OPUS₂

GRENFELL TOWER INQUIRY RT

Day 273

May 5, 2022

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Thursday, 5 May 2022

SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Good morning, everyone. Welcome to 4 today's hearing 5 Today we're going to hear from the former town clerk 6 of Kensington and Chelsea, Mr Holgate. 7 Yes. Mr Millett. 8 MR MILLETT: Yes, Mr Chairman, good morning. Good morning, 9 members of the panel. 10 I now call Mr Nicholas Holgate, please. 11 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you. MR NICHOLAS HOLGATE (sworn) 12 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much. Please sit 13 down, make yourself comfortable. 14 15 (Pause) 16 Right. 17 Yes, Mr Millett. MR MILLETT: Yes. 18 Questions from COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY 19 20 MR MILLETT: Mr Holgate, first of all, good morning to you. 21 22 Q. Can I start by thanking you very much for coming to 2.3 the Inquiry and assisting us with our investigations. 2.4 We are very grateful to you. 2.5 During the course of your evidence, a number of 1

1 things. 2

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(10.00 am)

First, if I ask a question that you can't hear or don't understand or want me to rephrase, I can do that.

Second, could I please ask you to keep your voice up so that the person who sits to your immediate right and is typing can get down your evidence clearly. Don't nod or shake your head; you have to say "Yes" or "No", as the case may be.

9 A. Yes.

Q. We will take breaks during the course of the morning and 10 11 the afternoon, but if you need a break at any other 12 time, we can take a break. All right?

Now, you've made a number of statements to the Inquiry, two of which relate to the aftermath of the fire . Everything that we're going to be examining together will appear on the screen on your desk in front of you.

Can I show you first two statements. You have given us your first aftermath witness statement to the Inquiry at {RBK00035426}. That's dated 27 September at the foot of it, at page 10, if we can go there, please, and there is a signature. Is that your signature?

23 A. It is.

24 Q. Thank you.

The second aftermath statement is at $\{RBK00063176\}$.

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1 That's dated 21 January 2021, and if we could go.

2. please, to page 7, you can see a signature there. Yes?

A. Yes

4 Q. Can you please confirm that's your signature as well?

5 A. It is.

6 Q. Have you read both of these statements recently?

7 A. I have.

8 Q. And can you confirm, please, that their contents are 9

10 A. I think there is one error in the first statement, which

is that recently, I think, while looking at other

12 material, I gathered that there was actually a form in

13 the contingency plan for invoking London Gold, and

14 I think in my first statement I say that, as it were, 15

a conversation is enough. So I think I got that wrong.

16 Q. Right.

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17 Now, let's turn to your background and 18 qualifications and look at your first aftermath statement, and let's take this as quickly as we can. 19

20 Page 2 {RBK00035426/2}, paragraph 6, where you touch

21 briefly on your work experience.

22 Summarising it, is it right that you worked in 23 central government, first employed by HM Treasury in 2.4 1984 as a management accountant, and you held that role

2.5 for some 20 years?

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A. I held a number of roles within the civil service for, 1

2 I think, 24 years, yeah.

3 Q. 24 years, right.

4 And from 2004 to 2008, you held the role of chief 5 operating officer.

6 A. Sorry, I was embracing the two, yeah.

Q. Right, fine. But 2004 to 2008, you held the role of 7 8 chief operating officer at the Department for Culture,

9 Media and Sport, I think, didn't you?

10

Q. Yes. In 2008, you joined RBKC as executive director for 11 12

finance, information systems and property. That's

13 paragraph 6.

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Q. Yes. Then in 2013 you became the interim chief 15

16 executive, alongside your role as finance director; is

17 that right?

18 A. Yes

19 Q. And then in December 2014 that position became permanent

and you became known as the town clerk.

21 A. Yes.

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Q. Yes. Was that linked together with your role as finance 2.2

23 director?

24 A. It was until April 2017.

MR MILLETT: Now, at paragraph 5 of your statement, on

1		page 1 ——	1		Did you find that having the dual role of town clerk
2	SIE	R MARTIN MOORE—BICK: I'm sorry, just a moment.	2		and finance director up until April 2017 adversely
3		R MILLETT: There is a noise.	3		affected your ability in any way to establish yourself
4		R MARTIN MOORE—BICK: I don't know who has got something	4		as and to carry out your role as town clerk?
5	311	broadcasting on.	5	۸	I did not think that it did, but of course I could be
6		Anyway, can we all make sure we've got our phones	6	Λ.	wrong about that.
7		and anything that might make a noise switched off,	7	0	Now, for the purposes of the civil contingencies
8		please. Thank you very much.	8	Q.	framework, to which I wish to turn now, is it right
9		Yes, on you go, Mr Millett.	9		that, first, a local authority is a category 1
	1/1		10		
10	IVII	R MILLETT: Thank you.		٨	responder?
11		Page 1, paragraph 5, and then over the page on	11		Yes.
12		page 2 $\{RBK00035426/1-2\}$, you set out the role that you	12		And you understood that at the time?
13		occupied as town clerk, and just taking that in summary,	13		Yes.
14		it's right, I think, that you were responsible for the	14	Q.	Yes.
15		overall stewardship and good governance of the borough	15		In simple terms, did you understand that category 1
16		to ensure the high quality of services; yes?	16		responders are those organisations at the core of
17		Correct.	17		emergency service response, which would include the
18		And that included the management of senior staff.	18		emergency services, local authorities and NHS bodies?
19		Correct.	19	Α.	Yes.
20	Q.	And I think you were responsible to $$ that is	20	Q.	And as such, category 1 responders have a number of
21		answerable to $$ the leader of the council, who was at	21		legal duties and responsibilities , including maintaining
22		that stage Nicholas Paget—Brown.	22		plans to ensure the ability to perform their functions
23	Α.	That's right.	23		in an emergency?
24	Q.	And also his cabinet; yes?	24	Α.	Yes.
25	A.	That's right.	25	Q.	Yes.
		5			7
1	Q.	Did you report to him directly?	1		Now, we've heard that the contingency management
2	Α.	I did.	2		plan for RBKC was drafted by and, as it were, owned by
3	Q.	Right.	3		David Kerry, the RBKC contingency planning manager; yes?
4		In addition to the town clerk role, it's right,	4	Α.	Yes.
5		I think, that from December 2014 you also continued to	5	Q.	And you understood that the current version at the time
6		hold the role of finance director, as you say, until	6		of the Grenfell Tower fire was the one dated
7		April 2017. What happened to that role in April 2017?	7		30 April 2015; yes?
8	A.	It was awarded to Kevin Bartle, who had been working at	8	A.	I wouldn't know off the top of my head which was the
9		the council for a little while before then.	9		current version.
10	Q.	I see. Did you have a handover with him?	10	Q.	Right.
11	A.	Well, he had been performing many of the duties and had	11	A.	But they did bear close resemblances to one another.
12		been a finance director at, I think, at least one other	12	Q.	Right.
13		London borough, so he was well appraised of the duties.	13		Do you agree that that was an important document
14	Q.	Right.	14		which set out how RBKC should respond in the event of
15		As you tell us later in your statement at	15		an emergency to which it applied?
16		paragraph 51 on page 10 {RBK00035426/10}, you resigned	16	Α.	I do agree.
17		your role as town clerk on 21 June 2017.	17		Yes.
18	Α.	Correct.	18		Looking at your own role in an emergency, at
19	Q.		19		paragraph 8 of your first statement, if we go to page 2
20	Α.		20		{RBK00035426/2}, let's just pick that up —
21		Therefore, you would hold —— is this right? —— the sole	21	A	Yes.
22	٦.	position of town clerk —— that is to say town clerk	22		—— you tell us that, as town clerk, you would be
23		only — for some three months.	23	۹.	Borough Gold as part of the council's contingency
24	A	Yes.	24		management plan; yes?
_		Yes.	25	۸	That's correct.
25	Q.	res.	23		

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- 1 Q. And that's also known as Council Gold. A. I'm not sure that I would have known that it was 2 3 Q. We've seen references to it as Council Gold, and you 3 4 understood that expression? 4 5 5 Q. Now, if we go to the contingency management plan itself, 6 6 we find that at {RBK00028631}. Let's look at the first 7 7 page. There it is, 30 April 2015. 8 8 9 Just looking at the first page of this -- and it's 9 10 10 a giant document with lots of bits -- was this a document with which you were familiar? 11 11 12 12 A. I was familiar. I had a copy of certainly the main part 13 of it at home. I re-read it each time a new issue --13 14 I was conscious of a new issue. 14 15 Q. You say you had a copy of the main part at home. 15 16 16 A Yeah 17 17 Q. So was it a hard copy on your --18 A. Indeed, a hard copy, and in the office, of course, 18 19 19 If you go to page 39 in the document 20 2.0 21 $\{RBK00028631/39\}$, please, we can see part 5.2, "Roles 21 22 22 and Responsibilities (summary)", and the functions of 23 2.3 Council Gold are there set out. You can see them in the 2.4 2.4 first 25 A. Yes. 25 9 1 Q. Well, certainly in the first box, and there are four 1 2 bullet points there: 2 3 ". Determine the Council's strategic course of 3 action.
- 5 " • Lead the Strategic Coordinating Group. " • Liaison with Leader and other Members. 6 7 " • Attend, or be represented at, multi-agency Strategic Coordinating Group meetings." 8 9 Now, at the time of the fire, did you understand 10 those to be your responsibilities as Council Gold? 11 12 Q. You did. 13 Let's then turn to the next topic: training and 14 capacity. 15 Is it the position that before the events of 16 14 June 2017, you had no experience yourself of acting 17 as Council Gold in a major emergency? 18 A. That's true.

19 Q. I think you tell us that at paragraph 14 on page 32.0 {RBK00035426/3}. 21 Were you aware at that time that, in relation to 2.2 23

emergency or contingency plans, RBKC, as a category 1 responder, was under a regulatory duty to carry out training and exercises for the purposes of ensuring that those plans were effective?

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a regulatory duty, but I would certainly have accepted that it was very good and recommended practice to do so. Q. Right. Dealing with your own training, then, first, as at June 2017, how would you assess or describe the sufficiency of training that you had undertaken to act as Council Gold in the event of an emergency? Was it sufficient or was it insufficient? A. Well, I would say it was insufficient, with the benefit

of hindsight, plainly insufficient . I can explain what I had done, but I think the direct answer to your question is that it was plainly insufficient .

Q. Now, let's just look at what you had done

I think in the opening statement put in by RBKC to this module of this Inquiry, the council says that you had received some training, but acknowledged that "it was not of itself sufficient for the role of Council Gold", and I think you have agreed with that, but it doesn't represent the totality of the training that you had received.

Perhaps we can take this more shortly: can you tell us what training you had received yourself to act as Council Gold?

Certainly. So there is a very modest induction process

that my understanding was all London borough chief executives, or nearly all of them, went through as part of being on a rota to be London Gold, should there be a call for a London Gold operation, and that would only have been a few hours at most. It essentially involved a visit to a facility which might have hosted a London-wide operation, were one to be needed and were there to be a local authority chief executive in a Gold role

In addition to that, as you know, we did have a practice in 2015. I attended as an observer one day of the Unified Response exercise, which was, I think, quite an impressive London-wide attempt to rehearse for a major disaster.

It is just worth recalling that, in terms of large disasters, I think the one that animated colleagues and I most over that period was the risk of terrorism. So I think the Bataclan massacre in Paris had been the previous year, and the most cohesive thing I had attended before the fire was a conference on lessons to be learned from that terrible series of events. Indeed. if you looked through my mailbox with a fine enough tooth comb, you would find a couple of things that I was pursuing coming out of that conference.

25 Q. Can you remember what those things were?

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- 1 A. I can, but, to be brutally honest, I'd rather not talk 2 about them, because I don't know whether the council 3 completed one or both, and one of them would be about 4 preventing a tragedy, another one would have been about mitigating it. 5
- Q. In the context of terrorism? 6
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. I see. So are you alluding to a potential national 9 security issue?
- 10 A. Yes, it would have been a national issue if such a thing 11 had occurred that I was doing work in a very small way 12 to try and make less likely.
- 13 Q. I follow. We may come back to the detail of what you've 14 just told us in a moment.
- 15
- Q. Before we do, let me just examine Mr Kerry's evidence 16 17 about training.
- 18 We heard from him in his statement that, before 19 June 2017, the date of the most recent Gold Group 2.0 training on strategic command, control and recovery was 2.1 14 September 2015, so some 21 months before the fire; is 22 that right?
- A. I think that is right. 2.3
- 2.4 Q. That was a two-hour tabletop discussion or desktop exercise; yes?

- 1 A Correct
- 2 Q. In relation to the duration of that training, Mr Kerry's 3 evidence was that it wasn't sufficient; he'd asked for a four-hour slot -- this is at $\{Day268/78:2-8\}$ -- and 5 then he says at first he was told that he couldn't do 6 it, no need to do it, then he was given two hours, and 7 then he told us that at the end of the session, as he
- left, you told him, "Next time you need longer". 8
- 9 A. Yes.
- 10 Q. Do you recall that?
- 11 A. Well, I don't recall it, but it may save time to say 12 that I cannot off hand think of anything that any of the 13 RBKC witnesses have said to you over the last few days 14 with which I would take any issue at all. So if 15 David Kerry said that, then I said it.
- 16 The gloss I would put on it is that I was not sure 17 what value this sort of exercise would be, but after 18 two hours, I was persuaded that such training was 19 worthwhile.
- 2.0 Q. Thank you. That's very helpful.
- 21 Just to be clear, in the light of that last answer. 2.2 can we be confident that you have followed the RBKC 23 witnesses' evidence?
- 2.4 A. I've followed anything that has any reference to me in 25

- 1 Q. Right, okay. I think I understand the parameters of 2 your answer
- 3 A. Thank you.

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- 4 Q. Was it the position that senior management were not 5 prepared to make the time available and commit to
- 6 contingency management training, or was there some other 7
- A. I think that you're right to say that there was 8 9 sometimes resistance to setting aside significant time 10 for such training.
- 11 I think it is worth pointing out -- and I'll try to 12 do this only once, but it's a very important background 13 fact $\,--\,$ that from 2010 onwards, there were very large 14 reductions in the recurrent funding of local 15 authorities . From my other statement, I think the figure for the borough by the time of 2017 was of the 16 17 order of 28%. And despite such a reduction, it was our 18 very great determination to keep all the normal services 19 of the borough going as well as possible, if not 2.0 actually to improve upon their quality, because that was 21 the demand -- the rightful demand -- both of residents
 - So I was not completely unsympathetic to -you know, I understood the pressures that senior managers across the council were under.

and of councillors.

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- 1 Q. To what extent, in light of that answer, was there 2 consideration given to how to comply with the fixed
- 3 statutory obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act
- and its regulations and the statutory guidance on the
- 5 one hand, whilst allowing for these budget exigencies on 6 the other?
- 7 A. I can't remember an explicit discussion of the tension
- 8 between those two things
- 9 Do you remember -- and this is a more general 10 question -- any discussion at London-wide level within
- 11 the LRP or the LRF, or other bodies sitting within the
- 12 London or pan-London resilience structure, about whether
- 13 some boroughs were doing better than others in relation
- 14 to being able to fund their civil contingencies
- 15 obligations?
- 16 A. I don't recall being party to any such discussion in
- 17 those fora. I do not think, in the case of the
- 18 Royal Borough, funding was an insurmountable issue; it
- 19 was the lack of funding for all the valuable services 2.0
- that we performed day after day which led to a shortage 21 of time and great pressure on senior managers that I was
- 2.2 alluding to.
- 23 The pan-London body that I did attend fairly 2.4 diligently were meetings of the chief executives of most 25 of the boroughs that took place every five or six weeks,

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I would think. There were occasionally items there, so for instance the conference on terrorism that I referred to, or feedback from or plans for the Unified Response exercise, but, again, I do not recall any discussion in that forum of the kind that you're mentioning.

Q. Now, let's go back to the contingency management plan, {RBK00028631/11}, paragraph 1.8, please. You can see there the heading "Training and exercising" at the top.

Was it the case -- well, let me read it to you. It says:

"This Contingency Management Plan shall be exercised at least once annually. The exercise shall test and validate the activation of the plan, the operation of the Borough Emergency Control Centres (BECC), the links between the BECCs and Council services."

Now, with respect to exercising the contingency management plan, I think you would agree that RBKC wasn't exercising it annually.

19 A. I would agree.

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- Q. And so you would agree not complying with what was set out in its own plan?
- 22 A. I would agree.
- 23 Q. Looking at the next passage in 1.8:

"Training shall be offered in each year for staffwith designated emergency response roles, and shall take

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- the form of specific training sessions, seminars and talks, and workshops."
- In relation to training for staff with designated
 emergency response roles, such as Council Gold, do you
 accept that that was less frequent than each year?
- 6 A. Yes.
- 7 Q. Why was that?
- 8 A. I don't think there's a good reason for that lack.
 9 I think that we did have occasional emergencies, so some
 10 part of the emergency provision was tested in reality,
 11 but it did not directly involve my unavoidable
 12 participation as Council Gold.
- Q. Were you aware, as David Kerry has told us, that for the
 role of Council Silver, in other words those who were to
 lead the operational response, there was no formal
 training programme at any time before the Grenfell Tower
 fire?
- 18 A. I wasn't aware of that. What I would have said is that
 19 I set some store by David's considerable experience and
 20 I think evident expertise in the matter, and I would
 21 have thought that he would have offered —— been offering
 22 training to an adequate level, and I think he did take
 23 part in such things, but I wouldn't be able to tell you
 24 the quantum or the sufficiency of it.
- Q. Let's then turn back to the topic of training on London

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- 1 Local Authority Gold and London Resilience.
- 2 You refer in your statements to LLAG, London Local
- 3 Authority Gold. Is it the position, just in general
- 4 terms, that that is a pan-London mechanism which can be
- 5 activated in response to an emergency, drawing on the
- $\,$ $\,$ $\,$ resources of all 33 local authorities , led by a single
- 7 chief executive?
- 8 A. Correct.
- 9 Q. Yes, and those arrangements again, I think this is $10 \hspace{1cm} \text{correct and common ground } -- \text{ are underpinned by}$
- something called a Gold resolution; yes?
- 12 A. Yes.
- Q. Which was I think a document passed in 2011. Were youfamiliar with that?
- 15 A. I've certainly read it.
- 16 Q. It was passed on behalf of each London Borough Council 17 and the City of London.
- Now, you mention in your statement that you were inducted into the role of London Local Authority Gold —this is at paragraphs 47 and 48 of your statement (sic)
- 21 [{RBK00035426/3}, paragraph 14], there is no need to go
- 22 to it, we can take it quickly —— but that was as part of 23 your role as town clerk, was it?
- 24 A. It was me taking my place in that rota, yes, correct.
- 25 Q. Right. Do you remember when you were inducted into that

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- 1 role?
- A. Not precisely, no. I think it ... I would have thought
 it would have been 2014 or 2015.
- 4 Q. Right
- Now, let's go to {RBK00036752}. What I'm showing you is an email chain in June 2017, before the fire.
- If we go to page 2, please, foot of that page, and go over to page 3 {RBK00036752/3}, this is an email
- between your PA, Sally Spriggs, and David Munroe; yes?
- 10 A. Yep.
- 11 Q. And David Munroe is, as is said clearly there, a London
- Resilience support officer . It's an email from him to
- you, inviting you, I think, to a strategic response
- training session for chief executives on 20 June.
- 15 A. That might well have been what I was referring to.
- 16 Q. Yes.
- 17 Now, had you had that type of training before
- 18 June 2017?
- 19 A. I think so, yes.
- 20 Q. When was that?
- 21 A. Well, I don't remember. It would have been in my diary,
 - and I would have attended it with Tony Redpath at the $\,$
- $23\,$ facility in -- just over from Lambeth Bridge, that would
- $24 \qquad \quad \text{have been activated for a London-wide emergency}.$
- 25 Q. Right.

