
 13 "▪ Due to the addressed nature of some of the
 14 resident[s] the quality of information being gathered to
 15 assess housing need is lacking."
 16 So you weren't copied in on that document there, but
 17 to give you the opportunity to familiarise yourself, and
 18 as we perhaps thought at the beginning, likely that
 19 housing assessments are being undertaken, and this is
 20 the feedback from those officers undertaking those
 21 housing assessments; correct?
 22 A. Yes.
 23 Q. Was this something that you were aware of on 17 June,
 24 these concerns being expressed in relation to Grenfell
 25 residents when housing assessments were taking place?

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1 A. No.
 2 Q. I want us to turn to another email, please,
 3 {RBK00002735}, which we've touched upon earlier, from
 4 recollection. This is an email we dealt with lower down
 5 in the thread, and if we look at the centre, where it
 6 says Andrew Carter, Saturday, 17 June, 7.59 pm, so just
 7 before 8 pm, you are copied in to this email, and we
 8 dealt with the thread earlier on, but this is the next
 9 matter which was mentioned in the thread:
 10 "Many thanks.
 11 "Mr Hasina also reported that he hasn't eaten in
 12 3 days. There has been suggestions from a few people
 13 that breakfast is available at the hotels but no other
 14 meals. Just a suggestion but is it worth contacting the
 15 hotels to confirm if other meals are available and will
 16 be covered?"
 17 Then Amanda Gill, further up in the thread, asks for
 18 a contact number to speak to the sender of that email,
 19 Andrew Carter.
 20 Again, were you aware of these matters? This is on
 21 18 June.
 22 A. The 17th -- this is from Saturday, 17th June.
 23 Q. Yes, correct, Saturday, 17 June, and the response from
 24 Amanda Gill is on the Sunday morning at 10.11.
 25 A. On Saturday I was in -- either in Westminster meeting

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1 with Barbara Brownlee, who was my equivalent in
 2 Westminster, who had also been asked to mobilise housing
 3 officers to go out and undertake those welfare checks.
 4 I was copied in to this email on Saturday evening, so it
 5 is very likely that I saw it, but I was still at
 6 Westminster till quite late, so I'm not sure whether
 7 I read it on Saturday evening, and on Sunday morning
 8 I very likely saw it, but I don't remember, to be honest
 9 with you, and I would have taken from the fact that
 10 Amanda saw that email that she was going to call Andrew
 11 and to address that issue.

12 Q. Just drawing this together, we've seen specific emails
 13 from colleagues from the tri-borough -- one from LBHF,
 14 one from Westminster City Council -- independently
 15 arriving at concerns regarding food, welfare,
 16 communication, with those who were placed in those
 17 hotels between four and six days after events on
 18 14 June.

19 Would you accept that this is a stark illustration
 20 that something had gone significantly wrong in the care
 21 that should have been provided to those in emergency
 22 accommodation?

23 A. I would say in certain instances there was definitely
 24 clearly a case that something had gone awfully wrong,
 25 that those people hadn't been provided with the food

1 and/or -- that they so desperately needed, and I'm, to
 2 be honest with you, horrified to read now that people
 3 were left in that situation, because I just didn't
 4 imagine for a moment that that was actually taking
 5 place. I thought we'd been very clear with the hotels
 6 about what people could and couldn't have, which we
 7 booked in, and expected that to be able to be
 8 communicated to the people that we had placed there.

9 I completely accept there was a lack of
 10 communication by RBKC to the people placed in hotels,
 11 but it was very difficult circumstances, and undoubtedly
 12 I can only say we should have done better.

13 Q. You mention that you're horrified, you mention certain
 14 instances where this occurred. Can I suggest that this
 15 was a pattern, not an isolated case where it went
 16 horribly wrong; isn't that correct?

17 A. I can't concur that from these emails that you have in
 18 front of me.

19 Q. I've given you the opportunity to respond.
 20 I'm going to move on now to the provision of
 21 financial support.

22 You've mentioned in your evidence that RBKC staff
 23 were providing financial assistance from the outset, and
 24 perhaps we could read paragraph 86 of your witness
 25 statement, which is at {RBK00035592/23}. If we could

1 read paragraph 86, this is what it says:
 2 "On 14 June, Housing officers started to give people
 3 money early in the day. Housing were their main point
 4 of contact, so it made sense for Housing officers to
 5 take care of this from the beginning. My team were
 6 given cash ... We were very aware that people would have
 7 no money on their person or limited access to funds. We
 8 put in place a policy that each household was to receive
 9 £500 for emergency funds in cash ... Then from the
 10 15 June at Westway, there was the facility to hand out
 11 more cash. I do not know the full details of the policy
 12 from the 15th onwards."