2.2

Now, if we go back to page $2 \{RBK00036752/2\}$, 2 please, we can see the response from your PA, 3 Sally Spriggs, back to David Munroe, second half of the 4 page. This is 5 June 2017. She says: "David 5 6 "Under the 'Event Prerequisites' it refers to 7 a number of documentation that delegates should familiarise themselves with. Nicholas wants to have 8 9 a look at these but I don't have access to either of the 10 sites mentioned. Are you able to send me the documents 11 or send me a link so that I can print these off." 12 The materials were listed at the top of the thread. 13 Take this from me, they were -- well, we can go to the top of the thread, if you like. Can we go, please, to 14 15 the top of page 1 {RBK00036752/1}, we can see what they 16 were. Third email down, she specifies them, and they 17 18 "- London Local Authority Gold (LLAG) Arrangements 19 and the Gold Resolution 2.0 "- Strategic Coordination Protocol ... $"-\ {\sf London}\ {\sf Resilience}\ {\sf Partnership}\ {\sf Plan}\ {\sf Summaries}.$ 21 22 "- London Recovery Management Protocol. 2.3 "- Humanitarian Assistance Framework." 2.4 Those are the documents. Had you seen any of those materials before?

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- 1 A. I think I had, yes --
- Q. Were you familiar sorry.
- 3 A. So certainly the first one, probably the second one.
- 4 I'm not sure about the others.
- 5 Q. Did you have them to hand?
- 6 A. I doubt I would have done.
- 7 Q. Right. Can you explain why you hadn't seen the ones you 8 hadn't seen before?
- 9 A. I don't think I've got a particular reason why
- 10 I wouldn't have seen them. I don't recall anyone
- alerting me to the need to look at them.
- 12 Q. Right.
- Do you know how your PA was aware of what documents specifically to ask for?
- 15 A. No.
- 16 Q. Did you ask her to seek out this list of --
- $17\,$ $\,$ A. I'd be very surprised if I'd been able to compile that
- 18 list .
- 19 Q. Right. So she must have got it from somewhere.
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 Q. Do you know where?
- A. Well, probably from Mr Munroe, if he knew thecomposition.
- 24 Q. Right.
- Now, you can see from this email that David Kerry is

1 the addressee of this email.

- 2 A. Yeah.
- 3 Q. You can't tell us whether there was a conversation 4 between them or where she got that information from?
- 5 A. No.
- 6 Q. No.

7 Now, our Inquiry records show, and particularly

 $\\ 8 \qquad \qquad \mathsf{Mr} \; \mathsf{Sawyer's} \; \mathsf{witness} \; \mathsf{statement} \; \mathsf{at} \; \big\{ \mathsf{GOL00001349/4} \big\},$

paragraph 14 -- we don't need to go to it -- that you

10 were on call on a number of dates in 2016, both as

11 primary and as secondary London Local Authority Gold.

- 12 Do you remember that?
- 13 A. Yes.

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- 14 Q. Were you actually called on when you were on call?
- 15 A. I don't believe so, no.
- 16 Q. Right.
- How could you be on call to act as London Local
 Authority Gold without knowing what the arrangements
- 19 were and without being familiar with --
- 20 A. Well --
- 21 Q. -- the resilience partnership plan summaries --
- 22 A. Sure.
- Q. -- and the other documents you hadn't seen?
- 24 A. Sure. Well, that implies that at an earlier date
- 25 I would have read these documents. It is quite possible

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that I would have done. All that I can remember of the training is the visit to the location from which we

3 might have had to run a London Gold operation.

So, I mean, I think I've confused myself slightly.

I hadn't realised the dates on these emails. I mean,

 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{6}}$ these emails are obviously, you know, just before the

7 fire . The London Gold induction that I had was some 8 time before that, as I said in response to one of your

8 time before that, as I said in response to one of your 9 earlier questions, and if that training had embraced

these documents, then I would have read those documents

11 at that time, But they do not, as it were —— I would not

be able to tell you the content of those documents now.

13 Q No So sorry just to be clear at the times when you

Q. No. So, sorry, just to be clear, at the times when youwere on call as LLAG, you were familiar with or had

access to the last three documents in that five-document

list , but not at the time of the proposed training in

17 2017?

18 A. Correct. That seems to me the most likely thing. But

19 it would be checkable. Somewhere in the exchanges of

 $2\,0\,$ email, particularly around the time that I did the

21 induction, there should have been some evidence of these

22 documents being sent over.

- 23 Q. Right
- $24\,$ $\,$ A. I mean, the danger is, if they're bulky, they would have
- been sent in hard copy and, therefore, there wouldn't be

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- 1 an email trail necessarily.
- 2 Q. But can we leave it this way: that at the time of the
- 3 fire, although you may or may not have had a previous,
- 4 historical familiarity with them in your role as
- 5 London Gold, they weren't imprinted on your brain or sitting on your shelf? 6
- 7 A. Correct.
- 8 Q. Yes, I see.
- 9 Now, looking back on the internal and external 10 training that you received yourself, do you consider now 11 that you were suitably equipped to deal with 12 an emergency of the scale of the Grenfell Tower fire?
- 13 A. Undoubtedly not.
- 14 Q. In which particular ways did you or do you consider 15 yourself ill -equipped?
- A. I think that it is possible that in the several years in 16 17 which I served as a chief executive. I picked up the 18 notion that the chief executive in many cases was very 19 dependent upon the staff that were steeped in training. 2.0 I think I'd also picked up some belief or some view that 21 because there were a great variety of crises that could 22 hit, actually preparing in-depth for each and every one
- 2.3 of them was more than boroughs could cope with, and 2.4 of course the wrong conclusion to draw from that is that

one had to put up with being a generalist who would

- 1 suddenly be confronted with a very specific disaster,
- 2 and I think that that was the quandary that certainly
- 3 I felt we were in, and maybe others would have felt that
- 5 Q. Right. Can I just see if I can understand that answer.
- Was the problem that because of the infinite variety 6 7 of kinds of major disaster that could befall London and 8 befall RBKC in particular, you had no choice, or you 9 felt at the time, to be anything more than a generalist? 10 Is that what you're saying?
- 11 A. That's pretty much it, yes.
- 12 Q. Right, I see.
- 13 Let's then turn to the question of capacity.
- 14 As at June 2017, had you yourself undertaken any 15 kind of assessment to satisfy yourself as chief 16 executive that RBKC, as a category 1 responder, had 17 sufficient trained staff to undertake specialist roles 18 in an emergency, such as Council Silvers and officers to
- 19 operate the BECC?
- 2.0 A. No.
- 21 Q. Why not?
- 2.2 A. Because I would have hoped that people who were more in 23 touch with the specific needs would have alerted me if

26

- 2.4 we were in deficit .
- 25 Q. So reliance on negative reporting?

A. Well, I think that if I had formed a view that that

- function was poorly staffed or that the people there 2
- 3 lacked expertise or professional skills , then I would
- 4 have been much more on alert. But I actually thought
- 5 that the council was quite blessed with the staff that
- we had. The core team had not suffered reductions in 6 7 the spending pressures that had befallen a lot of other
- parts of the council, and I felt confident that if there 8
- 9 were shortcomings, I was creating a culture,
- 10 a management culture in the council, where people would

11 feel able to say and put me on alert.

And indeed, if I may make one other point, in 13 successive funding rounds each year, the cabinet member 14 for finance and I were very anxious to find areas where 15 the general pressure relentlessly to make economies had

16 to be overcome in the opposite direction if there was

17 something that we really couldn't economise on any 18 further

19 Q. Was it not the position that, in or as at June 2017, you

20 knew there was an insufficient number of trained staff 21 to deal with a contingency?

2.2 A. I think the history is that David Kerry had rightly

2.3 warned me that we had too few. We had attempted to

2.4 recruit some more, and the numbers had gone up, but then

2.5 they had come down again, and I cannot remember whether

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1 I knew the last bit or not, but I would expect there to 2

be email evidence to that effect.

3 Q. You told us in your last answer that the core team had 4 not suffered reductions because of spending pressures,

5 and you felt confident that if there were shortcomings, 6

you had a culture where you could be alerted. 7 My question is: well, had you not been alerted to 8 the fact that there were shortcomings in staff capacity

9 in order to address a contingency?

10 I think that -- well, there's a distinction in my mind, 11 which doesn't sort of satisfy the question, but there's 12 a distinction in my mind between people paid full-time 13 to fulfil full —time or a very large part of their time 14 in an emergency planning role, and then others who 15 forewent their normal duties and became part of the

16 emergency planning team if required. So I'm referring 17 to the former group that I don't think suffered

18 reductions. The latter group I know had fluctuated in 19 number, and I certainly accept that, by the time of the

2.0 fire, there were too few of them.

21 Q. Right, thank you.

25

2.2 Let's just take the documents quickly and see what 23

24 Do you remember that the problem about staffing was raised with you as long before the fire as October 2014,

1		in a report written or prepared by David Kerry,	1		question. Was the decline in staff, as it were, the
2		entitled, "Emergency Staff Recruitment and Retention"?	2		rise and then the fall, something that happened betwee
3	Α.	That's right, and that's what I remember responding to	3		October 2014 and the first report from David Kerry we've
4		and trying to encourage more people to volunteer.	4		just seen, and January 2016, so 14 months?
5	Q.	Right. Let's just put that up so everybody can see what	5	Α.	I would think so.
6		we're discussing . $\{RBK00058038\}$. There is the report,	6	Q.	Right.
7		8 October 2014. In the box, "FOR DECISION":	7		Then if we turn over, please, to page 2
8		"The Council has insufficient trained volunteers for	8		$\{RBK00058008/2\},$ we can see David Kerry's response at
9		major incident emergency management roles in the Borough	9		the foot of page 2 to you.
10		Emergency Command Centre. Support from Executive	10	A.	Yeah.
11		Directors is sought."	11	Q.	"Nicholas
12		Then at page 1 lower down, paragraph 1.2, it says:	12		"Crisis Support Team.
13		"There is now a significant shortfall in the numbers	13		"Yes, this is a current concern.
14		of trained volunteer emergency management staff	14		"The Crisis Support Team is a group of volunteers
15		required. Traditional recruitment methods no longer	15		from across the Council who have been trained to provide
16		generate new volunteers. Demands from the 'day job' are	16		emotional support to people affected by a major
17		curtailing attendance at required training sessions and	17		emergency or incident in the borough. They will
18		emergency exercises. Support is now sought from	18		normally be deployed in the first hours of an emergency
19		Executive Directors."	19		most likely to a Survivor Reception Centre or a Friends
20		I'm assuming you saw that at the time?	20		and Relatives Reception Centre. The team will normally
21	Α.	I think so, yes.	21		work with people over 18 years old."
22		What did you do about it?	22		Then on page 3 {RBK00058008/3}, his response refe
23		Well, I supported attempts to recruit more volunteers.	23		to the BECC staff and the two roles that he says are of
24		Right, and did those succeed?	24		concern, and you can see the heading:
25		I think they did temporarily, and then the numbers fell	25		"1. Borough Emergency Controller — the Tactical
		29			31
1		away again.	1		Commander (Silver)."
2	Q.	Right.	2		And he sets out the figures there, ideally ten
3		We come then to January 2016. Do you remember at	3		senior managers.
4		that stage David Kerry expressing concerns to you about	4		Then "BECC Officers", and over the page to page 4
5		the numbers of staff in the role of Borough Silver and	5		{RBK00058008/4}, the numbers. He says:
6		incident response officers?	6		"Two roles in the BECC:
7	A.	I wouldn't remember it off the top of my head, but if	7		"BECC Supervisor (manages the BECC staff and
8		David told me so, then that must be the case.	8		systems) — currently 7 volunteers (I would like at least
9	Q.	Right.	9		10).
10	•	Let's look at {RBK00058008}. This is an email chain	10		"BECC Officers currently 11 volunteers (I would
11		in January 2016 where he raises this particular problem	11		like at least 20)."
12		with you.	12		Then he says:
13		If we pick it up at the foot of page 4	13		"A big concern with our BECC staff, apart from the
14		{RBK00058008/4}. In the usual time—honoured way, the	14		difficulty in recruiting new volunteers (over the past
15		email has become separated from its heading at the	15		couple of years there have been recruitment drives
16		bottom of the page. This is from you to David Kerry,	16		within Policy and Partnerships Unit and to staff
17		copied to Tony Redpath, 19 January 2016. Over the top	17		generally via KCBriefly) is their availability to attend
18		of page 5 {RBK00058008/5}:	18		training."
19		"David	19		You see that?
20		"A colleague at my 'brown bag' lunch today suggested	20	٨	Yep.
21		that there had been a decline in staff willing to form	21		Now, very little appears to have changed from his report
22		part of a crisis support team from across the Council.	22	ų.	in October 2014 and his email in January 2016, apart
		Is this recognisable as a concern and correct; if so,	23		from perhaps the recruitment drive to which you've
23					
24		what shall we do about it?"	24		referred and to which he refers here. Is that right?

Now, just pausing there, you were posed this

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 $25\,$ A. I think that's probably fair, yeah.

1 Q. Then if we go, please, to page 1 of this email run that the overall numbers of trained emergency staff at 2 {RBK00058008/1}, you respond, 26 January 2016, to him: 2 RBKC had continued to decrease? 3 3 A. I've no reason to disagree with him. 4 "Belated thanks: so you will kindly seek recruits to 4 Q. Right. the former and let Tony and me know if that works. I am 5 5 Do you accept, looking back on it, that the lack of happy to bang a drum for BECC personnel. PI[ease] can 6 staff had a huge effect on the ability to train and 6 7 you do a draft extolling the roles?" 7 exercise RBKC contingency plans? What action did you take to ensure that there was, A. It probably would have affected the capacity to train 8 8 9 in the end, the necessary number of BECC staff? 9 other people, yes. 10 10 A. Well, if there is further email traffic with such Q. Yes. a draft, then I would have used that to try and attract 11 11 We've seen from other material provided by Mr Kerry 12 that the overall number of borough controllers or BECC 12 some volunteers. 13 13 Q. Let me show you what Mr Kerry told us in his oral staff reduced from 24 to 20 by August 2016 and then down 14 14 to 16 by December 2016. Those are the numbers. Do they 15 Can we please have the transcript up for 15 surprise you? {Day268/66:2}. I'll just wait for this to come back up 16 16 A. I wouldn't have known them at the time. They don't 17 17 surprise me, given what we now know. on to the screen. 18 A. Yeah. 18 Q. Therefore, would you accept that there remained a significant shortfall in the number of Council Silvers 19 (Pause) 19 20 Q. We can live with what's there. 20 trained to occupy that role as at June 2017? 2.1 Mr Holgate, can you see the text with the moving 2.1 A. Yes. I mean, that is compared to the number that David 22 hand? 22 thought was needed, and I would look to him to assess 2.3 23 A. I think so, yeah. Yes. such a number. 2.4 Q. If the hand stops moving, I can read it. 2.4 There were three, compared with the recommended ten that It says: 2.5 Mr Kerry had recommended. 33 1 $^{\prime\prime}\text{It}\,$ had been the philosophy at RBKC for as long as 1 A. Mm-hm. 2 I was there to not have people appointed to roles and be 2 Q. Now, let's then turn to a different topic: minimum 3 on rotas, and certainly not to pay them to be on 3 standards for London. standby, but to seek volunteers for these roles. 4 We've heard some evidence about this, that RBKC, in "There are other reports I had done in past years, 5 5 relation to its category 1 responder duties, fitted into 6 one or two reports over the years, expressing the same 6 the London Resilience Forum; yes? And this is 7 7 concerns and considerations.' a structural point. Do you agree with that? 8 That's all I need from that. 8 A. Yes 9 9 ${\sf Q}.\;\;{\sf Do}\;{\sf you}$ also agree -- and we've seen plenty of structural

Why was there a philosophy not to pay staff to undertake these important roles as in other boroughs, such as LBHF?

12 A. Well, I think we were probably stuck with a practice
13 that we should have changed. I mean, I gather
14 the council does now pay people for fulfilling these
15 roles and we should have made that switch sooner.

16 Q. Right. I mean, it wasn't a problem about money, it was 17 just a problem about adhering to old practices; is 18 that --

19 A. I think so, yes.

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Q. I see. I see. And Mr Kerry told us that the position as at January 2016 in numbers terms was pretty much at rock bottom, he said, and didn't substantially improve thereafter. That's what he told us at $\{ \text{Day268/70:}10-11 \}.$

Is that right? Was it the position by June 2017

22 A. Yes.

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23 Q. And at the time of the fire was chaired by

Q. And you knew that at the time?

local authorities panel; yes?

material about this, so we can take it quickly -- the

London Resilience Forum, or LRF, is split up into sector

panels, which represent the interests of different

Q. And you understood that that included, did you, the

Q. And that brought together 33 local authorities across

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24 John Barradell —

London: ves?

sectors; yes?

A. Yes

A. Yes

A. I think so.

25 A. Yes.

Opus 2 Official Court Reporters

- $1 \quad Q. \quad -- \text{ from the City of London}.$
- 2 A. Correct.
- Q. Yes.
- 4 Were you aware at the time that RBKC resilience
- 5 capability was governed by something called the minimum
- $\,$ 6 $\,$ standards for London, or MSL, which was set by the local
- 7 authorities panel?
- 8 A. I don't think I'd have been able to volunteer that
- 9 information to you at the time. I might have been aware
- 10 but I don't recall it.
- 11 Q. Very well.
- Now, let me just show you a document, {LFB00119219}.
- This is the draft minimum standards for London 2016.1,
- $14 \hspace{1cm} \text{which was in operation, even though it's called a draft}\,,$
- 15 as at June 2017.
- Were you familiar, as at June 2017, with this
- 17 document?
- 18 A. It rings a bell, but I wouldn't be absolutely certain.
- 19 Q. No. I mean, the photograph on the front cover is --
- 20 A. Striking.
- 21 Q. -- striking.
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. And you would probably recall that; yes?
- 24 A Mm
- 25 Q. And you don't recall it?