13 Can you help us in relation to that, was that the
 14 case, that there was an initial policy of £500, and then
 15 you're not really sure what happened from 15 June?

16 A. So there was an initial -- in terms of what happened on
 17 the 14th, I believe the team went up with enough cash to
 18 give people who were presenting to us a small sum of
 19 money, £50, so that they had something, and then it was
 20 discussed, and I believe it's mentioned in the minutes
 21 of the meeting, that they were to make available
 22 £1,500 -- £500 for emergency funds, cash being the
 23 easiest way to do that for people who may not have
 24 a bank account, may not have any of their cards or have
 25 any documentation to be able to access any of those

1 facilities that they may have. So people presenting at
 2 the Westway or coming to the Westway were able to be
 3 given that sum of money, and people were able to hand --
 4 and finance were arranging for that amount of money to
 5 be delivered to the Westway, and then people to be able
 6 to be given that money.

7 But, to be honest with you, I don't really know what
 8 happened after that. It was just: how can we make sure
 9 that people have some money in order to be able to buy
 10 the essentials for the first couple of days, and then
 11 afterwards it's not a housing department issue, it's
 12 a wider corporate issue of how we provide to help people
 13 in those early days.

14 Q. If we could look at {RBK00047576}, please. This is
 15 an email sent on 15 June at 18.26, we can see at the
 16 top, it's forwarded by Amanda Johnson to herself. So we
 17 can focus down on the email just below that from
 18 Daniel Smith, and that's at 18.26, and you are in the
 19 body of recipients, Laura Johnson. So on the evening of
 20 15 June:
 21 "We have arranged for an out of hours service for
 22 any urgently required cash collections that cannot wait
 23 until tomorrow.
 24 "...
 25 "The cashiers have already prepared batches of £500

1 ready for collection .”
 2 It talks about authorisation forms and, in essence,
 3 it appears to be that the money would be available from
 4 16 June at the Westway; is that —
 5 A. That would appear to be the case, yes.
 6 Q. Okay.
 7 There’s a reference in the email we just looked at
 8 which talks about a list of flat numbers, right in the
 9 middle there, when we are just talking about batches of
 10 £500. It talks about a list of flat numbers. Flat
 11 numbers, one would assume, relating to Grenfell Tower;
 12 is that correct?
 13 A. I believe so.
 14 Q. Can you help with this issue: was financial assistance
 15 initially limited to those living in Grenfell Tower and
 16 not including walkway residents?
 17 A. I don’t remember, to be honest.
 18 Q. If we could turn to {RBK00027735}, please, a document
 19 that we’ve seen already. This is the Grenfell residents
 20 action plan from your meeting on 15 June 2017,
 21 an internal document which you refer to in your
 22 statement at paragraph 51 {RBK00035592/13}.
 23 I wonder if we could scroll down, please, to page 2
 24 {RBK00027735/2}, and we will see “Finance”, and it says
 25 here:

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1 “ ■ Households to be given cash to cover living
 2 expenses.
 3 “ ■ Finance currently with Corporate Finance to
 4 arrange for cash to be made available.
 5 “ ■ Potential allocation of £1k per household.”
 6 So drawing it together, there’s fragments of
 7 information, trying to assist you when the policy was
 8 devised and implemented.
 9 It appears probably implementation more likely on
 10 16 June; is that fair ?
 11 A. It does appear to be the case, yeah.
 12 Q. And in terms of criteria , was there a criteria for
 13 allocating money?
 14 A. I don’t remember, to be honest with you. I’d have to
 15 see evidence of that to jog my memory.
 16 Q. Okay.
 17 In relation to the inclusion or exclusion of those
 18 who were walkway residents in those first few days,
 19 14th and 15th, I’m just going to read a couple of
 20 examples and see if this assists your recollection as to
 21 whether that body of residents was excluded.
 22 Hicham Cherbika, in his statement, {IWS0001305/9},
 23 paragraphs 76 to 78, says this . He is a walkway
 24 resident :
 25 “We bumped into a Council worker, a lady who had

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1 just finished work for the day and I explained to her
 2 that we had ran out of money on the card and that
 3 I could not feed my kids. She said that if I needed
 4 money, she could give me some out of her own pocket.
 5 But I told her that I wanted what I was entitled to.
 6 I didn’t want to take her own money from her, that
 7 wasn’t right.”
 8 The implication was that he wasn’t able to get any
 9 financial assistance formally from the council at that
 10 stage.
 11 I want to give you another example, please, and this
 12 is an example not from a bereaved, survivor or resident,
 13 but an example from one of your colleagues,
 14 subordinates, in fact, Veneeze Augustine. She has
 15 provided a statement to the Inquiry, and at the time of
 16 the fire , Ms Augustine was a homeless team manager,
 17 which we have referred to before when we were referring
 18 to one of the plans at the outset of this questioning.
 19 Perhaps we could open up her statement, please, at
 20 {RBK00035411/6}, please, paragraph 30. So this is on
 21 15 June, we can see from surrounding evidence, and she
 22 says this . These are during the checks:
 23 “Whilst at the Holiday Inn I visited a 87 year old
 24 lady from the walkways who was distressed as she did not
 25 have her purse with her and therefore had no access to

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1 money and could not buy food. The Holiday Inn only
 2 provided breakfast for those staying there and therefore
 3 it would be necessary for them to purchase food. I went
 4 to a cash point and withdrew some money from my own
 5 personal account to give to her — I cannot remember how
 6 much I gave. One of the social workers then spent some
 7 time speaking with her. By the end of the visit the
 8 lady seemed to be calmer and some of her concerns had
 9 been allayed. I also contacted social services to
 10 inform them about this lady.”
 11 Was this something that one of your housing team
 12 members raised with you, that there was an elderly
 13 walkway resident without financial support in a hotel on
 14 15 June?
 15 A. I don’t remember that being raised with me directly. It
 16 may well have been, but I don’t remember.
 17 Q. Would you acknowledge and agree that would be a matter
 18 of real concern?
 19 A. Yes.
 20 Q. Can you assist with what the process was, if any, in
 21 communicating that financial assistance was available to
 22 those affected on 14, 15, 16 and 17 June?
 23 A. No, the financial assistance was being developed, and
 24 I cannot remember what the process was for letting
 25 people know that there was financial assistance

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1 available to them. As I said, it was a very fast-moving
 2 situation, and people were being assigned social workers
 3 and welfare workers, and I can only presume now as
 4 a matter of hindsight that that information was relayed
 5 through that means. But there wasn't a written
 6 communication nor a social media communication sent out
 7 by the housing department to inform them of what
 8 financial assistance that there may be available to
 9 them.

10 Q. So in terms of presumptions and assumptions, you
 11 mentioned it being a fluid situation; it would only be
 12 if somebody had spoken to a housing officer who visited
 13 them on 15 June or word of mouth, quite frankly, that's
 14 the only way they would have found out; is that right?

15 A. Yes, I was not in charge of sending out information
 16 about the financial assistance that we were giving.
 17 What I was advising of was the financial assistance we
 18 gave people on the 14th as an immediate cash sum, and
 19 then talking to the finance department about what people
 20 needed as an emergency amount of money to tide them over
 21 until more formal arrangements could be made.

22 But, no, I was not responsible for communicating nor
 23 did I communicate or instruct anyone to communicate from
 24 RBKC exactly what the financial arrangements that were
 25 being developed were to the people who were staying in

1 the hotels.

2 Q. It flows from what you have just said that there's
 3 probably agreement with the next question, but RBKC, in
 4 their opening submissions again to this module, state
 5 that the council failed to provide the public with
 6 clear, consistent communications after the fire as
 7 a result, individual residents missed out on receiving
 8 support to which they were entitled.

9 In relation to that, do you accept that this was
 10 a fundamental failing in relation to the council?

11 A. Yes, I accept the council's opening statement and the
 12 way it has been phrased.

13 Q. I want to deal with a discrete but important issue,
 14 which is residents which were discharged from hospitals.
 15 A number of residents were in hospital, and then, in the
 16 passing days, some of those were discharged with nowhere
 17 to go.

18 I want to turn to an email, {RBK00001026}, please.
 19 It's an email dated 14 June, at the outset, at 07.41.
 20 We've touched upon this already, and I just wanted
 21 to revisit the third part of that email that you sent at
 22 7.41 to your colleagues:

23 "We are also setting up a protocol for those people
 24 in hospital who will be discharged and need to be
 25 rehoused."

1 Correct?

2 A. Yes, that's what I said.

3 Q. And there was a recognition at that stage that there
 4 needs to be some system in place to ensure that those
 5 vulnerable individuals by the very nature that they were
 6 in hospital don't get missed; is that correct?

7 A. That's correct, yes.

8 Q. Can you assist with what the protocol was for people
 9 being discharged from hospital?

10 A. No, I think that statement was drawn from -- I was
 11 obviously sitting in the BECC at that point, and had
 12 probably had a conversation with my colleagues in adult
 13 social care about where the responsibility lay for what
 14 we did. I'm not aware that the housing department ever
 15 actually set up a protocol for what happened for people
 16 who were being discharged from hospital. From
 17 recollection, I believe adult social care took that on
 18 board as something that they then -- they would then
 19 liaise with the hospitals about, and about -- all
 20 hospitals have social workers, and it would be for them
 21 to liaise with the social workers in the hospitals about
 22 what we did when people were discharged.