- 1 A. I wouldn't be able to tell you what was in it now.
- Q. Right. So you'd seen it, but you can't recall it?
- 3 A. I think I probably had, not only for the picture, but
- 4 also the sort of logo at the top. As I say, it does
- 5 ring a bell.
- 6 Q. Yes. That logo, the multicoloured --
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. set of Olympic—looking rings all in a string appears
- 9 on a number of different London Resilience documents.
- 10 A. Mm
- Q. And the LAP logo on the right—hand side is something wewill also be seeing as we go through.
- But if we go, please, to page 7 {LFB00119219/7},
- 14 paragraph 9, do you remember that these minimum
- standards included an assessment of the operational
- $16 \hspace{1cm} \hbox{response and contingency plans?} \hspace{0.2cm} \hbox{You can see} \\$
- paragraph 9, "MSL Assessment".
- 18 A. Yes, I wouldn't have remembered that.
- 19 Q. Right.
- 20 Did you know that the most recent assessment before
- 21 the Grenfell Tower fire in June 2017 took place in
- 22 February 2016?
- 23 A. Right. I wouldn't have known that.
- $24\,$ $\,$ Q. Right. Did you know what the outcome of the assessment
- 25 was? Probably not, if ——

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1 A. No.

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- Q. -- you didn't know the fact of it.
- 3 Were you aware -- and I'm going to assume not, but
- 4 correct me -- that the RBKC scores included amber, which
- 5 meant operational but requires development, for four
- 6 particular areas: first, borough—level exercising;
 - second, humanitarian assistance; third, shelter; and
- 8 fourth, identification of vulnerable persons?
- 9 A. No, I'm sure I did not know that, because I think that
- 10 would have caused me some alarm.
- 11 Q. Whose job was it to report those deficiencies in the
- 12 assessments pursuant to the LAP requirements for minimum 13 standards?
- 14 A. Well, I would have thought it would be the staff
- 15 compiling our returns.
- 16 Q. Right. Was there a system in place within the RBKC
- whereby the results of those returns would be reported
- to you if they were significant?
- 19 A. I do not think I got regular reports of that material.
- 20 Q. Should you have done?
- 21 A. I'm sure I should have done, yeah.
- 22 Q. Does that indicate that there was a deficiency in RBKC's
- 23 oversight systems in relation to preparedness?
- 24 A Yes

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25 Q. Were you aware that, for the appointment of

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- 1 a humanitarian assistance lead officer , or a HALO, that
- that had scored red, which meant there was no
 - operational capability or plan in place?
- 4 A. No, I wasn't aware of that.
- 5 Q. Right. Would you agree that that role, the HALO role,
- 6 is a pivotal one in the event of a significant
- 7 emergency?
- 8 A. I would.
- 9 Q. And that is -- is this right? -- because the holder of
- that role requires knowledge of the council emergency
- 11 plans and the wider London Resilience humanitarian
- 12 assistance framework?
- 13 A. Yes
- 14 Q. Yes.
- Did you yourself appreciate the importance of the
- 16 role of a HALO?
- 17 A. I think I did.
- 18 Q. Before the fire?
- 19 A. I think I did, yeah.
- $20\,$ $\,$ Q. Did you ever ask yourself or anybody else in your
- organisation: "Do we have one, and if we don't, why
- 22 don't we?'

2.4

- 23 A. No. I think, again, if I'd joined the dots, I mean,
 - I would obviously have been very concerned, but I think
- I knew of the role in the abstract and I -- if you'd

- 1 have asked me the question, (a) I would have asked David 2 or Tony Redpath, and (b) I'd have assumed it would be 3 someone in the adult social care directorate.
- Q. Well, now, under (b), of course, adult social care was
 subject to the tri borough arrangements, wasn't it?
- 6 A. Yes
- Q. So had you asked did it occur to you, perhaps, that
 if you'd looked at that role, you may very well have
 ended up identifying somebody who was not employed by
 RBKC at all?
- 11 A. Well, the idea of the tri –borough service was for staff
 12 to be flexible across all three boroughs. So even if
 13 their contract of employment had been with one of the
 14 other two, they would have owed duties to Kensington and
 15 Chelsea as well
- 16 Q. How common were tri-borough arrangements across London?
- 17 A. They were unusual. They were an innovation that began
 18 to be planned in 2010 in response to the reductions in
 19 funding of local authorities that I mentioned earlier.
- 20 Q. Right.

From your knowledge of the LAP, was it common or universal, perhaps, that a HALO would be appointed from an adult social care department?

A. No, I wouldn't have necessarily — I wouldn't know where
 HALOs came from across London at large.

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- 1 Q. Right.
- What I'm really seeking to get at is whether in
 those cases where a HALO would or should be appointed
 from adult social care, there were some boroughs where
 the HALO would come from within the borough, but some
 boroughs, in the unusual case of a tri—borough
 arrangement, where they wouldn't, RBKC being one of
 them. Can you help with that?
- 9 A. Well, I think what you have is an innovation in the form
 10 of tri borough working for which not necessarily every
 11 consequence had been worked through from the perspective
 12 of something like resilience .
- Q. Do you remember yourself being involved in any
 discussions about whether the tri-borough arrangements
 for sharing, pooling adult social care, meant that there
 was an uneven distribution of the ability to have
 an in-borough HALO across London?
- 18 A. No, I don't remember any —
- 19 Q. You see the point I'm driving at?
- 20 A. Yes, I do.
- Q. Do you accept that, structurally, RBKC as a body and its
 senior management and decision—makers had no system in
 place whereby they knew that the council was in the
 respects I've identified, the amber and the red, failing
- to live up to the minimum standards for London set by

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- 1 the LAP?
- A. I do. As far as I can recall, I do not recall suchan item appearing on any collective management agenda.

Day 273

- 4 Q. And in terms of governance and scrutiny, that was
- 5 a failing on your part and on the part of the council.
- 6 A. I agree.
- 7 Q. Thank you.
- As you told us earlier, I think you accept all the admissions made by RBKC in its written opening in this module
- 11 A. I do.
- 12 Q. That would include the admission that there should have
 13 been more internal reporting up the management chain and
 14 should have been greater oversight, both of the team
 15 itself and the council's emergency response
 16 capabilities?
- 17 A. I absolutely accept that.
- 18 Q. Yes

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Let's then go to {RBK00058010}. This is an email
run of March 2017, so a little bit less than
three months before the Grenfell Tower fire, and it is
an exchange between David Kerry and Tony Andrews of
Westminster City Council, and we've heard a bit about
Tony Andrews from earlier witnesses in this module, and
it involves a query about the current state of play with

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humanitarian assistance board issues. It's a lengthy
 email from David Kerry to Tony Andrews:

"Hi Tony

"Sorry I was not able to speak by phone today — a rather hectic day, dashing from meeting to meeting."

Then there are four topics set out there. I just want to focus on topics 3 and 4:

"3. Emergency Rest Centre Staff: We have very few Council staff trained as Emergency Rest Centre managers and staff. We will, of course, call upon the British Red Cross under the MoU for ERC staffing, but this is, of course, not a guaranteed service. Our last recruitment drive (using KCNet) did not result in any new volunteers. Training for Council staff volunteers would be carried out for us by British Red Cross under the MoU."

Now, is it right that the last recruitment drive, the one that occurred, I think, between October 2014 and January 2016, hadn't produced new volunteers for emergency rest centre staff?

- 21 A. I've no reason to doubt that.
- Q. Looking at item 4, then, "Identifying VulnerablePeople", David Kerry says:
- "This remains a considerable concern at RBKC. Asdiscussed at the last meeting of the Humanitarian

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1 Assistance Board, RBKC does not have a good system for 2 accessing details of vulnerable people out-of-hours." 3 Then he goes on: "Unlike LBHF, we do not have a Welfare Bronze on 4 5 Rota. Unlike WCC, we do not have a Tony Andrews on 24/7 call." 6 7 Then he goes on about it being raised, and also the possibility of a tri-borough Welfare Bronze rota. 8 9 This issue, it appears, was something to be raised 10 at senior level . My question for you is: were you aware 11 of that issue, the problem he identifies here? A. I don't think I was. Q. Should you have been?

- 12
- 13
- 14 A. I think I should have been, yes,
- 15 Q. Again, does that point to a failure of oversight and a structural deficiency in RBKC's management line 16 17 reporting?
- 18 A. I'm not entirely sure. I think that there is a balance 19 between the person at the top continually prodding all 20 those reporting to him or her, and a certain duty on 2.1 those in possession of important information like this 22 to keep emitting it to people who are accountable for it
- 2.3 in the end. Q Yes

2.4

2.5 A. And, you know, plainly that didn't work often enough.

- 1 And I think what one might say in David Kerry's defence
- 2 is that probably he felt that this was a thing he was
- 3 banging his head against a wall on, and maybe he decided not to carry on doing that.
- $\ensuremath{\mathsf{Q}}.$ Can you account for why RBKC did not have a good system 5
- for accessing details of vulnerable people out of hours? 6
- 7 A. No. I can't.
- Q. Can you account for why RBKC did not have a Welfare 8 9 Bronze on rota, as its neighbour borough did?
- 10 A. If that is an absolute requirement, then we should have 11 had such a person on the rota. I would not have known,
- 12 off the top of my head, that that was an absolute
- 13 requirement or a desirable requirement.
- 14 Q. Can you account for why RBKC, unlike Westminster, its 15 other neighbour borough, did not have a Tony Andrews.
- 16 a humanitarian assistance expert, on 24/7 call?
- A. No. Again, we should have done, plainly. 17
- 18 Q. Do you agree, in the light of that, that RBKC, at least
- 19 in those respects, was ill-prepared and incapable to 2.0 meet its duties as a category 1 responder at the time of
- 21 the fire?
- 2.2 A. I think ill -prepared. I don't know whether we could
- 23 have made up by other means. I don't know how incapable 2.4 we should have been even with those deficiencies.
- SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Can I just ask you: was this

a matter of a combination of identifying the persons who 2 would fill these roles and perhaps paying them to do it?

3 A. I agree that, as the council I gather has now done, we 4 should have taken the bull by the horns and made it much easier for people. 5

> I think probably we should have gone even beyond that, with the benefit of hindsight, and we should have said: "Your role" -- you know, to a number of people showing some willingness to take on such

10 a responsibility , "Your role will only be 80% or 90%11 what it was before, and now it will be 10% or 20% of 12 an emergency planning nature, and maybe your pay will 13 need to be adjusted accordingly".

14 So, you know, we should have had a more structural, 15 sort of reliable answer than just relying on volunteers.

16 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you.

17 MR MILLETT: Now, I want to turn, please, next, to the 18 events of 14 June 2017 and to start with the initial 19

2.0 In your statement you tell us that you first learnt 21 of the fire at Grenfell Tower just before 3 am, when you 22 woke up and heard the headlines; yes?

2.3 A. Yes

2.4 You go on to tell us at paragraph 18 of your statement 2.5 {RBK00035426/4} that you immediately rang David Kerry,

- 1 the RBKC contingency planning manager, to get an update;
- 2. yes?
- 3 A. Yes
- 4 Q. And thereafter spoke with the leader and with
- 5 Laura Johnson, who was director of housing; yes?
- 6 A. Correct.
- 7 Q. And also, I think, officers from the media and
- 8 communications team.
- 9 Α. I think so.
- 10 Q. At what time do you recall attending the scene?
- 11 I think it would have been around 4.30, probably.
- 12 Right. And why do you remember that particularly?
- A. Well, because it -- I think I was busy on email and the 13
- phone for a while. I had retrieved the copy of the 14
- 15 emergency plan in the flat, and then after a while my
- 16 wife got up and we agreed that it would be a very
- 17 sensible thing to go and look at the circumstances
- 18 around Grenfell Tower. So we probably set off around
- 19 4.00, something like that.
- 2.0 Q. Right.
- 21 Now, at paragraph 19 of your statement —— let's go
 - to that, please, at page 4, your first statement.
- 23 A. Yes

2.2

- 24 Q. Well, {RBK00035426/4}.
- 2.5 You say at paragraph 19, having explained the visit

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1 to Harrow Youth and Community Club and the Rugby 2 Portobello Trust:

3 "At any one time, there were two to four 4 rest centres in various stages of helping survivors. 5 From what I saw, I was content that the rest centres were functioning properly. It was also clear that the 6 7 Council's response would involve many Council services

and staff." 8 9 What did you see to lead you to the conclusion that the rest centres were functioning properly?

- 11 A. Well, I remember seeing one that had capacity but wasn't 12 being fully used, and I remember at least one other that 13 was very busy indeed, but they, you know, seemed to be 14 helping people
- 15 Q. Did you see anybody from the council at any of those 16 places?
- 17 A. No. I didn't.

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- 18 Q. Did you ask yourself why not?
- 19 A. I think I knew that there would have been the local 20 authority liaison officers prompting, where necessary, 2.1 and encouraging people to open up facilities, but
- 22 I didn't expect them to be numerous, nor did I expect
- 2.3 other council staff to be there that early, because,
- 2.4 I mean, a very critical fact which I think you covered
- 25 with Laura Johnson yesterday is that the great majority

- of borough staff live outside the borough, sometimes 1
- 2 quite a long way away, and therefore there would have
- 3 been a lag in people making arrangements to come to the
- borough much earlier than usual and getting there.
- 5 Q. That was a known problem, though, wasn't it?
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. If an event happened outside office hours for which the
- contingency arrangements were required to be activated, 8 9 then that was a known problem.
- 10 A. Yes, and I thought that we had some measures that would 11 have mitigated against that risk.
- 12 Q. And what were those measures?
- 13 A. Well, I thought that we had agreement with several 14 voluntary organisations in North Kensington for such 15 an eventuality.
- 16 Q. What, to take the place of RBKC staff?
- 17 A. Well, to be rest centres in the short term.
- 18 Q. No, but what I'm really asking you is access to your own
- 19 paid staff at short notice in the event of a major
- 2.0 emergency happening between the hours of, let's say,
- 21 5.30 pm in the evening and 9.30 or 9.00 am in the 2.2 morning
- 23 A. Well, I think I could move both the evening time and the 2.4 morning time to reduce the range when there would be
- 25 significant staff, because people worked very hard in

normal days, let alone days like that tragedy. But it

- is, I'm afraid, true that, you know, most staff were not
- 3 living in or particularly close to the borough.
- Q. Yes. I'm sorry to harp on. What consideration was 4 given to putting in place arrangements to have staff on hand, on call, in an emergency which happened out of 6

7 normal routine office hours?

8 A. Yes, I think there were telephone trees, essentially. 9 There were arrangements whereby people would ring their 10 direct reports so the message would get out very quickly 11 that there was a crisis to deal with, and I think people 12 would then respond as best they could to come in as 13 early as they could in this case.

14 Q. Thank you.

> Now, you attended the scene and had seen first-hand the scale of the fire and the sheer number of people directly affected. What did you assess your immediate priorities to be at that time?

19 A. Particularly with my conversation with Laura Johnson,

20 I thought the most urgent thing was to, via our housing

officers and social workers, get practical support to as

22 many of the survivors as we could. So financial

23 support: non-financial support where, for instance,

2.4 someone needed a medical prescription and that needed

25 sorting out very quickly; and, of course, shelter, by

1 the time of the next evening.

- 2. Q. Does that tell us that your priority at that stage, that 3
 - very early stage, was the survivors?
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. Yes

6 What consideration did you give to those who were 7 not survivors from the tower but had been evacuated or 8 were in the process of being evacuated from the 9 walkwavs?

10 A. Well, really, much the same considerations apply to 11 them. I mean, the focus was the people who had had the

12 terrifying experience of being at risk -- direct risk

13 from the fire and who would probably have had to

14 evacuate their flats with little or nothing to help

15 them. But I think that quite quickly the borough tried

16 to do what it could for those laterally affected, as it

17 were, by the fire .

18 Q. And what about the families of those who were living in 19 the tower and needed information about their loved ones?

2.0 A. Well, I have to say that wasn't absolutely at the top of

2.1 my list. but I realise. of course, that it's a very

2.2 important service.

23 Q. Why wasn't it at the top of your list?

2.4 Because I was more worried about the people who had had

25 this terrifying experience and who needed to be

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- 1 supported as soon as we could get there.
- $2\,$ $\,$ Q. Now, at the time you were at the scene, I think the
- 3 staff present were limited to two LALOs, and I think 4 a third then attended later; yes?
- 5 A. Yes.
- ${\sf 6} \quad {\sf Q}. \;\; {\sf Nicholas\; Layton\; and\; Mike\; Rumble\; and\; a\; third.} \;\; {\sf Is\; that}$
- 7 correct? 8 A. I've no reason to doubt that.
- 9 Q. It's right, I think -- and correct me if this is
- 10 wrong -- that additional staff did not attend to assist 11 at rest centres until after 10 am that morning?
- 12 A. I thought that they —— at least some might have got
- there sooner than that, and plainly one would wish them
- 14 to have got there sooner than that. I don't know what
- obstacles, you know, each member of staff faced in order
- to get to somewhere where they could be of help as
- 17 quickly as possible, but I am sure that it was their
- intent to get there as well equipped as possible, as
- quickly as possible, and that they would have had to
- judge how to surmount the obstacles to do that.
- 21 Q. Do you think that lag of time until after 10 am that
- morning was acceptable?

 23 A. Well, it obviously isn't acceptable. If people begin
- a process that is absolutely horrifying and deeply
- 25 traumatising any time after about 12.30 or 1 o'clock in

- 1 the morning, it is a long time to cope before people
- come with a specific duty and some empowerment to help
- 3 you. Plainly that is a very long wait.
- $4\,$ Q. Do you accept that it was the responsibility of RBKC to
- 5 set up and to operate an emergency rest centre --
- 6 A. Yes. I do.
- 7 Q. within the meaning of the protocol?
- 8 A. Yes, I do.

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- 9 Q. And do you think that more staff could and should have
- been deployed earlier in order to assist at those
- 11 emergency rest centres?
- 12 A. Well, I think that that is a little difficult . But,
- again, it's a bit like the point the Chairman made
 - earlier . What we could have done is we could have had
- $15 \hspace{1cm} \text{more staff billeted closer to the borough or we could} \\$
- have paid them an allowance or something like that.
- But, you know, I'd be intrigued to know whether others
- $18 \hspace{1cm} \text{had different ways of solving it} \, . \hspace{.2cm} \text{I think the closest}$
- 19 we came to an answer was to have an understanding with
- voluntary bodies who had facilities , who had premises —
- $21\,$ so it wasn't just lack of staff , it was actually lack of
- 22 facilities . We had an office or two in
- North Kensington. We didn't ourselves own some large
- $24 \hspace{1.5cm} \text{space which would have been re-purposed automatically} \\$

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25 for this.