23 But we ourselves, I nor my team I don't believe set
 24 up a -- drafted a protocol for people being discharged
 25 from hospital.

1 Q. Let's look at paragraph 37 of your statement, please,
 2 {RBK00035592/9}, just to draw out what you've said. You
 3 say:

4 "The protocol for people being discharged from
 5 hospital was organised through Adult Social Care ... and
 6 Families' and [Children's] Services ..."

7 Which you've just said a few moments ago.

8 "They had social workers at hospitals to liaise with
 9 the hospital and families on what housing and/or support
 10 they needed when they were due to be discharged. ASC
 11 [adult social care] would then make this information
 12 available to Housing. We would then arrange For them to
 13 be placed in hotels."

14 So, in short, the protocol was that ASC would do
 15 that first contact, and they would inform you that there
 16 was somebody who was being discharged, and then that you
 17 would arrange a placement in hotels?

18 A. That was my belief, that that was the situation that was
 19 going to take place.

20 Q. Did that work? Is that what happened?

21 A. I can't remember, to be honest with you.

22 Q. Let's try and help your memory.

23 I'm going to give you a suggestion so that you can
 24 have that in mind when we're working through the
 25 documentation. I'm going to suggest that there was some

1 confusion and a lack of communication between your
 2 department and ASC regarding the procedures for
 3 providing housing for those discharged. So I don't
 4 expect an answer now, I'm going to try and assist your
 5 recollection by looking at some documentation.
 6 Let's look at {RBK00006745}. This is an email on
 7 16 June at 19.57, Amanda Johnson. You were not copied
 8 in:
 9 "Dear BECC
 10 "It would be good if we know about any people being
 11 potentially discharged from hospital in the short term –
 12 especially as we enter the weekend."
 13 So your senior colleague being proactive,
 14 ascertaining if anybody was going to be discharged;
 15 correct?
 16 A. Yes.
 17 Q. If we could turn to {RBK00011588}, please, at the bottom
 18 of page 1, this is an email the Inquiry's seen I think
 19 already, Michelle Scaife, 17 June, 14.23, so this is the
 20 Saturday, the weekend:
 21 "My understanding from a brief discussion with
 22 Amanda Johnson (housing) this morning is that anyone who
 23 will require accommodation at time of discharge needs to
 24 be flagged with them as soon as possible. Any
 25 information pertaining to family members that will need

1 housing with person for discharge will also be of
 2 benefit to housing. Apparently hospital teams are
 3 [directing] this information to housing or via RBKC ASC
 4 Community Liaisons ...
 5 "I think it would be helpful for us to all have one
 6 directive on this because at the moment there are a
 7 number of lists flying around and assumptions about who
 8 is doing what – Are hospital sending information direct
 9 to housing or is all information coming to us here at
 10 ASC and we pass it on to housing? Rob/Paul [Hargreaves,
 11 as we can see in the list of recipients] are you able to
 12 clarify what the message is that housing has given
 13 hospitals in terms of this or how hospital teams are
 14 currently working in term[s] of this matter?"
 15 Two different departments within RBKC, not seeking
 16 to attribute blame to any particular department here,
 17 but was it the case that information was falling,
 18 perhaps, between the two stools, between housing and
 19 between ASC, and some residents were discharged from
 20 hospital without RBKC knowing?
 21 A. That may well have been the case. It was my
 22 understanding that adult social care were dealing with
 23 it. I probably had a discussion with Amanda, and we had
 24 followed this up, but it sounds from this email that
 25 there wasn't clarity on who was dealing with the

1 discharge of people leaving hospital, and what we were
 2 seeking to do was to find -- to have clarity on that.
 3 Q. Yes.
 4 A. We were probably concerned that people might be
 5 discharged over the weekend period and that would be,
 6 you know, more difficult for us to deal with because
 7 there wouldn't be such a number of staff available.
 8 Q. As a general observation, Sue Redmond, who gave evidence
 9 yesterday, she was at London Borough of Hammersmith and
 10 Fulham and she held a pivotal role as the HALO, the
 11 humanitarian assistance lead officer, in those early
 12 days, she referred in her evidence to the Inquiry
 13 yesterday that there was confusion at times in these
 14 sorts of situations, and this was a product of different
 15 parts of the council operating as silos.
 16 In relation to that phrase, "operating in silos",
 17 was there an issue with different departments during
 18 this response operating in silos?
 19 A. I think all departments within the council were trying
 20 to do their very best in very difficult circumstances,
 21 and information was shared at the Gold meetings that
 22 were happening twice a day about what people were
 23 managing with and what help they needed. So, yes,
 24 people were operating on their own initiative, doing
 25 their own thing, but there was an opportunity twice