Q. Now, I'd like to turn next to the strategic

- 2 co-ordination group meetings. You cover that at
- 3 paragraph 10 in your statement, page 3 {RBK00035426/3}.
- 4 At paragraph 10 you say:
- 5 "Borough Gold would work closely with non-Borough
- 6 agencies to coordinate the response, notably the
- 7 Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG), of which I was
- 8 a member, and which was chaired by the
- 9 Metropolitan Police."
- 10 Do you accept that the core function of the SCG was
 - to create and maintain shared situational awareness,
- 12 among other things?
- 13 A. Yes

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- $14\,$ $\,$ Q. And the first SCG in relation to this incident was at
- 15 5 am. wasn't it?
- 16 A. I believe so.17 Q. Yes, and the second at 6.30; yes?
- 18 A Probably
- 19 Q. Well, my point is you didn't attend either of those, did
- 20 you?
- 21 A. No, I didn't know, I think, that they were occurring,
- and others, I think, attended on my behalf.
- 23 Q. You didn't know they were occurring?
- 24 A. I don't think so, otherwise I would have done my best to
- 25 take part.

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- $1\,$ $\,$ Q. Right. Can you account for why you weren't aware that
- 2 they were occurring, given that you were the chief
- 3 executive?
- 4 A. Well, I would have -- someone would have told me.
- 5 Q. Yes, and did they?
- 6 A. Well, I don't think they did, no. I think they -- it's
- 7 probably David, took it on himself to attend on behalf
- 8 of -- on my behalf, and, you know, I would not criticise
- 9 him for doing that. David at that stage was probably
- 10 the best junction box the council had available to bring
- 11 the council's perspective to the SCG.
- 12 Q. Yes, but should he not have told you of the fact of the
- meetings, if not the 5 am one, when you were still
- 14 perhaps going around familiarising yourself on scene,
- but at least the 6.30 one?
- 16 A. Yes
- 17 Q. When did you discover that those meetings had happened?
- 18 A. I daresay he would have referred to them when we met in
- 19 the Town Hall --
- 20 Q. Right.
- 21 A. around about 6.30 or thereabouts.
- 22 Q. Yes.
- 23 Let's pick that up in your statement.
- 24 A. Sur
- 25 $\,$ Q. Page 4 {RBK00035426/4}, please, paragraph 20. You say:

1 "I arrived at the Town Hall at about 6.00am and went document. 2 straight to the BECC. I recall that David Kerry and 2 A. Yeah 3 others were there." 3 Q. If you cast your eye down the list, about halfway down you can see: 4 Was that not an opportunity to attend this SCG 4 "Local Authorities: Nicholas Hollgate [misspelt] 5 meeting? 5 A. I think it would have been. As I say, I can't account (Kensington & Chelsea)." 6 6 7 for the fact that, you know, somebody didn't hunt me out 7 Along with Rebecca Blackburn, Stuart Priestley and 8 and tell me that it was taking place. 8 David Kerry; yes? 9 Q. No. Did you not even overhear the fact that it was 9 A. Yes. 10 10 taking place or see David Kerry go off to it? Q. So you were at the meeting. A. I don't recall doing so. It may well be that he was 11 11 A. Mm-hm. 12 12 doing something which seemed to be important that he Q. Now, let's just look at something else briefly. $\{GLA00000004\}$. This is the statement of Jon-Paul Graham 13 carry on doing. 13 Q. Now, others have given evidence -- well, there is 14 14 of the GLA. He is head of city operations. 15 contemporaneous evidence, notably an email from 15 If we go in that statement, please, to paragraph 41, Toby Gould at 8.04 -- and for reference purposes, that's 16 16 which we will find on page 8 {GLA00000004/8}, he covers 17 $\{GOL00000218\}$ — that says that "Nicholas Holgate was on 17 the strategic co-ordination meeting of 8.30. In 18 the 06.30 SCG via teleconference". I think you're 18 paragraph 41, he said in the second line of your 19 19 telling us that's not the case. attendance at that meeting that you: 2.0 A. I don't -- well, it is possible -- it's possible that 2.0 "... seemed very interested in my proposal [which 2.1 I was, but I don't recall ... I don't recall, as it 21 was one of liaising with RBKC about the Mayor's visits] 22 and insisted that RBKC be involved in any such 22 were, outputs of that meeting or exchanges at that 2.3 meeting which would have anchored me there. But. 23 arrangements. I was very surprised at this and it 2.4 I mean, you know, if someone else thinks I was there, 2.4 seemed, again, to reinforce RBKC's skewed priorities in 25 I'm reluctant to disagree with them. 25 the aftermath of the fire . Mr Holgate seemed to be more 57 59 1 Q. What did you do at the BECC when you arrived? 1 preoccupied on this call with minor issues such as the A. I think I wanted to get an idea from David and others 2 Mayor's proposed visit to the scene and the possible 3 there of their appraisal of the situation and tell them 3 attendance of Nicholas Paget-Brown (Leader of RBKC), what I thought was the priority. rather than more important strategic issues regarding 5 Q. Did you observe any problems, problems with the IT, 5 the handling of this crisis." problems with setting up the log? 6 Is that a fair observation or criticism? 6 7 7 A. Not at that point, no. I think -- I'm now aware that A. I think it's absurd. 8 O. Why do you say that? 8 there had been a problem or two, but I don't think it 9 9 was evident by the time I got there. A. Because it would have been -- it would have had a very. 10 Q. Right. 10 very modest importance, but in the sense that someone 11 When you did arrive, did anybody report to you? Did 11 like the Mayor was visiting, we would -- you know, it 12 anybody give you a sit rep, situation report? 12 would be a matter of courtesy to know and to be aware of 13 A. I think David would have done, yes. 13 it . But, you know, the idea that it was an important 14 Q. Now, you did attend the third SCG meeting at 8.30; yes? 14 issue compared with all the others is plainly absurd. 15 MR MILLETT: Yes, thank you. 15 A Mm-hm 16 Q. Let's look at the note, first of all, just to pin that 16 Mr Chairman, is that a convenient moment? down. $\{MOL00000014\}$. This is an email from Toby Gould. SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, if it suits you, I think it is. 17 17 18 I'm sorry -- yes, there it is: 18 MR MILLETT: Yes. 19 "Major Incident — North Kensington. 19 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well, Mr Holgate, as you were told, 2.0 "London SCG Minutes: 08.30, 14 June 2017." 2.0 we have a break during each session, and this is the 21 21 And you can see the time: you see that? time to have the morning break. We'll stop there.

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therefore, and resume, please, at 11.35.

SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: As I have said to all the other

witnesses, you no doubt know this, but I have to ask you

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THE WITNESS: Certainly

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A. Yes.

Q. And the attendees are on page 5 $\{MOL00000014/5\}$. Just

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for pattern purposes, the attendees of these SCG

meetings are always in a list at the end of the

1	not to talk to anyone about your evidence or anything	1		was better to bring in someone who was not familiar with
2	relating to it while you're out of the room.	2		the borough, who would undoubtedly have brought
3	THE WITNESS: Certainly.	3		a handful of London Resilience people with him or her,
4	SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right? Thank you very much.	4		and who would have had to set up and get to know, as it
5	Would you go with the usher, please.	5		were, not just the physical geography but the human
6	(Pause)	6		geography and who was trying to do what already within
7	Thank you, Mr Millett. 11.35, please. Thank you.	7		the council.
8	(11.17 am)	8		So at that time I thought that there was
9	(A short break)	9		an advantage to responding as the council, with
10	(11.35 am)	10		assistance where we knew we needed it, rather than
11	SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Right, Mr Holgate, ready to carry	11		passing the problem, huge problem, to AN Other chief
12	on?	12		executive of another London borough who was simply the
13	THE WITNESS: Certainly.	13		person on the rota.
14	SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Good, thank you.	14	Q.	Now, let's go, please, to {RBK00013296}. This is
15	Yes, Mr Millett.	15	•	slightly later in the morning. This is David Kerry's
16	MR MILLETT: Thank you, Mr Chairman.	16		BECC emergency incident log, which is his typed log,
17	Now, let's take a step an hour or so back to the	17		based on his handwritten notes, as he told us. He was
18	time of your arrival in the BECC.	18		satisfied that they were comprehensive, so I think we
19	Between the time of your arrival in the BECC at	19		have to assume that that is the case, at least in this
20	about 6.00 or 6.30 am on the morning of 14 June and the	20		respect.
21	SCG meeting at 8.30, did you have any discussion with	21		If I can take you, please, to page 10 in this
22	Tony Redpath or Stuart Priestley or David Kerry about	22		document {RBK00013296/10}, row 2, 10 o'clock. Do you
23	seeking support from other councils, either through	23		see that?
24	mutual aid on an ad hoc basis or through activating the	24	А	Yeah.
25	Gold resolution?	25		10 am, item 3. It says:
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1	A. I think I would have remembered without the prompting of	1		"Meeting with David Kerry, Chief Executive
2	David's and Stuart's evidence that David, I think I can	2		Nicholas Holgate, Director of Housing Laura Johnson, CEO
3	just about remember, did say that the fire was	3		K&CTMO Robert Black, Council Silver Stuart Priestley."
4	an exceptional crisis, and I'm more than prepared to	4		Do you remember that meeting?
5	accept that Stuart advised seeking mutual aid. So there	5	A.	Not as such, but I'm absolutely happy to accept what
6	was such a discussion, in answer to your question.	6		David says about it.
7	Q. And what did you do with that advice?	7	Q.	Right.
8	A. At that time, I had given some thought as to whether we	8		Now, let's go, then, to the right—hand side of the
9	should invoke London Gold or not. I think there is	9		page. It says in the second bullet point:
10	an important distinction between invoking London Gold	10		"Advice given by David Kerry to Nicholas Holgate:
11	and accepting or seeking mutual aid across councils. So	11		" • This incident is bigger than any one local
12	I think at no point was I against obtaining specific	12		authority in London can manage.
13	assistance from other councils where we knew we needed	13		" • Consideration should be given to asking for
14	it, but at that point I did not think that we needed to	14		mutual aid for the BECC.
15	invoke London Gold as such.	15		"• There are people who can support NH and RBKC Gold
16	Q. Why is that?	16		Group, including:
17	A. Well, I'd given this as much thought as I could in the	17		"• John Barradell [and you can see his designation
18	circumstances of the morning, and I thought that	18		there]
19	I had —— and would still today, for the specific	19		"• Eleanor Kelly Southwark

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responded as a cohesive management team, or whether it $$\rm 62\,$

officers in question $-\!-$ I had great confidence in the

a great deal of what was necessary as quickly as they

and work out whether it was better that the council

management team of the borough to respond well and to do

could, and what I wanted to do was balance -- was to try

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the Dedicated Disaster Mortuary for the Tunisia

expert on humanitarian assistance.

shootings."

" ullet Andrew Meek, EP Manager Haringey - London's

Did you consider at that stage taking that advice

"■ Alistair Ayres ... Hammersmith & Fulham — managed

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3 seeking specific assistance where we knew we needed it, 4 and invoking London Gold as such. 5 So I was perfectly happy for the BECC to be reinforced by people practised at managing BECCs from 6 other boroughs, and I talked to -- I think Eleanor Kelly 8 got in touch with me in the course of the morning, and 9 you have some emails between me and her, and I think --10 but this is the faintest memory -- I think that in the 11 event Alistair Ayres thought that he should stay at 12 Hammersmith and Fulham and stand up their BECC in case 13 that was the right and helpful thing to do, but I may be 14 quite wrong about that.

and using mutual aid that was available?

A. Well, again, I think there is a distinction between

- Q. Now, what was your response to David Kerry's advice that
 this incident is bigger than any one local authority in
 London can manage?
- A. Well, I wasn't expecting us to cope with it just as one
 local authority. I was going to and would be happy to
 accept help where it was required.

I also had tried to work out what it was that we would need to do, and it was plainly —— you know, there's no argument that it was an extremely big disaster, but to me, the priority was reaching the survivors, as we have said, and I had high confidence in

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the borough's ability to be able to do that, and I thought that that was what we ought to do.

So having convinced myself — however erroneously, we can now see — that I thought it was better to have the responsibility cohesively run from — with a group of people who knew how to work together in ordinary times, could work together very well, then, having convinced myself of that, I thought it was our duty and our responsibility to get on with it, and that was why I didn't then invoke London Gold.

- 11 Q. Well, that's London Gold, but we're talking about mutual 12 aid really here --
- 13 A. Yeah, well --

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14 Q. -- which is the subject of the second bullet.

Just breaking it down: first, did you agree with
David Kerry, your expert in these matters, that the
incident was bigger than any one local authority could
manage? Did you agree with that?

- 19 A. Not quite, no.
- 20 Q. Why not?
- A. So because I had by then discussed what Laura was planning to do, and I think I may also have been in touch with Claire Chamberlain, I can't remember, but she is the executive director of children's services, and I thought that there were some very clear and urgent

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tasks and the borough was capable of addressing those tasks.

Day 273

So, you know, it is one thing to say it is a huge crisis; it is, but one then has to quantify or compare the tasks to which that gives rise and the tasks of which the council was capable, and I thought that if we proceeded as a team, working together, knowing one another well, the council would be able to respond effectively, at least to begin with. I wasn't sure about, you know, days later, as it were, but to begin with, that was what I thought we should do.

- Q. So is it the case, then, that consideration was given by
 you to seeking mutual aid, but you rejected it and
 didn't, or rather you rejected the advice that you
 should go to the people identified for support?
- should go to the people identified for support?

 A. Well, as I say, Eleanor Kelly and I did —— I think we
- both emailed and conversed soon after is this
 10 o'clock? Yeah. Well, it would have been, I think,
 later in the morning, but you have an email to that
- later in the morning, but you have an email to that 20 effect.
- 21 Q. Now, let's go to {RBK00013318}. This is
- Stuart Priestley's log of Wednesday, 14 June 2017.
- I should just tell you, this is not a contemporaneousnote; it was made in the days after the incident.
- 25 If we go, please, to the bottom of page 1, you can

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see it says:

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"06.30 — Meeting with: Robert Black, Laura Johnson, Nicholas Holgate, David Kerry: David provided an update as had been feedback to him by the on—site LALO and gathered from the meeting he had dialled into. DK advised of the scale of the tragedy. Robert reported he had attended the site and it was very serious indeed. Nicholas advises he has spoken with the Leader who has agreed to fund anything necessary for the relief effort. David advised Nicholas of the mutual aid arrangements available via LLAG and our neighbouring boroughs. Nicholas stated 'That looks like we can't cope'. The conversation on mutual aid at that point ceased. Nicholas agreed to use the 11.00 Senior Management Board meeting as the first Gold Group. David Kerry confirms he forgot to call Tony Redpath. I agreed to do so now."

Then if one goes on, one can see that there are later meetings, but no 10 o'clock meeting. So in timing terms, there is a discrepancy between this record and the emergency log.

- 21 A. Sure.
- Q. First, do you remember whether the meeting that is
 described here was at 6.30 am, when you would just have
 arrived at the BECC, or at 10 am, some hours afterwards?
- $25\,$ $\,$ A. Well, it could have been both, of course. I think it's

- 1 quite likely that we met on both -- around both times.
- 2 Q. Right.
- 3 Do you recall, first, David Kerry advising on the 4 scale of the tragedy?
- 5 A. Again, as I said earlier, I don't exactly, but I'm absolutely happy to accept his account of it. 6
- 7 Q. Do you accept that you said, when David advised you of 8 the mutual aid arrangements available via LLAG and the 9 neighbouring boroughs, "That looks like we can't cope"?
- 10 A. I'm not sure I would have used exactly those words, but 11 again, if that's what Stuart recalls, I'm very happy to 12 accept them. They are not a happy choice of words. 13 Again, what I mean by that is that, however erroneously, 14 I thought that the borough could achieve the tasks 15 immediately in front of it, and, yes, we would need 16 reinforcement, but the reinforcement could be specific 17 and as necessary. It did not need to be put into
- 18 a different process entirely. 19 Q. What do you mean by the tasks immediately in front of 20
- 2.1 A. Well, essentially reaching the survivors.
- 2.2 Q. Right. When you say reaching the survivors, what do you 2.3 mean by that?
- 2.4 A. And offering them all the help we could, to give them 25 shelter the next night, to give them money, to try and

- 1 sort out specific difficulties they have and to begin 2 a process, you know, and a long relationship and process 3 of trying to rehouse and so on. But that was further
- off in the future.
- 5 Q. But was it not right that at that stage you didn't know how many survivors there were and you didn't know what 6 7 the boundaries of this event were?
- 8 A. That's true. I thought —— I mean, I was implicitly 9 working on the assumption that there were a lot of 10 survivors and that the borough would be able to give 11 many of them, hopefully all of them, help as soon as 12 possible on that day.
- 13 Q. What about your own staff? Given the pre-existing 14 difficulties to which Mr Kerry had drawn your attention 15 historically, why did you think that the borough could 16 cope even with these tasks immediately in front of it, given the numbers of staff in the BECC available? 17
- 18 A. Well, for some crises, the BECC is a very significant 19 part of a borough's response. In this particular case, 2.0 the BECC was still very important as a junction box for 21 exchanging, passing on information in several 2.2 directions, but actually the housing department, as is 2.3 evident from Laura Johnson's statement yesterday and 2.4 your conversation with her, was going to work as
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 - a department pretty much entirely on the tasks as we've

- 1 described it, and, you know, that brought a huge number
- 2 of people with relevant expertise to begin to reach the 3
- 4 Q. Now, there are two different things. Let me just 5 explore them with you.
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. There is one, which is your perception of whether in 8 fact RBKC could cope with the tasks immediately in front 9 of it or tasks which are more intermediate, and there's 10 the look of the thing.
- 11 When you are recorded as saying, "That looks like we 12 can't cope", were you concerned about the look of the 13
- 14 A. I don't think so.

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- 15 If I can backtrack just a little , you referred 16 earlier to my civil service experience, and you know 17 that civil servants are meant to be objective. 18 impartial, neutral, and indeed council officers 19 similarly, and I would assert very strongly that 2.0 throughout my career I have been bothered about the 21 substance, not the appearance.
 - So I agree that it is a form of words which conveys, you know, an impression that I would not wish to give. but actually. I thought we were substantively capable of beginning the process of recovery, and if, having set

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- 1 lots of people working and people feeling they had the
- 2 chief executive right behind them in doing so, I then
- 3 say, "Well, hang on a minute, you know, perhaps somebody
- else should take over and let's, you know, listen to
- 5 what they've got to say", and so on, then I think that
- 6 is giving off a rather uncertain note, and I do not
- 7 think that that would have contributed positively to the
- 8 exercise, and I think that is what I was trying to say.
- 9 Right. Just to be clear, are you quite sure that, in 10 saying what you're recorded as saying, you weren't at
- 11 the time feeling a need to protect the council's
- 12 reputation from inevitable criticism about being
- 13 understaffed or having the lack of preparedness or
- 14 capability?
- 15 A. Absolutely not, and indeed, if I had had that uppermost
- 16 in my mind, it would have been a completely
- 17 self -defeating proposition and I would not have
- 18 entertained it.
- 19 Q. Now, Rebecca Blackburn refers in her first statement --
- 2.0 we don't need to go to it, it's paragraph 21 on page 5
- 21 $\{{\sf RBK00035364/5}\}$ — to a meeting between the contingency
- 2.2 management team at 8.10, between you, David Kerry, her
- 23 and Tony Redpath. Do you remember that?
- 2.4 I don't bring it to mind, no.
- 2.5 Q. You don't remember a discussion involving her at that

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1 stage, do you, about mutual aid? 1 given the scene is contained within Kensington & 2 A. I don't. Which is not to say that I dispute that it 2 Chelsea.' 3 happened. I absolutely don't dispute it. 3 You see that? 4 Q. Do you accept —— I think you do, because you've told 4 A Yes 5 us -- that, as RBKC has admitted in its opening 5 Q. Then it goes on about standing people up. We may come statement, in fact the leadership was unable to cope in 6 6 back to that. 7 the days after the fire? 7 But you respond to Toby Gould, who is at London Resilience, at the bottom of page 1 $\{\mbox{GOL}00000173/1\},$ if A. I think that's absolutely right. 8 8 9 ${\sf Q}.\;$ And I think you accept now that it was an error -- or do 9 we can go to that, please. At the foot of page 1, you 10 10 you accept -- not to have sought outside help, including can see it says -- and this is you at 7.50: 11 activation of London Local Authority Gold, at this early 11 "Toby 12 12 stage? "Thanks: aside from housing needs that may well 13 A. I do. I do. Under a duty of candour, I would retain 13 spill over borough boundaries, I do not (yet) think LLAG a sort of very small quibble that we are imagining 14 14 needs to gear up.' 15 a complete counterfactual if I had invoked London Gold 15 What did you mean by, "I do not (yet) think LLAG 16 16 early on, and I think it begs a whole set of questions needs to gear up"? 17 about exactly what would then have happened. But 17 A. Well, I — whatever else I thought that we were capable 18 I agree and accept that, not least given the thematic 18 of doing. I knew that there was a possibility that we 19 evidence from the survivors that you had a week or so 19 may not be capable of doing it. So, you know, it would 20 2.0 have been bizarre to have had 100% confidence in ago, we were not coping very early on. 2.1 Q. Thank you. 21 a decision or in a view taken, inevitably with some 2.2 Let's then turn to London Resilience and the contact 22 shortage of information, as to whether the borough had 2.3 23 you made with them on the morning of the 14th. an advantage in being the core of the response or 2.4 Is it right that your initial contact with London 2.4 whether a bigger response that over time —— perhaps 25 Resilience, beyond where you were copied in to the SCG 25 quite quickly, perhaps not so quickly -- would have 75 1 minutes, happened after you had spoken with David Kerry 1 drawn from other boroughs in a much more -- in a much 2 and senior management at the BECC? 2 larger fashion. 3 A. Probably, yes. 3 So, you know, at no point — this rather illustrates Q. Yes. Now, at {GOL00000173} we find an email. Let's go my point that at no point was I sort of manically 5 to that, please. I would like to go straight in it, 5 against assistance, but I was first in favour of 6 please, to the foot of page 2 $\{GOL00000173/2\}$, where you 6 specific assistance where we needed it, and only later, 7 7 can see an email at 7.44. There it is, thank you. It's you know, when it became more obvious, did I invoke 8 8 from Toby Gould to you. Do you see that? Copied to London Gold. 9 9 David Kerry: Q. So is it right or would it be fair to characterise your 10 "Nicholas, (Andrew LLAG to 09.00, Chris LLAG from 10 approach at this stage as incremental? 11 09.00). 11 12 The Chris is the incoming LLAG. 12 Q. You were waiting to see how things developed before A Yes 13 13 deciding whether to invoke London Gold? A. I think that would be slightly too kind. I think I --14 Q. That refers to the on-duty LLAG, doesn't it? 14 15 15 A. Yes. Q. Right. 16 Q. Chris, I think, is Chris Naylor. 16 A. -- was probably more confident of being able -- of the 17 A. Correct. 17 borough being able to give a very good account, 18 Q. "I tried to call but appreciate you are very busy. 18 you know, to be able to make very good inroads into the 19 "I understand you spoke to Matthew Hogan from our 19 various tasks lying ahead of it for, say, at least

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first day.

A. I do.

LLAG, Chris Naylor?

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team earlier this morning and confirmed you were content

for Kensington & Chelsea to participate in the SCG

meetings/teleconferences. Please let me know if that

position changes and you feel there would be benefit in

pan-London issues. I am not aware of any at present

London Local Authority Gold participation to lead on any

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Q. Right. I think he confirmed to you in a brief

Monday -- sorry, at least the Wednesday, at least the

Do you recall having contact with the incoming duty

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- 1 conversation in that morning that he remained on standby 2 and at your disposal; yes?
- 3 A. Indeed

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4 Q. Very good.

Let's then turn to the TMO, if we can.

We've seen from David Kerry's BECC log that Robert Black, the chief executive of the TMO, was present at the BECC that morning and present at the Council Gold meeting at 10 o'clock.

Do you accept that the civil contingency responsibilities for the response lay with RBKC, as a category 1 responder, and not with the TMO in any capacity?

- 14 A. Yes.
- 15 Q. Yes.

Now, we've heard in Phase 1 of the Inquiry how a list of residents and plans of the building were not provided to LFB on the night quickly. When information was provided, we have also heard it was incorrect or out of date, and that's the subject of the Phase 1 report at paragraph $30.96 \{INQ00014817/710\}$, if people want to see

My question for you in the light of that is: do you accept that the responsibility for providing that kind of information lay with the council, even if they might

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- 1 need to co-operate with the TMO to get it?
- 2 A. I'm not sure I'm fully qualified to give that answer, 3 but I would accept that it lay across the TMO and the council, and if the TMO didn't have it, then plainly
- 5 the council should or could have had it. 6 Q. Let me try it slightly differently .

So far as RBKC needed to have up-to-date and accurate information about who was living where and whether they had vulnerabilities or not in order to discharge its obligations under the contingency legislation, regulations and framework, that was RBKC's responsibility, even if the information wasn't held within the council?

- $A. \ \ I \ think \ you \ must \ be \ right, \ yeah.$ 14
- 15 Q. What was the role of Robert Black at the Town Hall and 16 Gold meetings on the 14th?
- 17 A. Well, I think that he would want to have been 18 co-operating and his staff to be aware of the overall 19 picture, and this would have assisted his understanding 2.0 of what the council was doing, and, I mean, he could 21 have worked with the housing department without him 2.2 being in the Gold meeting, but the Gold meeting was as 2.3 convenient a place as any other where, you know, he and 2.4 Laura would be hearing the same material and working out

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25 what to do together.

- 1 Q. What were your expectations of him and the assistance he 2 could give you?
- 3 A. I thought that he could probably provide more staff,
 - some of them with knowledge of some of the residents of
- Grenfell Tower, but I wasn't expecting a huge amount, 5
- because I didn't know in depth the staff numbers or 6
- 7 capacities that he would be able to provide.
- Q. What did you understand the wider role of the TMO to be 8 9 in responding to this emergency?
- 10 A. Well, I'd have thought that they might have assisted in
- 11 a small way with some rehousing, and I'm surprised that
- 12 they -- their information on who was resident in the
- 13 tower was so imperfect, but I wouldn't have gone a long
- 14 way further than that.
- 15 Q. Were you aware that TMO staff were assisting at
- 16 rest centres and continued to create to maintain and to
- 17 circulate lists of safe or missing residents from the
- 18 tower to identify who needed support?
- 19 A. I think I probably was available -- I was aware of that,
- 20 because I think probably Robert would have made that 2.1
- 22 Q. Did you know that lists which were created, maintained 23 and circulated continued to have inaccuracies in them?
- 2.4 I think I knew that they were not absolutely right, but
- 2.5 they were what we had to work with.

- Q. Right. 1
- 2 Was it the case that RBKC was heavily reliant on the 3 assistance of the TMO throughout the time that RBKC was leading the response, not just in relation to housing 5
 - data but physically?
- 6 A. I think I was aware that the TMO led on work to make the
- 7 finger blocks habitable. So I was aware of some
- 8 specific roles they undertook which were, I mean, very
- 9 much part of their housing management function, but
- 10 I don't think I'd have known much more than that.
- 11 Right. I mean, was it the case that RBKC, in the event,
- 12 had in essence outsourced its functions to TMO staff?
- 13 For example, assisting at rest centres and triaging
- 14 survivors
- 15 A. I think "outsourcing" might be too proactive a word.
- 16 I think that TMO staff probably sought to give what help
- 17 they could wherever they could, and that -- those were
- 18 amongst the things they ended up doing.
- 19 Q. Well, let me try it non-proactively. Did you understand
- 2.0 that the TMO were coming in to fill a gap in RBKC's
- 21 capabilities?
- 2.2 A. I would not have described it that way if asked on the
- 23 day. I'm perfectly prepared to accept it if that's how
- 2.4 others slightly closer to what they were doing would

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25 have described it.

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- Q. Well, how would you have described it on the day?
- A. I would have said that they were an extra resource and
- 3 they were improving on the response that the council 4 would otherwise have been able to achieve.
- 5 Q. In what way improving?
- A. Well, more pairs of hands, more people able to make 6
- 7 a better rest centre at the Westway, for example.
- 8 Q. But you're not saying that they were surplus to 9 requirements?
- 10 A. No, I'm sure that we could have done with more people 11 still .
- 12 Q. Okav. So that answers my question.
- 13
- 14 Q. Let me try it again, though: do you accept that they
- 15 were coming in to fill a gap, in other words to make 16
- right what was wrong?
- 17 A. I don't know what we would have achieved without them
- 18 being there compared to what we would have achieved with
- 19 them being there. I'm very reluctant to say no to your
- 20 question, because if they were there in sufficient
- 2.1 numbers, and given that the overall effort fell short of
- 22 what we wanted to achieve, I think you have to be right
- 2.3 as a matter of logic.
- 2.4 Q. As a matter of logic, maybe that's right, but as
- 25 a matter of what you understood or saw at the time, did

- 1 you think at the time that RBKC, as a category 1
- 2 responder, was unable to fulfil a number of its
- 3 obligations without the assistance of the TMO?
- A. I wouldn't have -- I don't think I would have thought 5 that on the day.
- 6 Q. But do you accept it now?
- 7 A. I readily accept it now.
- 8 Q. Yes
- 9 Is it also right that, on the day of the fire, you 10 personally received several offers of assistance from 11 colleagues in local government, including chief
- 12 executives from other London Councils?
- 13 A. Yes. certainly.
- Q. And I think you have referred to Eleanor Kelly in your 14 15 evidence earlier this morning. We've seen that she at 16 the time was chief executive of Southwark, and you
- 17 referred to an email on that morning.
 - Let's look at it. It's at {GOL00000309}. I think it's also at {GOL00000376}, because it's been referred to before.
- 21 This is an email. first in chain, to you at 6.50, so 2.2 if we go to the bottom of the chain, please.
- 23

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2.0

- 24 Q. 6.51, I apologise. Eleanor Kelly to you at 6.51, copied
- 25 to Gerri Scott at Southwark:

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- "Dear Nicholas.
- 2 "Just reaching out to offer any help we can to your 3
- officers regarding the serious fire in your Borough. As
- 4 you are aware, we experienced the terrible fire in
- 5 Lakanal House and so we have people across the Council with both experience and understanding. Please do not 6
 - hesitate to put any department in touch with us.
 - "Best ...

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- 9 "Eleanor."
- 10 You replied, if you go up the chain, please, at -actually, we have this reply in a different $\mbox{\it email},$ which 11
- 12 is {GOL00000376}. That's it. That's where you say at 13
- 6.56, in response to this email: 14
 - "Eleanor
- 15 "Many thanks. I will certainly be in touch if we 16 need to be '
- 17 Just pausing there, were you aware at the time of 18 the fire that Eleanor Kelly was deputy chief executive
- 19 during the Lakanal House fire in July 2009? 20 A. Probably not, but I knew -- I could see the link between
- her as chief executive of Southwark and Lakanal House, 22 so I could see that she had relevant expertise.
- Q. Did you consider whether you could in fact benefit from 2.3
- 2.4 her experience of leading a response following a major 2.5 incident where a fire had occurred in a high-rise

- 1 building in her borough?
- 2 A. Yes, but I think that her offer —— and we did talk,
- 3 I think, on the phone, and the offer I took up, which
- was in your other extract, was for the director of
- 5 housing and another Southwark officer to come to the
- 6 first Gold Group on the Thursday.
- 7 Q. Yes, and we'll come back to that in just a moment.
- 8 That's a response at 13.31.
- 9 A. Yeah.
- 10 Q. There are one or two communications between 6.56 and
- 11 13.31 I just want to show you.
- 12 First, {RBK00001253}. This is your email that you
- 13 I think pass on to Laura Johnson. This is at the top of
- the string --14
- 15 A. Yeah.
- 16 Q. -- at 7.37.
- 17 A. Yeah.
- 18 Q. Also to Stella Baillie, who was at LBHF.
- 19 A. In fact, she was a very experienced RBKC employee in
- 2.0 adult social care who was on Hammersmith and Fulham's
- 21 books, or she had an email address both in Hammersmith
- 2.2 and Fulham and RBKC.
- Q. As part of the tri-borough arrangements? 23
- 24 A. Yes, but she originated in RBKC and knew an awful lot
- 2.5 about the borough.

1	0	Right, I see.	1		at 9.35, which I want, second email down on the string,
2	Q.	And then copied to David Kerry, and all you say is:	2		subject, "Any help you need, just ask". Do you see
3		"Please let us call on Southwark colleagues if we	3		that?
4		have anything on which they might be able to help."	4	Δ	Yeah.
5		Is it fair to say that you didn't at that point know	5		She says:
6		how the council might use help from Southwark?	6	ų.	"If any of us here at Hounslow, members or officers,
7	Δ	Yes.	7		can help you and colleagues in any way at all today or
8		Yes. Yes, thank you.	8		over the next days, please just ask.
9	ų.	Then let's look back at the 13.31 email at	9		"Thinking of you.
10		{GOL00000309}. This is your response back to	10		"Mary."
11		Eleanor Kelly again, and you say:	11		You respond to that at 10.31:
12		"Eleanor	12		"Thank you for thinking of us: we should be able to
13		"Thanks again: Chris Naylor has put me in touch with	13		manage but if I see any shortfalls , I shall be in
14		Jonathan Toy. And the Director of Housing here is in	14		touch!"
15		touch with your director, Gerri [?].	15		Now, this is after, in chronological terms, as we've
16		"If you have any particular names or specialisms to	16		seen, the either 6.30 or 10 o'clock meeting that you had
17		put forward, I would be grateful. Just occasionally,	17		had internally with Robert Black, David Kerry and
18		people do not say there are struggling when they are so	18		Stuart Priestley, where the advice was given to you to
19		having a few names and a few words on the role each	19		consider LLAG or mutual aid.
20		played/could play would help me if I sense we are	20		Can we take it that at this point you had, as is
21		running on empty."	21		clear here, essentially refused to do that or rejected
22			22		that advice, and made a decision that you were going to
23		How likely did you envisage that RBKC would be	23		continue to manage?
24		running on empty, as you put it, during the response, at that stage?	24	۸	_
25	٨	G	25	A.	I still at that stage thought it was better to take responsibility myself as a Gold, but I was not, as it
23	A.	Well, at that stage, not.	23		responsibility mysell as a Gold, but I was not, as it
		85			87
1	Q.	Not.	1		were, adamant in any way that we in every particular
2	A.	But I think the picture began to change 24 hours later,	2		would have all the staff that we needed, and it felt to
3		essentially .	3		me, as it happens, these sorts of messages were very
4	Q.	Right. So does that tell us that you considered the	4		encouraging, because I thought that we would $$ if we $$
5		level of response required by RBKC to be sustainable in	5		identified a shortfall , I knew that there were
6		at least the short term?	6		neighbouring boroughs that would respond very positively
7	A.	Yes.	7		if we asked them for a particular, you know, housing
8	Q.	What about in the medium term, did you think about that?	8		officer, social worker, media, whatever it would be.
9	A.	Yes, I did, and I was particularly concerned about the	9	Q.	I see.
10		range of centres and facilities which needed to be set	10		Looking then at $\{RBK00064675\}$, second email down in
11		up so that, as according to the contingency management	11		this chain, this is an email from Helen John at the DWP,
12		plan, there was everything that the survivors, the	12		central government, she was in the stewardship
13		bereaved and others would need. So it was beginning $$	13		directorate, to you, subject, "Dreadful news", timing,
14		perhaps not on the Wednesday, but certainly on the	14		8.41:
15		Thursday $$ to begin to worry me quite a lot, that we $$	15		"If there is anything I can usefully do, let me
16		whether we had the capacity, management capacity, to be	16		know. Work won't miss me for a day or two.
17		doing all those things at once.	17		"Take care
18	Q.	Now, is this right: the second person you got assistance	18		"Helen John"
19		from or you got an offer of assistance from was	19		Your response is at 13.25, if we look at that, as we
20		Mary Harpley, who was the chief executive of Hounslow;	20		can see:
21		yes?	21		"Helen
22	A.	I don't recall what order they came in, but it's quite	22		"Thanks and very kind of you: we think we are
23		likely that she did, yes.	23		coping. The main things are intensely practical at this
23		mely that the dia, yes.	20		

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goods."