1 a day to come together and talk about those problems,
 2 and/or we were all available to each other, in that
 3 I knew Sue Redmond, I was sitting next to the
 4 tri-borough director of family and children's services
 5 during this time, and so there was an opportunity
 6 outside of the meetings to talk to me about any areas
 7 that there was fears, where there may not have been
 8 enough communication on.
 9 I was sitting in an open-plan office, with -- on the
 10 same floor as adult social care and children's services,
 11 so although people were all doing their own thing, there
 12 was plenty of opportunity to come and talk to me or me
 13 to talk to my colleagues about issues that needed to be
 14 resolved.
 15 Q. I'm going to move on to another topic.
 16 We know that on 16 June, the London Local Authority
 17 Gold resolution was activated. During the evening of
 18 16 June, you have mentioned at paragraph 77 of your
 19 statement {RBK00035592/20} that Nicholas Holgate asked
 20 you, together with your colleagues Amanda Gill and
 21 Rachael Dalton, to go to the Westminster BECC to meet
 22 with Barbara Brownlee. Barbara Brownlee was the
 23 director of housing at Westminster; is that correct?
 24 A. Yes.
 25 Q. What did you understand to be the purpose of that

1 meeting?
 2 A. I understood -- we had had a meeting earlier in the day
 3 which had been truncated because there had been
 4 an invasion of the Town Hall. We were evacuated from
 5 the Town Hall, and, as I say in my statement, it was
 6 a terrifying experience.
 7 At that meeting we were asked to go and meet
 8 Barbara Brownlee of the view that Westminster were to
 9 make the housing team available and offer assistance to
 10 RBKC, which I was more than happy to accept. The more
 11 people the better.
 12 Q. Scroll down to paragraph 80 {RBK00035592/21}, please.
 13 Thank you. We're on 18 June, and it says at this stage,
 14 third line:
 15 "I was informed at some point late morning or early
 16 afternoon by Nicolas Holgate that I was no longer
 17 leading the Housing effort and that [Barbara] Brownlee
 18 would be leading my team."
 19 Is that correct?
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. So that would be the Sunday, as you mentioned, you no
 22 longer were leading housing efforts.
 23 A. Yes. I believe the decision had been taken before that,
 24 but I wasn't informed until Sunday.
 25 Q. Just going back to that meeting on 16 June, that evening

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1 when you went to the BECC at Westminster to meet
 2 Barbara Brownlee for the first time, according to
 3 Amanda Gill, your colleague, at that meeting with
 4 Barbara Brownlee, RBKC were criticised for the response;
 5 is that correct? Do you recall that?
 6 A. I'm sure if Amanda recalls that -- I don't recall it
 7 particularly, but, yes, there was probably a general
 8 view that we were not doing as well as we could.
 9 Q. Specifically, paragraph 51 {RBK00044877/9}, it was
 10 replayed back to you and the other attendees that it was
 11 not appropriate to leave residents in hotels over the
 12 weekend, and that WCC, Westminster City Council, would
 13 be completing suitability assessments on Saturday
 14 morning. Does that assist your recollection?
 15 A. Yes, I mean, we went to Westminster on Saturday morning
 16 to meet Barbara and a group of officers at a housing
 17 office somewhere in Westminster, Lisson Grove, somewhere
 18 massively inconvenient, I have to say, and officers were
 19 going to be deployed to do assessments of people in
 20 their hotels. The more people who could help the
 21 better, to be honest with you.
 22 The assessments, as I understood it at that point,
 23 were really as a push from central government in order
 24 to be able to rehouse everybody within three weeks, so
 25 that was the driver behind it. Not necessarily welfare

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1 checks, but because central government had been
 2 convinced that it was possible to rehouse all of the
 3 people who were coming out of Grenfell Tower as
 4 survivors into accommodation within a three-week period.
 5 Q. Perhaps for context and to assist everybody, there was
 6 an announcement, is it right, on the late afternoon of
 7 16 June by the Prime Minister in relation to housing
 8 placements; is that correct?
 9 A. I believe there was, yes.
 10 Q. You mentioned that there was a guarantee that people
 11 would be rehoused in three weeks; is that correct?
 12 A. I believe so, yes.
 13 Q. In relation to that matter, where I've asked you
 14 a number of questions today about emergency
 15 accommodation -- and this is a different type of
 16 accommodation, and it's outside the scope of this
 17 module -- but in relation to this point, did that
 18 announcement have an impact on the ability of your
 19 department to operate?
 20 A. Yes.
 21 Q. And can you assist us what that impact was?
 22 A. Because the government had made a decision that --
 23 initially it was going to be two weeks, and then they
 24 extended it to three weeks -- all people were going to
 25 be made rehousing in three weeks, there became -- all of