Let's go to {RBK00064627}. This is her email to you

1		Were those your priorities at that stage?	1		"Both
2	A.	Yes.	2		"I just wanted to say well done for getting Nicholas
3	Q.	Right.	3		to agree to London Resilience help. I have tried to get
4	A.	And for the avoidance of doubt, of course, this wasn't	4		him to recognise this is too big for RBKC and we have
5		the DWP officially, this was a colleague whom I'd worked	5		offered a wide variety of help but, he hasn't been able
6		with when I was a civil servant offering help in	6		to acknowledge that it would be necessary. I fear he
7		a personal capacity.	7		doesn't quite understand the implications and wider
8	Q.	I understand. But no doubt about it, if central	8		significance of what's going on. However, I have had
9		government and the full force of central government was	9		a long conversation with him tonight especially about
LO		being offered through your personal contact and you	10		his personal resilience and a range of operational
L1		needed it, you could have had it.	11		issues . We have offered a number of key personnel
L2	Α.	Well, we may come to central government, but ——	12		including a colleague who handled all the Southwark fire
L3		We will.	13		comms in 2013 — I think?"
L4		it wasn't clear, really, what they could or would	14		Then it goes on about permanent housing
L5		offer .	15		opportunities.
L6	Q.	All right.	16		Do you recall a conversation with Charlie Parker
L7	٩.	Would you agree, though, thus far, that the	17		before the evening of 15 June 2017 when he did try to
L8		consistent message from you to those who offered help	18		get you to recognise that the incident was too big for
L9		from early on on 14 June was that RBKC was managing and	19		RBKC?
20		didn't need help for the time being?	20	Δ	I don't think that he said that in those terms. I think
21	۸	I thought we were managing, yes.	21	Α.	what he may have done is seek to explore what we were
22	Λ.	It may be worth dwelling on this a moment longer, in	22		doing and how we were coping in such a way as to prompt
23		the sense of saying: if you are in the position of	23		me to reach such a conclusion.
			24		
24		sending several dozen and at times scores, even			So, you know, I think that if a number of local
25		according to a note hundreds of staff out to do certain	25		authority chief executive colleagues had said in terms,
		89			91
1		tasks, there is a period of time in which belief is $$	1		"You may think you can cope but you are not coping" or
2		disbelief is suspended, and you don't know for certain	2		"You will not be able to cope", I would have taken that
3		how well they are or are not achieving those tasks. So	3		extremely seriously.
4		it isn't —— the feedback is not necessarily	4	Q.	Right.
5		instantaneous, and sometimes what you do get fed back	5		Also, I think if the timing of this email —— did I see
6		may not tell you exactly what you need to know in terms	6		the timing of this email was 9.42 pm?
7		of asking for more help for this task or that.	7	Q.	Pm on the evening of the 15th.
8	Q.	Now, another source of help was Charlie Parker at	8		I think it is perfectly possible that he had a call with
9	٦.	Westminster. I think you knew him quite well.	9		me after —— I mean, I think, actually, it's implicit in
LO	Α.	Yeah.	10		the email that he had a call with me after I had invoked
L1		And I think it's right that he called you in the early	11		London Gold and, you know, Charlie is essentially saying
L2	٩.	days because he was worried about you personally; is	12		well done to the others for, you know, mutual agreement
L3		that right?	13		at some call earlier that evening that plainly we
L 3	۸	I think that's correct.	14		weren't succeeding and London Gold was necessary.
L5		Do you remember him telling you on either 14 or 15 June	15	0	Let's just examine that chronology just a little bit
L 5	Q.	that RBKC would not be able to cope?	16	Q.	more ——
	٨	·	17	٨	Sure.
L7		Not in so many words, no.			
L8	Q.	Not in so many words.	18	Q.	closely, then, in light of that.
L9		Let's go to {GOL00000158}, please. Now, you're not,	19		Can we look, please, at {CLG00008314}. This is
20		I think, on this email chain, which is perhaps the	20		an email run from 16 June, and if we go, please, down to
21		point, but if you go to the foot of page 1, which is	21		page 2 {CLG00008314/2}, there's an email at the bottom
22		where it starts, this is now 15 June 2017 at 9.42 pm, so	22		of page 2 from Charlie Parker to Councillor
23		it's the evening of 15 June, and it's from	23		Nickie Aiken, copied to others at Westminster, and the
24		Charlie Parker at Westminster to John Barradell and	24		context is the decision that I think had been made for
25		Eleanor Kelly at Southwark, subject, "Kensington".	25		John Barradell to go in to RBKC as chair of LAP.

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1 But if you then go up the chain to Nickie Aiken's 2 response, she says:

"Only took them two days to decide they can't cope. We told them first thing on Wednesday that they wouldn't be able to cope."

Now, do you remember that? 6

- A. No. And I'm sorry to have to volunteer something disagreeable, but just before the break you showed me an email that was really someone obsessing about reputation management. I think reputation management is very much the theme of these communications, but it is not my reputation or Kensington and Chelsea's reputation, it is the reputation of those in this email chain that we are talking about.
- 15 Q. Well, was it a fact -- just to answer the question, if you wouldn't mind, please -- that either Westminster or 16 17 others told you first thing on Wednesday the 14th that 18 you, RBKC, wouldn't be able to cope?
- 19 A. No, it is not a fact. I can imagine how Nickie Aiken 20 would have come about this impression --
- 2.1 Q How?
- 22 A. —— but it is not a fact.
- 2.3 Q. Right. How would she have come about --
- 2.4 A. It would have come about through reputation management on the part of others.

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- 1 Q. Why would others be interested in managing their 2 reputation?
- 3 A. Well --
- Q. What was the problem?
- 5 A. The problem would be that this was a huge tragedy, and not only would, of course, Kensington and Chelsea come 6 7 under intense scrutiny, but also arrangements around 8 London Gold itself. So I think people would be anxious 9 as to what role they thought they'd played or perceived 10 they had played or would want others to perceive they 11 had played.
- 12 Q. Do you remember that Emma Strain was the person in 13 charge of -- well, she was assistant director of external affairs at London Councils; do you remember 14 15 that?
- 16 A. No.
- 17 Q. You don't.
- 18 Let's just look at a document, {RBK00065051}. This 19 is her email to you on 15 June, and we've jumped to that 2.0 date for reflective purposes. This is where she offers 21 the assistance to you of additional volunteers for 2.2 sorting out donations and help with communications. Do 23
- 2.4 A. I don't, actually, but I'm sure -- you know, it's plain 25 there that it should have reached me, yeah.

- Q. Let's go to {RBK00004229}, because we see in that email 2 that you forward this email on to Debbie Morris, who at 3 this stage was RBKC's donations lead during the 4 response
- A. Yeah. 5

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Q. She's provided a witness statement to the Inquiry at {RBK00035581} and she explains this at paragraph 23.

8 But if you look at this document, you say to her: 9 "Debbie

1.0 "I don't think we want cash donations but if people 11 want to give to the Just Giving or other websites, that 12 [would] be the fine. 13

"We don't want physical items.

14 "Agreed?"

15 In the light of the pressure, though, that 16 the council was facing in relation to communications 17 being completely inundated, why did you think or why did 18 you not think that using this type of assistance offered 19 by Emma Strain was helpful?

20 A. Well, it's the sorting out of donations. I think that 21 that would have been fine, if that was a sort of 22 physical -- a contribution of members of staff, and that 23 would have been up to Debbie to respond to. Just

2.4 as Emma Strain says, "Pass me on", I'm passing her on to

2.5 actually not just Debbie Morris, but to a number of

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1 others there

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What I did not want them to do is to think that they needed to make cash donations, because the borough was perfectly capable of meeting the cash needs, not least with the Bellwin scheme. That wasn't an issue. What was at issue would be help with physical items, where we did need help, and that was what Debbie was then engaged upon. I didn't think there needed to be more physical items donated because, actually, the public response on the Wednesday was huge and, you know, wonderful. But actually it was so huge that it became a task in itself to corral the donations and organise them in such a way to be of practical use to the survivors.

- 14 Q. But why not adopt the offered help from GLA in order to 15 send the message out, "We don't want physical items, 16 please stop sending them in, they're inundating us, if 17 you want to give, give by Just Giving"? Why not use the 18 offered assistance?
- 19 A. Well, as I say, I think volunteers folded into the 2.0 command of the person in charge of corralling the 21 physical donations was fine, that would have been for 2.2 Debbie to take Emma up on that offer, so that's 23 Team London volunteers

Then there's a question about donate cash. Well, not to us, but to independent and charitable routes,

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that would have been fine.

2 And then she says, "Is it also please do not donate 3 any" -- yes, well, it was, we don't want more physical 4 items

- 5 Q. You were also, I think, offered assistance on the morning of 14 June from central government. Do you 6 7 remember that?
- A. I think I was. I think it was of a "tell us what you 8 9 need" sort of open offer, rather than a specific thing.

10 Q. Yes

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{RBK00005766}. Email to you from Melanie Dawes, who was the Permanent Secretary to the DCLG, at 09.07. You can see it . second email down:

"Dear Nick.

"I just wanted to express how shocked and sad I was to hear about the terrible fire at Grenfell Tower this

"We are ready to help however we can from Central Government - Jo Farrar from DCLG is already leading on this. Obviously today you will be dealing with the immediate response but do let us know - as and when it is helpful — if there is anything we can do."

That was at 9.07, and at 9.09, two minutes later, you responded to her:

"Many thanks. Plenty of blue light resource

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at present." 1

So that was your response.

Did you go back to her or did you think of going back to her at any later stage, particularly during 14 June, and change your mind and say, "Well, actually, we would like some help, please, from central government"?

A. I don't think I did consider doing that. I thought 8 9 I knew something about what central government could or 10 couldn't do, having been a civil servant for some time, 11 having had contact with DCLG over the years in which I'd 12 worked in local government, and it was not immediately 13 obvious to me what central government as such could do 14 in the immediate aftermath. Plainly there were things 15 they could do a little bit further down the line, 16 notably financial, but on that day, I didn't think that 17 they were a source of specific or practical help.

Q. Very good. Okay.

Did you know that Jo Farrar had tried to contact you during the 14th but you weren't available to speak to

- 2.2 A. I think we may have missed calls or something like that. 23 I think I was able to talk to her on the 15th.
- 24 Q. I think the upshot of your evidence is that during the 25 14th and indeed the 15th, your view was that you didn't

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need any assistance from central government?

2 A. I didn't see what assistance they could really provide 3 as central government at that stage in the crisis .

4 Q. Now, let's then turn to the first Council Gold meeting

that you attended. That was at 11 am on 14 June; yes? 5

6 A. Yeah

7 Q. And you chaired it; yes?

8 A. Yeah.

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9 Q. What do you say to those who say that a Gold meeting or 10 strategic meeting should have been held at an earlier

11 point in the day?

12 A. I say that that might have impeded the work that

Laura Johnson and adult social care colleagues and

14 others were doing briefing staff so that they could get 15 on up to the scene of the tragedy.

16 Q. Did you consider having a Gold meeting earlier in the

17 day but then put it off until 11 o'clock, or was this

18 the first moment that you --

19 A. I thought that we were in train trying to get help to

20 the site, and that that was the priority for people who

2.1 would then attend the London Gold meeting -- the RBKC

22 Gold meeting.

2.3 Q. And if we go to the meeting notes, {RBK00013271}, we can

2.4 see who was in attendance, and we can see, if you go to

2.5 page 3 {RBK00013271/3}, that, at the bottom of the page,

it says:

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"NH reported that a number of other boroughs have offered their help and we can call upon their resources and to establish a rota of officers at the rest centre."

Was it the case that at that point -- I think it

5 6 is -- you hadn't accepted any of the offers of the help 7 from other boroughs?

8 A. I don't think I'd accepted any specific offer by then.

9 Q. Right.

10 I think that the two officers from Southwark I obtained 11 soon after this meeting, yeah, in the chronology.

12 Q. Now, if we go back a page, please, to page 2 13

 $\{RBK00013271/2\}$, you can see that this meeting records, 14 in the third bullet point down:

15 "Although there were no Council officers present at 16 the rest Centres for a long time, they are now there."

17 Were you satisfied during 14 June, and particularly 18 at this point in the morning, that there were sufficient 19 RBKC staff at the scene supporting those affected by the

2.0 fire?

21 A. I was under the impression that there were, but I would 2.2 not have said that -- I would not have been confident of 23 them getting there much after -- much before 9, maybe

24 even 10 o'clock.

2.5 Q. What led you to be confident that there were?

- 1 A. Well, again, it's a lack of contraindication. It's 2 people -- as far as I was aware, no one saying, "We have 3 a desperate problem at such and such, we don't have any 4 cover"
- 5 Q. Did you go out to the rest centres to see for yourself which RBKC staff were there and what they were doing? 6
- A. No, I didn't. I think it is expected or part of the 8 protocol of the contingency management plan that the 9 Gold is pretty proximate to the borough emergency 10 control centre, not necessarily sort of sitting in the 11 room, but very contactable, very close by, and after my 12 visit up to the scene of the disaster early in the 13 morning, I didn't think I should absent myself again 14 that day
- 15 Q. What was your assessment that day, perhaps coming into 16 the afternoon, of the way the rest centres were 17
- A. I think if you'd asked me exactly that question at the 19 time. I would have said that I was under the impression 20 that the voluntary sector had done a very good job in 2.1 providing some shelter, some respite, some sustenance 22 for the survivors, and that we were probably in the 2.3 process of trying to whittle down the numbers so that we 2.4 had one large facility to look after instead of coming 25 to deputise at or support a number of them.

- 1 Q. Now, let's look at {RBK00037123}. This is an email from Councillor Mills, sent to you and Councillor 2
- 3 Nicholas Paget-Brown and Laura Johnson at 12.59 on
- "Dear Officers, I have spent time there this morning 5 6 and will go back now."
- 7 She gives her telephone number:
 - "The Trust wanted to know if you can send an officer too help liaise with the different agencies and act as a coordinating voice.
 - "Most grateful if you can. Do let me know if I can assist also and of course my mobile will be on alert."
 - Was it the position that there was an absence of RBKC leadership at the rest centres that were operating?
- 14
- 15 A. I think it must be so, yeah.
- 16 Q. Why?

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- A. I think for a little while at least we were depending on 17 18 the people who had very kindly opened them up and were
- 19 running them, but I think that we were trying also to 2.0 find people who would go and take over from them as soon
- 21 as we could.
- 2.2 Q. And that was still happening, was it, by 1 pm?
- A. I'm a bit surprised that it's still happening then. 23
- 24 Q. Right.
- A. It is just possible that Councillor Mills thought that

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there was, as it were, someone in addition to whoever 2 might also have been there doing something specific for

anyone taking shelter at that rest centre.

4 Q. Right.

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Let's go to {RBK00037309}, next. This is an email 5 6 from Rock Feilding-Mellen on 14 June at 14.42 to you, 7 "Re: Westway":

8 "We are getting more messages about Westway Sports 9 Centre being in chaos.

10 "Who is going to manage it and when will S/he get 11

12 "Maybe let Angela McConville know, so she can give 13 name of their manager there?"

14 Were you concerned that there were reports of, as he 15 calls it, chaos at the Westway?

- 16 A. Yes, I'm sure, yes. That's a very strong word to use.
- 17 Q. Well, did you seek to understand what was going on there 18 and why it was in chaos?
- 19 A. Well, I can't honestly remember what I did, but
- 20 I suppose I would have inferred that there were a lot of
- 2.1 people in need of help and it not being clear who to go
- 22 to, or the people who were there helping were in short 2.3 supply compared to those needing help.
- 2.4 Q. What did you do in response to this message?
- 2.5 A. I think we -- I checked that there were people who could

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- 1 be sent up there to help. I can't imagine what else
- 2 I would have done.
- 3 Q. Who would you have checked with, or who did you check 4
- 5 A. I don't know. I mean, I might have started with Laura 6 and gone on to social care colleagues.
- 7 Q. Right. But Laura was housing.
- 8 A. Yes, indeed. But there would have been -- I would have 9 thought there would have been housing officers there 10 undertaking their role, so she might have had
- 11 a perspective on what else was needed.
- 12 Q. Had you thought at this -
- 13 A. I don't know the answer to that question, let me be clear. I'm guessing. 14
- 15 Q. Let's go next to {RBK00013272}. What I'm showing you 16 next here are the minutes of the RBKC Gold meeting that 17 happened at 3 o'clock on 14 June. You are present, and 18 you can see who else was present, Robert Black also

19 present.

2.0 If we go, please, to page 2 {RBK00013272/2}, where 2.1 you see in the second bullet point down under "Issues & 2.2 actions [arising] from the meeting", it says:

23 "We were short of senior managers at the 2.4 rest centres. The Board was invited to submit a list of 25 volunteers, with Corporate Cards, to TR who could help

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Opus 2 Official Court Reporters

A. I think —— well, it was becoming clear. It was not

Was that a reflection of the fact that RBKC, in

fact, structurally and in resource terms, couldn't cope

with the scale of this incident?

clear enough to me on the day. On that Wednesday, we were in continuous sort of call and response mode, I would say. We were seeking to do better. We knew certain things we had to do; other things then needed to be added to that list, and I think that that forms part of the cycle of action and reaction over the course of that day.

Q. Did this message from Rock Feilding-Mellen that the Westway was in chaos not prompt you to reconsider whether or not you should be seeking external mutual aid or, indeed, triggering the LLAG Gold arrangements?

12 A. I think I thought it was a problem that could be solved 13 within our capacity, rather than escalating.

14 Q. Why did you think that?

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15 A. Because there were significant parts of the council who 16 were not completely under the cosh already and to whom 17 I could turn for further support. So Debbie Morris 18 looking after the donations was one example, I think 19 Sue Harris took on creating a rota that would help with 2.0 the Westway Sports Centre, and it was a case of 21 absorbing tasks across the breadth of the council.

2.2 Q. Did you discuss that very question with David Kerry or 23 Stuart Priestley or Tony Redpath at the time, so 2.4 mid-afternoon?

25 A. I don't remember a specific conversation on that. 1 Q. Right.

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2 Let's then go next to {GOL00000159}, which is 3 an email at 14.26 on 14 June, second email down, from 4 John Hetherington to Chris Naylor, the on-duty LLAG, and 5 this provides a general update on the situation.

There's a response from Chris Naylor at the top of the string, into which you are copied, as well as John Barradell at this point, and the response is simply a thank you.

10 But if we look down at the substance, in the third 11 paragraph it says, can you see, third line down from the 12 start of that paragraph:

13 "Cordons remain in place ..."

14 Can you see that?

15 A. Erm ...

16 Q. Third paragraph:

"There are 6 confirmed fatalities ..."

18 A Yes

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19 Q. "Cordons remain in place ..."

20 And then it says:

21 "RBKC have opened a number of reception centres and 22 a friends and family centre for this looking for people 23 involved in the incident. They have support from LBHF 2.4 for the reception centres and have received supportive 2.5 offers from a number of boroughs. At present they are

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1 managing within demands and assessing the exact need for 2

3 "There is a Cross Whitehall meeting at 16.00 which Nicholas will be on the call to represent local 5 government. The focus at present for RBKC is sorting 6 the practical and accommodation needs for those affected 7 by the incident.'

Was that an accurate summary of the position as it stood at the time as you saw it?

10 A. Well, I think the last sentence is correct. I think 11 that, given what we've just seen, to say RBKC have 12 opened a number of reception centres is not right, 13 because the voluntary sector opened reception centres 14 for the most part. I mean, you can -- I think Westway 15 might be different.

> "At present they are managing within demands"; well, we were in the process of trying to ensure that we were, so I think that is probably too optimistic, but we were trying to assess the exact need for support, certainly.

2.0 Q. Right.

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21 So it's not perfect. Α.

2.2 Right. So you were intending to manage within demands, 23 thought you were, but in fact weren't?

2.4 A. I think that's fair enough.

2.5 Q. Right.

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Then let's turn to the first ministerial meeting, 1 Q. Were you contacted after the meeting about why you 2 cross-Whitehall. As it says in this email, there was to 2 weren't there or to be the recipient of an update, do 3 be one at 1600 hours. 3 you remember? A. No, I don't recall that. 4 Was it the case that you received the invitation for 4 5 that meeting but, due to an administrative error not of 5 Q. Right. your making, you were unable to join the call? Let's move on in the day, then, to the meeting with 6 6 7 A. I'm pretty certain I didn't join it. The reason for not 7 John Barradell at 5.30, 17.30, on that day, 14 June. joining it, you know, would not come naturally to mind. 8 8 Let's go, please, to $\{GOL00000155\}$. We can see the 9 Q. Right. There are records within the Inquiry's 9 invitation and the agenda for that meeting. At it were 10 10 disclosure that would show that. to be you, Chris Naylor, John Barradell, John O'Brien, 11 11 John Hetherington and Mark Sawyer, and the agenda items: 12 12 Q. But you don't know anything about the reason, but you "

Significant changes to the situation overview and 13 didn't ioin it. 13 pan London coordination structures in place 14 14 You saw that it was going to happen, though, from (John Hetherington/Nicholas Holgate) 15 the email that you got or were copied in to from 15 " • Immediate and longer term support requirements Chris Naylor to John Hetherington. Did you follow that for RBK&C (Nicholas Holgate). 16 16 17 up and seek to join the cross—Whitehall meeting? 17 " • Wider London implications (All). 18 A. I don't remember. There are quite a few meetings, and 18 "It is anticipated to take approximately 15 mins for 19 19 I'm not sure when the strategic co-ordinating group the call." 20 meeting was at that time. I think my own Council Gold 20 That was sent at 16.10; yes? 2.1 meeting had finished before it, but I'm not sure about 2.1 A. Yes. 22 the -- I think the SCG might have been 5.30, so it 2.2 Q. And you, as you can see, got that invitation. 2.3 23 should have been possible. Now, what was your understanding -- well, let me ask 2.4 Q. Yes. Were you asked to provide any information to the 2.4 you this way: if you look at the text, it says: cross-Whitehall meeting before it happened? 2.5 "A teleconference has been organised for 17.30 ... 109 111 1 A. I don't remember doing so, and I would have been very 1 The purpose of the call is to understand the likely 2 surprised if I wouldn't have written an email to that 2 support RBK&C will require and how this can be best 3 effect if I had been asked to do so. 3 supported across local government and in particular strategic support to Nicholas. Secondly to consider the Let's go to $\{CAB00002714\}$, minutes of that meeting. wider implications for RBK&C and London, and what 5 5 There it is: "Ministerial meeting: Grenfell Tower fire. 6 initial actions are required." 6 7 7 14 June 2017" Was it you who prompted that call and the purpose of 8 Now, we don't have a record of your receiving these 8 that meeting? 9 9 I don't think so. minutes after the meeting, either in an email or in the 10 documents in your possession. Do you remember seeing 10 So was it thrust upon you, essentially? 11 these minutes after the meeting at all? 11 Well, very welcome. I think it was a very welcome 12 A. I'm pretty certain I wouldn't have seen them. 12 initiative on London Resilience's part. 13 13 Q. Not, right. Q. Right. Was it your view at the time that the call had 14 14 no purpose because you didn't need support? Let's go to page 1, b) at the bottom: 15 15 "Immediate shelter and medium term rehousing." A. No. No. I thought that the value of the call. in 16 That was listed as a key issue. 16 addition to anything that other copy recipients thought 17 17 they would get from it, the value of the call would be Then underneath that it says: 18 "The local Council were presently identifying 18 for me to give an account and for others on the call to

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correctly summarised the position, didn't it?

A. Yes, I think that's a fair enough as a summary, yeah.

temporary accommodation for those residents of

currently asking for additional support."

Grenfell Tower. Longer-term re-housing would also be

the responsibility of the Council. The Council were not

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I think from your evidence this morning, that

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say, "Have you thought of X?", or, "What you've said on

Y is either reassuring, not reassuring", and so on. It

was a way of people who had thought more deeply about

emergency planning than I had to hold me to account, in

a kindly fashion but nevertheless an effective fashion.

John Hetherington's text of what he says in the email?

That's not how it comes across, though, is it, in

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Day 273

- A. No. Well, I mean, what he says is absolutely fine as far as it goes, but I think that the subtext was: are you managing, and do you need to invoke London Gold or not?
- Q. Did it occur to you at the time to ask yourself thequestion: "Well, why are they asking me that? I'mmanaging fine"?
- 8 A. I would not have taken so presumptuous an attitude. 9 I think, having talked to Eleanor Kelly earlier in the 10 day, and also having seen some of the toing and froing 11 and the efforts we were making to try and bring help, 12 there was room for doubt, there was room for not knowing 13 as much as I could have done, and sharing where 14 I thought we were with this particular set of copy 15 recipients was as good a way of stress testing what we 16 were then doing as I could find.
- Q. Is it fair to say that by this stage, teatime on
 14 June, you were beginning to have doubts about your
 confidence in the ability of RBKC to cope on its own
 without external help?
- A. I think I was probably still thinking that we were in the throes of a response and that we were making some progress. I mean, I took some comfort at both Gold meetings from what appeared to be and what I think was actually some good progress on the part of the housing

department, which Laura Johnson sets out in her statement, for example.

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So, you know, I knew that I did not know, but I did not know how far we were falling short, and having an interlocutor who was independent of the efforts that the council was making, but who had given thought and had the professional —— relevant professional background was a very good way of trying to either affirm or refute that we were doing enough in the right way.

Q. Now, according to John Barradell's Inquiry witness
 statement number 1 at paragraph 31 {GOL00000244/9}, he
 refers to "various issues facing RBKC" that were the
 subject of what he says there was "extensive discussion"
 on the call.

Can you help us with what those were?

Do you agree, first of all, there was extensive discussion of various issues?

18 A. Well, "extensive" implies that it went on for quite
19 a long time. I think I'd be surprised if it lasted as
20 short a time as 15 minutes, but I'm not sure it went on
21 a very long time.

What I do recall is John Hetherington's account of that telephone meeting, and I think I remember thinking that that was a perfectly reasonable account of it when I saw it.

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1 Q. I see

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Do you remember whether questions were asked about the sufficiency of resources in relation to temporary housing or social workers, or communications, or community cohesion and things of that nature?

A. I don't remember the specifics of the call, I'm afraid. I think John's account is all that I would sort of recollect at one remove.

Q. Right. Let's look at that and see if what I'm putting
 to you is what you're referring to by his account.
 {GOL00000181}. This is an email of 18.59 at the

14 June from John Hetherington to you, Chris Naylor, John Barradell, Mark Sawyer and John O'Brien:

14 "Good evening,

15 "A short precis of the earlier Teleconference."

You can see what's then set out underneath that.

17 A. Yes

18 Q. Is this what you're referring to?

19 A. Yes, it is, I think so.

20 Q. So you have read this recently, have you?

21 A. A few days ago, probably.

Q. Right. But, having refreshed your memory from it, youdon't have any quarrel with its accuracy as an account

24 of the --

25 A. No, I think I thought at the time it was accurate and

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1 I've no reason to change my tune on that.

2 Q. Right.

3 Do you know why a full minute wasn't taken of the 4 meeting?

A. Well, I mean, that may just be people trying to convey
 the substance of a meeting in a — you know, under
 considerable time pressure, making sure that the

8 headlines are circulated as quickly as they can.

9 Q. Now, John O'Brien has provided a witness statement to
10 the Inquiry. Let's just look at that, please. It's
11 {LOC00000004/3}. I would like to look with you, please,
12 at paragraph 7. This is about this meeting, and he
13 refers to the 18.59 note we've just looked at, which he
14 exhibits, and he said:

"The note does not record Eleanor Kelly as being present on this call and I do not recall her being so. During the call, I said to Nicholas Holgate that if the Council's political leadership thought it would be helpful at any point to have a conversation with other borough Leaders I would be happy to see if I could facilitate that. My recollection is that on the call Nicholas Holgate related the response actions being taken by the Council to that point in time, working with other partners, and answered some questions on that from

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25 other participants on the call ."

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1 Just pausing there, is that right? John O'Brien and Mark Sawyer? 2 A. That seems right to me. 2 A. I think that it was an obvious choice, and they were 3 Q. "Participants asked Nicholas Holgate to consider 3 right, absolutely right, to seek to explore whether the 4 further, specific assistance that the Council may 4 choice should be made. $\ensuremath{\mathsf{Q}}.$ You say in your statement at paragraph 32 at page 6 5 require from other boroughs." 5 6 Is that right? $\{RBK00035426/6\}$ — there is no need to go to it — that 6 7 A. I think it's very likely they would have said such 7 at that stage no one seemed to envisage an escalation in 8 a thing. I've no difficulty with that. 8 the response of local government; is that correct? 9 Q. Right. Then: 9 A. That is correct. 10 10 "Nicholas Holgate acknowledged the many offers of Q. I think you say you could have escalated your response 11 mutual aid that had already been made and welcomed. 11 and asked colleagues from other boroughs to take charge 12 on behalf of London boroughs as a whole, but essentially 12 Further steps, including the invitation to receive 13 13 further, experienced officers the next day, were agreed vou chose not to do so --14 14 as detailed in the note ... ' Correct. 15 Do you agree with both of those? 15 $Q. \ --$ at that stage. A. I think that's right. 16 A Correct 16 Q. Right, thank you. 17 17 Q. Was that because you thought that the two colleagues 18 If we go back to the précis of the meeting, please, 18 coming from Southwark and the offer of the comms team 19 at {GOL00000181}, which you have accepted, it says under 19 2.0 20 A. Well, and Mark Sawyer, and people from Hammersmith "Immediate and longer term support": 21 "LB Southwark will send two senior officers with 21 helping at the reception centre or the BECC or both, and 22 recent experience and longer term experience of recovery 22 other arrangements of which I might not have been aware, 2.3 23 following the London Bridge and Lakanal House and which management colleagues were completely at 2.4 incidents ' 2.4 liberty to adopt. Four lines underneath that: 2.5 So, again, it was absolutely not a case of RBKC 117 119 1 "City of London have offered Communications Team 1 managing all on its own, but trying to fill out where support to RBKC, this will be arranged direct between they needed to do so. 2 2 3 the two comms teams. 3 Q. Did you have any further telephone conversation with "London Resilience will work with RBKC to ensure the 4 John Barradell that evening? 5 right support to Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery 5 A. I don't believe so. 6 6 Q. Now, I just want to look at two other limbs of support Going forward ... ' 7 7 You have accepted the accuracy of that as a subject and the circumstances in which they were provided. 8 8 First, John Barradell tells us in his first witness of discussion. Was there any support offered that you 9 9 statement to the Inquiry $\{GOL00000244/9\}$ that it was didn't accept, any specific support? 10 A. I don't think so. 10 agreed during this call, the 17.30 call on 14 June, that 11 Q. Did anyone advise you that the incident was too big for 11 he and Eleanor Kelly, who was, as we know, from 12 one local authority to deal with? 12 Southwark, would provide support or peer support to you. 13 A No 13 That doesn't appear to have been mentioned in the Q. Was activation of the London Gold resolution discussed 14 14 post-meeting précis, other than that Southwark would 15 15 by anyone on that call? send two officers. Is that right? A. I don't think it was explicitly discussed, but I do 16 16 A. I don't -- well, what he might be referring to is that 17 think it lurked underneath the conversation, and I think 17 I think, either implicitly or explicitly, it was agreed 18 that -- I mean, if I had either changed my mind by then 18 that there would be a very similar phone call on 19 or if the answers to the questions had been 19 Thursday, and that essentially, again by implication,

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Chris Naylor being the on—duty LLAG, John Barradell,

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rights to say, "We think you should invoke London Gold".

insufficiently encouraging, then I think I would have

expected and they would have been well within their

You say it lurked under the surface; was that purely

because of the identity of those on the call,

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A. Well, I think the phone call and, as it were, the

and I was entirely in accord and welcomed that.

did you understand at the time?

there would be tabs kept with sufficient frequency to be

able to react if the situation appeared to have changed.

How would the peer support be given, if it was offered,

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Day 273

MR MILLETT: Thank you.

1		searching conversation taking place on that phone call	1	(1	.00 pm)
2		would probably tell Eleanor and John whether there was	2		(The short adjournment)
3		a problem that required me to be persuaded to invoke	3	(2	.00 pm)
4		London Gold.	4	SII	R MARTIN MOORE $-$ BICK: Right, Mr Holgate, ready to carry
5	Q.	What peer support was provided to you, if any, during	5		on, I hope?
6		the period between this call at 5.30 and the evening of	6	TH	HE WITNESS: Yes, thank you.
7		the 14th, and the activation of the Gold resolution on	7	SII	R MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much.
8		16 June?	8		Yes, Mr Millett.
9	Α.	Well, first of all, I would say that the London Gold was	9	М	R MILLETT: Thank you, Mr Chairman.
10		activated on the evening of 15 June.	10		Mr Holgate, can I take you back, please, to
11		All right.	11		{GOL00000181}.
12	Α.	But that's, you know, another matter.	12		(Pause)
13		I think that what I could have done, and I'm sure	13		Yes. I can see paragraphs 31 to 33.
14		what I should have done, is what I did do the following	14		That's not the document we want.
15		week, which was to invite an experienced local authority	15		I beg your pardon.
16		chief executive colleague to come and, as it were, be in	16	Q.	{GOL00000181}, please. Yes, that's the one.
17		the room at all times and help me to do the role that	17		Now, this is the email from John Hetherington to you
18		I was then assigned to do, and Barry Quirk, who	18		at 18.59 on 14 June, we looked at it earlier.
19		of course took over from me, turned up on I think either	19		Yes.
20		the Monday or the Tuesday of the following week.	20	Q.	You said you had seen this and there wasn't anything
21		I could have done such a thing the previous week, and	21		which you would quarrel with, and it reflects your
22	_	that would have probably helped.	22		recollect as best you have it.
23	Q.	The second limb of support relates to what I think is	23		Can I take you, please, to the heading, "Immediate
24		called the after—call note, which was that Mark Sawyer	24		and longer term support", and look under that at the
25		would liaise with RBKC to detail the support and provide	25		third line, which says this:
		121			123
1		initial support on structures, needs and experience of	1		"If requested by the Leader of RBKC, London Councils
2		previous events.	2		may make an approach to political leaders across London
3		Were those discussed afterwards?	3		to provide political support to RBKC but it was
4	A.	Well, it says he would discuss with RBKC tomorrow	4		recognised this is a small network of people able to act
5		morning, and $$	5		in this capacity and a delicate subject."
6	Q.	Yes, did he?	6		Who said that?
7	Α.	Yes, he came to the council, and I wouldn't be able to	7	Α.	Well, I don't know, but the active parties in the
8		recount individual conversations to you, but he was	8		sentence appear to be the leader of RBKC and
9		invaluable on the Thursday.	9		London Councils.
10	MI	R MILLETT: Thank you.	10	Q.	Right. What was meant, so far as you recollect it and
11		Mr Chairman, is that a convenient moment?	11		understood it, by an approach to political leaders to
12	SII	R MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Yes, I think it is. Thank you very	12		provide political support to RBKC?
13		much.	13	Α.	I think what it might have meant was that if
14		Well, Mr Holgate, it's time we all had a break to	14		Councillor Paget—Brown felt extremely beleaguered and,
15		get some lunch. So we will stop there and resume,	15		you know, completely on his own, then just possibly
16		please, at 2 o'clock.	16		another council leader could say something like, "Please
17		As before, please don't talk to anyone about your	17		give Kensington and Chelsea a chance to do its job", or
18		evidence while you're out of the room. All right?	18		something like that.
19		HE WITNESS: Certainly.	19	Q.	What was it at that time $$ so early in the evening of
20	SII	R MARTIN MOORE—BICK: Thank you very much. Would you care	20		14 June 2017 $$ that led people on this call to think
21		to go with the usher, please. Thank you.	21		that RBKC needed what is called political support?
22		(Pause)	22	Α.	Well, it may have been that commentary was beginning to
23		Thank you very much, Mr Millett. 2 o'clock, then,	23		turn. So this isn't contemporaneous, but, I mean, the
24		please.	24		next I think it was at the $next$ Gold meeting that the

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head of media and communications said that conversation

- 1 was turning to cause and blame, and it may be that there
- 2 was an intimation of that even by the Wednesday evening.
- 3 Q. Cause and blame of?
- 4 A. Of the fire, either the responsibility for the fire in
- 5 the first place, let alone addressing the aftermath.
- Q. Right. Was that -- well, will you help me: what was the 6 7 delicate subject?
- A. Well, that there was a crisis and potentially a huge 8 9 number of people who'd lost their lives.
- 10 Q. Was the delicate subject the handling of the aftermath 11 of the fire or the causes?
- 12 A. I'd have thought both, and the fact of it. The fact of
- 13 it immediately gives rise to a question as to who is
- 14 responsible and can we, you know, in an age of media
- 15 frenzy, immediately identify and pillory the culprits,
- and actually it was a lot harder, as all your 16
- 17 painstaking work has indicated, it is somewhat harder,
- 18 and there are many more people involved in
- 19 an explanation of the fire than might have appeared at
- 20
- 2.1 Q. Now, this is at just before 7 pm on the 14th. Do you
- 2.2 recall that at 7.30 pm there was a strategic
- 2.3 co-ordination group meeting, the fifth of that day?
- 2.4 A. I don't spontaneously recollect it. no.
- 25 Q. I think, in fact, you weren't in attendance at that,

- 1 according to the records, and that RBKC was represented
- 2 by Tony Redpath, David Kerry and Rebecca Blackburn.
- 3 A. Okay.