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1 the efforts -- well, large parts of the efforts of
 2 the -- of my team were then to be directed towards
 3 assessing the needs of the people in hotels and the
 4 offers that we had received from other housing
 5 associations and other councils in order to place those
 6 families in that accommodation, and it was, if I may
 7 say, an enormous waste of everybody's time.
 8 I categorically stated, both on the Friday to the
 9 housing minister, when he came to see me, and anybody
 10 who would listen to me, that there was no way that we
 11 were going to rehouse everybody that needed rehousing
 12 within three weeks, because it was not the right
 13 approach to take to people who were traumatised and had
 14 come out of the most awful situation. What they needed
 15 was a considered and thoughtful response about what we
 16 would offer them and where they would like to live.
 17 People were in absolutely no fit state to make decisions
 18 about where they wanted to live and what they wanted.
 19 What they needed was a compassionate and considered
 20 response. What they didn't need was a target from
 21 central government that wasn't achievable.
 22 Q. Okay.
 23 I'm going to move on, if I may, to another document,
 24 {RBK00049580}, please. This is an email between your
 25 housing team members, Rob Shaw, Claire Wise, on 17 June

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1 at 7.03. So this would be the morning after the meeting
 2 with Barbara Brownlee.
 3 Could I just help you with some of the context, if
 4 that's okay, and read out that email, please. So it
 5 says this:
 6 "Amanda, Laura and Rachael attended a [Government]
 7 Gold meeting last night. We've been told Westminster
 8 are taking over from us, because we have been deemed
 9 ineffectual. Yep. Extremely valid criticism of the
 10 RBKC central command however, raised at this meeting
 11 too. Don't say anything yet. Amanda, Laura and Rachael
 12 have to head to Westminster this lunchtime so waiting
 13 for the official line."
 14 Claire Wise responds later on in the thread. At the
 15 top of that thread:
 16 "It is valid in some respects but it is shameful
 17 that we haven't been supported by London or national
 18 services. How are local authorities expected to have
 19 this expertise? There needs to be a centralised control
 20 team to be deployed to major incidents to guide local
 21 authorities to it. Fire brigades have it. Every single
 22 person tried their absolute best. Housing and planning
 23 staff should not be coordinating this. It needs major
 24 expertise. Frustrating and upsetting."
 25 I just want to explore a couple of matters which are

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1 opinions expressed by your colleagues.
 2 Do you agree with the opinion that the criticisms
 3 made in relation to RBKC central command at the meeting
 4 you were at were valid?
 5 A. Yes, in some respects, that it was an incredibly
 6 difficult situation. It was a national disaster, which
 7 perhaps when you're in the middle of it you don't really
 8 appreciate how big it is, because you are in it, trying
 9 to deal with it and manage the results from it. But,
 10 of course, other people are standing on the outside of
 11 it and making very different judgements. So whereas
 12 I can quite understand why people found us to be
 13 ineffectual, all we thought was that we had tried our
 14 very hardest, and we had booked hundreds of hotel rooms
 15 and placed people in lots of accommodation, and we were
 16 definitely thinking about what the next step was. So it
 17 felt quite harsh, but I can understand how people drew
 18 that conclusion.
 19 But it was — if I may say, it was a national
 20 disaster. It wasn't an RBKC disaster, it was a national
 21 disaster, and when you're in the middle of that, it was
 22 utterly shocking to see how people stepped back from
 23 RBKC. London Gold was enacted, which was great, but it
 24 is a very difficult situation when the national
 25 government are briefing against you, and you just don't

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1 know where to turn.
 2 Q. You described it as a national disaster, and I want to
 3 deal with the final topic, which is your assessment of
 4 the adequacy of the response by RBKC.
 5 Perhaps we could turn to paragraph 89 of your
 6 witness statement {RBK00035592/24}, please. Under the
 7 heading "Adequacy of the Response":
 8 "The emergency planning response by RBKC should have
 9 been better. It did not adequately meet the needs of
 10 either the families whose lives were devastated by the
 11 fire or the local community who were also horribly
 12 affected by the events of the 14th of June."
 13 In relation to that, do you stand by those comments?
 14 A. Yes, I do.
 15 Q. "However, I think it should be acknowledged that this
 16 was an unprecedented event and I believe any borough
 17 faced with managing a response to a fire of this
 18 magnitude and loss of life of this scale would have
 19 struggled to provide the level of help and assistance
 20 required."
 21 Again, is that your view?
 22 A. Yes, it is.
 23 Q. If we could go to paragraph 93 {RBK00035592/25}, please,
 24 to put your assessment in complete context:
 25 "The people so terribly [a]ffected by the events of

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1 the 14th June were let down by central government. They
 2 did not appear to have any emergency planning function
 3 to put into place in the event of a disaster such as
 4 this."
 5 Again, is there anything you want to say in relation
 6 to that comment about the involvement of central
 7 government?
 8 A. No, I think I've set it out very clearly. They didn't
 9 appear to have any emergency planning that they could
 10 contribute towards the council with. I understood
 11 afterwards about London Gold. But at the time, central
 12 government's response seemed to be one of asking for
 13 figures about how many placements we had made, not
 14 offering help or assistance.
 15 Q. I want to revisit a final matter which you mentioned and
 16 I asked you about earlier on in the narrative, which is
 17 at page 6 of your statement {RBK00035592/6}, that's
 18 paragraph 24. It's a view you say that you arrived at
 19 after events and not at the time:
 20 "RBKC was not sufficiently prepared to deal with
 21 a fire that was so devastating and of such a significant
 22 impact."
 23 Why did you form that opinion?
 24 A. I would say that was fairly self-evident. I don't think
 25 that, as I've said at the end of my statement, any local

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1 authority was really equipped to prepare with something
 2 which was a national disaster and needed to be dealt
 3 with on a regional or national basis. It was caught in
 4 the eye of a terrible, terrible storm, and it took some
 5 time to appraise and assess what had happened, and
 6 that's very hard to do once you're dealing with events
 7 and just trying to cope with an unprecedented level of
 8 both media interest and a highly traumatised community
 9 which had just witnessed something that nobody should
 10 ever have to see.
 11 So, no, I don't think RBKC was sufficiently prepared
 12 to deal with a fire of this scale and this disaster.
 13 I don't think any local authority would have been able
 14 to deal with it. That's not to say that it couldn't
 15 have been dealt with better at the time by a local
 16 authority like RBKC, but we just weren't in a position
 17 to manage the scale of the disaster as it unfolded.
 18 MR KEATING: Ms Johnson, they're all the questions I have at
 19 this stage for you.
 20 Mr Chairman, there have been a number of suggested
 21 questions which have flowed through.
 22 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: It would be probably sensible,
 23 wouldn't it, to take the afternoon break at this point
 24 anyway?
 25 MR KEATING: Yes.

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1 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Ms Johnson, as you know, we have to
 2 have a break at this point so that counsel can check
 3 that nothing has been overlooked, and so that others can
 4 suggest questions that perhaps we ought to put to you,
 5 so we'll break now until 3.20, and then we'll come back
 6 and see if there are any more questions that we need to
 7 ask you.
 8 THE WITNESS: Okay, thank you.
 9 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: I think, as before, please don't
 10 talk to anyone about your evidence while you're away.
 11 All right? Thank you very much.
 12 (Pause)
 13 I think that ought to give you long enough.
 14 MR KEATING: Yes, thank you.
 15 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: If you need more time, just let us
 16 know.
 17 MR KEATING: I will do. Thank you.
 18 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.
 19 (3.06 pm)
 20 (A short break)
 21 (3.20 pm)
 22 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Right, Ms Johnson. Well, we'll see
 23 if there are any more questions.
 24 Yes, Mr Keating.
 25 MR KEATING: Just one follow-up question, Ms Johnson, if

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1 I may, in relation to when you were talking about the
 2 three-week announcement in relation to — was it your
 3 phrase — permanent housing?
 4 A. Yes, or to be placed — follow-on housing, perhaps.
 5 Q. Follow-on housing. I want to be precise as to the
 6 terminology.
 7 A. Yeah.
 8 Q. So in relation to follow-on housing, and you mentioned
 9 in evidence that you thought that was wholly
 10 inappropriate in terms of a period of time; is that
 11 correct?
 12 A. Yes.
 13 Q. So we have displaced residents placed in emergency
 14 accommodation, ie hotels, in those early days; we've got
 15 this three-week announcement in relation to placing
 16 those affected in follow-on housing, which you thought
 17 was wholly unrealistic; what did you consider or did you
 18 consider what the correct interim approach would be?
 19 A. I — so, as I explained earlier in my evidence, I'm
 20 really aware of how few social housing units there are
 21 in RBKC which are available in any one year. I'm even
 22 more aware that there's 50,000 people in temporary
 23 accommodation in London — maybe more now, that was
 24 five years ago — and there is a huge problem with
 25 homelessness and a lack of social housing. So I was

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1 very aware that there was going to be a very limited
 2 number of available housing units to be able to offer
 3 people who were coming — who needed rehousing after
 4 Grenfell.
 5 I was very aware as well that people didn't just
 6 need to be popped in the first flat that became
 7 available. That wasn't the right approach. There was
 8 a lot of offers coming in from housing associations and
 9 other local authorities, but whether that would be
 10 something that the people who needed rehousing wanted
 11 was an entirely different matter, and quite rightly.
 12 They should be given time and space in order to be able
 13 to make decisions, and I just didn't and couldn't see
 14 how people who had been through such an awful traumatic
 15 experience could possibly be asked to make a decision
 16 about where they wanted to live or what type of housing
 17 they wanted to live in, in such — in a period straight
 18 after the fire. And I knew that the type of
 19 accommodation that we'd been offered, other
 20 social housing units across London, probably wouldn't be
 21 what people wanted.
 22 So I didn't have an alternative to where to go from
 23 hotels and what happened before people were permanently
 24 housed, but I did rather suspect that people wouldn't
 25 want to be just bunged in a tower block in Wandsworth

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1 and told, "You'll be all right there for a couple of
 2 years until we find you something permanent". What
 3 people really probably wanted was something entirely
 4 different, which is quite a personalised service, where
 5 people considered what their wants and needs were, and
 6 quite rightly, you know, kind of some thought and
 7 consideration about where they wanted to go next. And
 8 that may well mean that people stayed in hotels for
 9 a longer period than anybody ever envisaged at the
 10 outset, but moving people and then moving people again
 11 and then moving people again is just awful. It's awful
 12 when you haven't been through a disaster, but even more
 13 awful when you have.

14 But I also knew it's a very difficult problem to
 15 solve, because there just aren't enough social housing
 16 units in London and the south east, so supply was always
 17 going to be difficult in the wake of overwhelming
 18 demand, not just from the wider housing waiting lists of
 19 all boroughs, but also from people who needed to be
 20 rehoused, who needed a thoughtful and considered
 21 approach. And I said on the Friday that I thought it
 22 would probably take around two years to rehouse
 23 everybody, and I think it probably took about that
 24 length of time.

25 Q. Finally, Ms Johnson, in relation to events between

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1 14 June and those days when you were involved up until
 2 17 June, is there anything now that you would have done
 3 differently?

4 A. Gosh, yes. If -- I would have made it a priority to
 5 communicate, communicate, communicate with all of the
 6 people who had been placed in hotels. I didn't realise
 7 at the time that people had such a lack of information.
 8 I suppose I was dealing with events as they arose, as
 9 was my team, in terms of placing people, cordons, a huge
 10 amount of my time was spent answering press enquiries
 11 asking for information. But actually, now being able to
 12 step back from it and looking at it with hindsight,
 13 actually what people really needed when they came out of
 14 there was they needed people to come round and see them
 15 straight away and be able to talk to them and just run
 16 them through what was happening, and really explain,
 17 you know, kind of how we were managing that situation.
 18 We just didn't have the manpower, and we probably didn't
 19 think it through in careful enough detail about what
 20 people really needed after they'd come out of that.

21 So that's what I would -- that's my reflection on
 22 that, is that people really needed a great deal more
 23 communication and understanding and information from the
 24 local authority than was available, and that's what
 25 I would definitely do different.

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1 MR KEATING: Ms Johnson, it only remains for me on behalf of
 2 the counsel team to thank you again for attending today,
 3 and we've got no further questions. Thank you.

4 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Ms Johnson, it's right, of course,
 5 that I should thank you for coming a second time to give
 6 evidence to the Inquiry, albeit on a completely
 7 different area of our investigations. We are,
 8 of course, very grateful to you for making the time to
 9 come and give your evidence. It's been helpful and very
 10 interesting to hear what you have to tell us, and so, as
 11 I say, we are very grateful to you.

12 Thank you very much, and you're now free to go, of
 13 course.

14 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much, Chair.

15 (The witness withdrew)

16 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much, Mr Keating.

17 Now, we have another witness coming, but not until
 18 tomorrow; is that correct?

19 MR KEATING: That's correct. Mr Millett will be calling
 20 Mr Holgate, the former town clerk, tomorrow.

21 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, very good. Well, thank you
 22 very much.

23 So at that point we will close for today and we will
 24 resume the hearing tomorrow at 10 o'clock in the
 25 morning.

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1 MR KEATING: Thank you.

2 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.
 3 10 o'clock tomorrow, please.

4 (3.30 pm)

5 (The hearing adjourned until 10 am
 6 on Thursday, 5 May 2022)

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