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- Q. Did Mr Kerry update you about what transpired at that
- 5
- A. I don't remember him doing so. 7 Q. Were you aware that concerns were expressed about the
- 8 lack of accurate details about the numbers of those
- 9 affected?
- 10 A. Again, I don't recall that, but I think that would --
- 11 I mean, that would have been a perfectly valid comment,
- 12 and I think it would have been something that would not
- 13 have completely surprised me.
- Q. Do you remember being told by Mr Kerry by way of update 14
- 15 that the police had asked that RBKC improve their
- 16 messaging?
- A. Again, that doesn't ring a bell, but it is perfectly 17 18 possible that he did do.
- 19 Q. Did he tell you that there was an action point, which 2.0
- 21 vou -
- 2.2 A. Right.
- 23 - at {LFB00119322/4}, which said:
- 2.4 "Future communications to provide clarity of
- 25 messaging to partners and the public what is provided by

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one can see in the minute, which I don't need to show

- the authority at various reception centres."
- 2 A. Yeah.

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- 3 Q. Did he update you on that?
- 4 A. I don't remember that, but I think it would —— I mean.
 - I don't dispute at all that it would have been
- a perfectly valid point for somebody to make. 6
- 7 Q. Now, at that meeting there was also discussion of
- 8 putting plans in place overnight for recovery and
 - humanitarian assistance.
- 10 Now, we know from Sue Redmond's evidence that she
 - was appointed to the role of HALO to lead the HASG, the
- 12 humanitarian assistance steering group, on 15 June, the
- 13 next day: yes?
- A. I think that's right. 14
- 15 Q. And you I think accepted earlier when I asked you that
- 16 she had a pivotal role.
- Was there any reason why you didn't officially 18 appoint the HALO on 14 June and ensure that the
- 19 humanitarian assistance steering group was established
- 20
- 2.1 A. It may have been the case that I was worried about the
- 22 burdens that that would entail, and that I was
- 2.3 reflecting on whether there was someone who could lead
- 2.4 that work within the council's purview.
- 2.5 Q. Was there?

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- 1 A. Well, I think although Sue was an interim executive
- 2 director, and although she was new, actually she was
- 3 a very experienced senior social worker, and I think she
- could and in practice did do a lot towards making that
- 5 role a reality.
- 6 Q. Right.

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- 7 Did you tell her that she would find out the
 - following day if she was to be HALO or not?
- 9 I think there was an email to that effect, but -- yeah.
- 10 Q. Right. Was there a lack of clarity in your mind as to
- 11 who was to be the HALO?
- 12 A. I think I was quite keen that it would be her, but I was
- 13 worried about whether it was asking too much.
- 14 Q. Did you discuss that worry with anybody internally at
- 15 RBKC?
- 16 A. I don't remember doing so.
- 17 Q. Or anyone at London Resilience, given that they were now
- 18 involved?
- 19 A. No, I don't remember doing so.
- 2.0 Q. Right. Why is that? Why didn't you?
- 21 A. I think -- I suppose I thought that it was my
- 2.2 responsibility
- Q. Right, it may have been, but why not discuss how you 23
- 2.4 were to discharge that responsibility with somebody who
- 2.5 was perhaps a little bit more expert in the field?

1 A. Yes. Well, I agree, I think that would have been a very with the operational response. Stick with page 7 and 2 sensible course of action. 2 look at the heading "15 June", paragraph 35: 3 Q. Why didn't you? 3 "Thursday, 15 June was effectively a continuation of 4 A. It didn't occur to me to do so. I thought I had to take 4 the efforts and plans put in place the day before. Two 5 responsibility. 5 further Gold meetings took place during 15th June and Q. Yes I produce a copy of the Gold Meeting actions sheets from 6 6 7 Can we go to Sue Redmond's statement, please, her 7 these meetings as Exhibits NH/20 and NH/21." Now, you attended the Westway Sports Centre at 8 second statement at $\{RBK00058120/5\}$, and on page 5 we 8 9 can see at paragraph 7.3 she says: 9 6 o'clock that morning, didn't you, I think? 10 "Whilst preparing for the first HASG meeting, I was 10 hib I A 11 informed by Nicholas Holgate that an expert from 11 Q. And you say in your statement, in the next paragraph: 12 12 London Councils may be joining us on 15 June 2017 and "It appeared to me that it was functioning well." 13 that he may take the role of HALO.' 13 That's paragraph 36; yes? Do you recall telling Sue Redmond that? 14 14 15 A. I don't, but I may have been thinking of Mark Sawyer at 15 Q. "(It was then that I learned that about 25 people had 16 16 the time staved the night there.)" 17 17 What was it that led you to form the view that it Q. Right, thank you. 18 Were you aware that Sue Redmond was not in fact 18 was functioning well? trained on RBKC's contingency management plan? A. Well, I talked both with the two officers who had stayed 19 19 A. I think I'd have been implicitly conscious of that, 20 overnight and also the representative of the Red Cross, 20 2.1 given that she had been in post for quite a short time. 21 and I could see what I thought was a reasonably orderly 2.2 Q. Was it a deliberate decision by you to wait until 22 layout. In particular, I could see that someone had 2.3 23 taken quite a lot of trouble to stack up in an orderly 15 June to --2.4 A No 2.4 fashion a fraction of the many donations that we'd 25 Q. Right. So what caused you to make the decision when you 2.5 received, and I took some comfort from the fact that not 129 131 1 did as opposed to earlier? 1 a huge number of people had stayed overnight, but some A. I think perhaps the need to press on and have someone do 2 2 people had stayed over -- some survivors had stayed 3 it, or at least begin to do it, pending an even more 3 overnight. qualified person turning up. Q. But, nonetheless, I think your view of the scale of the 5 Q. Do you accept now that that appointment should have been 5 incident and the needs that could be furnished by RBKC 6 had not changed from the previous day? 6 made earlier and --7 7 A. Yes. I do. A. I think that's right. 8 Q. — that valuable time in that respect was lost? 8 Q. Yes. 9 9 Just out of interest, what at that stage, early in A. I absolutely accept that. 10 Q. Now, let's get to the end, then, of 14 June. 10 the morning of the 15th, did you think the status was in 11 In your statement at paragraph 34, page 7 11 terms of the LRP framework and the protocols that 12 $\{RBK00035426/7\}$, if we can go to that, please, you say: 12 Westway had at that stage? What kind of centre was it, 13 13 "Overall, I believed then that the Borough had did vou think? A. Primarily a rest centre. Primarily a place where 14 initiated the right arrangements and that officers were 14 15 15 focusing on the right priorities. I now know that survivors could go for support. 16 around 340 RBKC staff were mobilised on 14 June." 16 Q. Well, those are not the same thing, are they? 17 Was it your view at the end of that day that council 17 A. Well, there were -- there was scope for people to sleep

20 A. I think I would go for sufficiently.

sufficiently well?

21 Q. Sufficiently, but I think that's a view you now recant?

officers were managing the response well, or at least

A. I would say so. I mean, not at least because of whatwe've just said about the HALO.

24 Q. Thank you.

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Let's then turn to 15 June 2017, and I want to start

respects it was the centre through which council

there, but there was also scope for people to go there

helpful to them. So I think it is -- it had been

a rest centre overnight. If it had to, it could have

been a rest centre again, and I think indeed there were

to stay in that location or very nearby. But in other

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a handful of people, for very strong reasons, who wanted

and meet council officers and collect goods if they were

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Day 273

1		officers could meet survivors if they needed to, to help	1		a hotel in the course of the day to address as many of
2		them.	2		their needs as we can manage."
3	Q.	Now, what communications strategy was in place from the	3		Was it the case that the ability to receive support
4		14th into the morning of the 15th about providing the	4		from the council was dependent on the affected person
5		community with updates on the relief effort?	5		making themselves known at the Westway?
6	Α.	Well, I had hoped that this would have been a product of	6	A.	Well, for those that had obtained accommodation the
7		the fact that the council was working with itself across	7		previous day, I think, as I say there, we were hoping to
8		the functions and that managers across the council knew	8		be able to see them in their $$ you know, in or related
9		whom to contact for any given support. So I had thought	9		to their accommodation.
10		that messages would go through the officers, in	10	Q.	I mean, you would agree that communication about what
11		particular, attending rest centres or any other places	11		support was available out there into the community was
12		where they could meet survivors, and that that would be	12		critical; yes?
13		reflected, for instance, on the council website and	13	A.	Yes.
14		other messages released to the media.	14	Q.	Yes. Do you recall, as indicated in these emails,
15	Q.	Can we go to {RBK00005409}. Halfway down the first	15		speaking with Councillor Weale, as we saw earlier, on
16		page, email from Warwick Lightfoot,	16		the evening of 14 June about preparing leaflets and
17		Councillor Lightfoot, to you and Nicholas Paget-Brown,	17		posters?
18		subject, "The Council's need to co-ordinate in	18	A.	Yeah.
19		North Kensington".	19	Q.	Yes. What was done about that, do you know?
20		If you look a little bit further down, if you go,	20	A.	I don't.
21		please, to page 2 of the email run $\{RBK00005409/2\}$, at	21	Q.	Is it right that a draft leaflet was created by a number
22		the top of the page, it says.	22		of councillors under their own steam?
23		"There remains a serious challenge in the	23	A.	That may be so.
24		co-ordination between the Council and the Police around	24	Q.	Let's look at {RBK00038615}. Email to you from
25		the issue of who is dead, missing and who is in hospital	25		Mary Weale at 18.46 on 15 June, so it's the evening of
		133			135
1		and the Council not being able to offer guidance, which	1		that
2		as I understand it is very much a matter for the	2	A.	Yeah.
3		police	3	Q.	day. She suggests to you distributing:
4		"I think the Council has to be much more visible.	4		" in printed form to the centres that have been
5		Moreover that visibility will be needed in the days and	5		operating, even if they are no longer official , and put
6		weeks ahead. The full focus of the Council has to	6		up and handed out and emailed to councillors, the front
7		remain on this matter and it must take priority over all	7		desk, other vol orgs etc as soon as possible."
8		other work we need to be doing. I am not yet persuaded	8		Now, that leaflet wasn't distributed, was it?
9		we are fully on top of the position. Can I assure that	9	A.	I don't recall it being so, no.
10		I was hugely impressed by Council staff, the generosity	10	Q.	Do you recall that one of the co-authors,
11		of our public and the police and fire officers ."	11		Councillor Faulks, emailed you again the next day?
12		Did you consider at the time that you got this	12		Let's look at that, $\{RBK00003124/3\}$, bottom of the
13		email, which I have not told you, but was at 08.21 in	13		thread. There it is:
14		the morning, that those were valid comments and	14		"Dear all,
15		concerns?	15		"I have repeatedly said to Mr Redpath and others
16	Α.	I think they are valid comments and concerns. Yeah.	16		that we need to communicate more with communities. The
17	Q.	Right.	17		councillors preparing a leaflet that I wanted to get out

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If we go to your response at the top of page $\boldsymbol{1}$ $\{\mbox{RBK00005409}/1\},$ we can see you say there at 9.17, an hour or so later:

"Thank you. We are clear where people need to go: Westway Sports Centre. That has been on the news too."

Then in the last paragraph you say:

"We are visible at Westway and although this is not yet certain, we plan to visit every one given shelter in 134

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last night, but there was still no sign of it today.

"I have become the focus now for discontent saying that we are not listening . Please can you advise me as

soon as you can tomorrow am what and how we can handle

this situation. We have been far too late to reach out

 $-\ \mbox{but}$ not for want of us councillors asking for help and

to take all the blame for this. We really need help and

advice to do so. We are the front line and are having

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transcripts@opus2.com Opus 2 Official Court Reporters 020 4515 2252

"Please see email below as an example of what I am receiving."

There's quite a detailed email on page 4 {RBK00003124/4}, which sets out some of the matters in respect of which the community was expressing discontent, matters like wristbands, tagging, housing arrangements, burial procedures for Muslim groups or from Muslim groups as a concern, et cetera.

Do you recall that?

A. I don't — I recall, I think, Councillor Faulks' email. If I saw that, I probably saw this, and I would have alerted the media team, I imagine, but I can't remember, to try and respond to this, and --

Q. Right.

A. I mean. I think it is absolutely fair commentary and it is perfectly strong evidence that the borough was not covering all the bases that it needed to, either at the start or by this date, which was presumably the Friday.

Q. Yes. Do you accept that no leaflet was in the event distributed by RBKC before the Saturday, the 17th?

2.2 A. I think that's right, yeah, I think that's right.

2.3 Q. What accounted for the delay?

2.4 A. Well, I suspect that, as Mr Maxwell-Scott said, our media team was very small, and I think that it was too

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1 absorbed in reactive work with the media wanting answers to lots of questions, and really, you know, we had to 2 3 forsake that purpose and get on with this, and we didn't. We weren't purposeful enough in this regard. Q. Did it not occur to you at that time, and this is now

6 the 15 th -- I mean, this is later, clearly, but on the 7 $15 th \ --$ that that was one area, comms, where you could 8 ask for mutual aid?

A. Well, correct, and we did get two people from the City of London, and if Martin Fitzpatrick had wanted more people, he could have obtained more people. But what we should have done is been alert to the possibility that he and his team were essentially getting submerged and they weren't coping.

15 Q. Yes.

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Now, do you recall -- well, let's look at it. {RBK00002480}.

Now, if we go, please, to the bottom of page 1, we can see that here is an email from Rock Feilding-Mellen to Amanda Gill, copied to you, and over the page {RBK00002480/2} we can see the email signed by Rock Feilding-Mellen:

"Sorry to burden this with you now, when you have so much else to be doing, but I just skimmed the email below from CIIr Mills and it sounded to me as [though]

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she was suggesting the Council had a policy of only housing vulnerable residents last night (see her 3rd para). This is not my understanding of our policy?"

4 Now, you were copied in to this. Can we take it 5 that you also saw and read Councillor Mills' email halfway down page 2, which is an email to all 7 the councillors and to Councillor Paget-Brown? Did you 8 see that?

A. I can see the copy list at the moment.

10 $Q.\,$ Yes. And then if you go to the top of page 3 11 {RBK00002480/3}, you can see how it starts:

12 "Thank you for this. 13

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"As you know I spent most of the day at Rugby Portobello and later visited St. James and St. Clements."

16 And it goes on, and I just want to look at the third 17 paragraph:

> "Really sad to see vesterday that it was only the disabled, over 65s and people with kids under 10 were to be housed last evening. Whatever the exigencies of this approach, some families had witnessed people throwing their kids down or losing touch with small children &friends and were so devastated that I personally found that the idea of not putting many more up quite extraordinary."

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Then two paragraphs down, after the reference to the evacuation of Lancaster West:

"The manner in which this news was delivered by officers was equally insensitive . There were no Arabic interpreters that I could see. No news of missing people. One Sudanese group had travelled from Derbyshire to get news."

Then a little bit lower down:

"St. James told me that Westfield had offered 100000 beds but KC officialdom had turned it down because KC insurance was not adequate."

Just pausing there, is that right?

13 A. I have to say, I don't recollect that at all. I've no 14 idea what insurance would have to do with the offer of 15 heds

16 Q. Then:

> "Fresh cold food was being delivered. It being Ramadan it could not be eaten. No storage facilities had been set up. Luckily Tabernacle Matthew and Pepe brought down hot food and suitable to some groups.

"The traffic in the whole area meant congested side stress streets ... No messaging or coordination between

And then it says:

"However there is still not a central trained

1 coordinator with authority at each centre from the 2 Council who can connect all the agencies. You may 3 remember that I sent a message from all the centres 4 yesterday asking for this. Maybe it will be different 5 today ... 6 " ... no number in this email which Councillors could 7 use as a contact which might be good to provide." 8 That's at the foot of the page. 9 Then top of page 4 $\{RBK00002480/4\}$: 10 "Which Cabinet Member is able to be contacted should 11 a problem arise? No one was available yesterday and no 12 briefing. May I suggest that Councillors are trained 13 and mobilised in the future as part of the support 14 process." 15 Then in the penultimate paragraph: 16 "When we come to examine this, we will need to 17 establish how a much better emergency and comms 18 procedure needs to be developed." 19 Now, there's quite a lot in that by way of 2.0 complaint, which travels far and wide, but the essential 2.1 point is: do you accept that there were a number of 22 areas of concern about the response raised with you at 2.3 this point? 2.4 A. Raised with me or others and copied to me, yes, I do. Q. Yes, and many of them focused on the paucity of the 141 1

- communication response.
- 2 A. Yes, yes, absolutely
- 3 Q. Now, while we've got this email open, can we perhaps
- deal briefly with the question of how the senior
- 5 leadership team in the council, including you, was
- 6 communicating with councillors.
- 7 In your Project Athena interview -- you remember the
- 8 Project Athena interviews in the early part of 2018? Do
- 9 you remember those?
- 10 A. No, I don't, but I must have done them.
- 11 Q. Right. Let's look at {RBK00029013}.
- 12
- 13 Q. Do you remember this meeting, this interview? It was 14 an internal investigation conducted by RBKC, and you
- 15 were interviewed as part of that process. Do you recall 16
- 17 A. I think -- yes, yes, I remember the --
- 18 Q. Right.
- 19 A. Lennart Poulson, yeah.
- Q. Let's go to page 14 in it $\{RBK00029013/14\},$ then, 2.0 21 please.
- 2.2 At page 14, at the very foot of the page, you say:
- 2.3 "I sent an email to all councillors on Wednesday
- 2.4 evening at 6.38pm, and the Council Leader sent one maybe
- 25 two days later. I think she [Judith Blakeman] has

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- a semi-respectable case where, in a sense, they should
- 2 have been bored by the number of communications from us
- 3 telling them what we were doing but those emails were
- 4 infrequent and I think we could have done better than
- that really.' 5
- 6 Is that right?
- 7 A. Yes

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- 8 Q. You accept that?
- 9 A. Absolutely.
- 10 Q. Do you accept that to update councillors is one of your
 - roles as Council Gold?
- 12 A. Absolutely, Absolutely,
- 13 Q. And do you consider that had councillors, and ward
- 14 councillors in particular where Grenfell was situated,
- 15 been promptly briefed, they could have provided
- 16 an additional channel of communication between
- 17 the council and those whom it was seeking to support?
- 18 A. Yes. I completely accept that.
- 19 Q. Let's then turn to Mark Sawyer's presence.
- 20 You told us earlier in today's evidence this morning
- 21 that he had attended on the morning of 15 June. He
- 22 tells us in his statement that he was there to provide
- 23 emergency planning and major incident response advice
- 2.4 and support where requested. That's how he puts it;
- 25 would you agree with that --

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- 1 A. I would.
- O. characterisation? 2.
- 3 A. Yes.
- Q. Is it the case that, on 15 June, you and David Kerry had
- 5 an initial meeting with Mark Sawyer before the 10 am
- 6 wider RBKC Gold meeting?
- 7 A. That sounds very -- yeah, sounds likely.
- 8 Q. He says in his statement, does Mark Sawyer, that he
- 9 raised a number of matters with you, including what it
- 10 was that RBKC should consider by way of additional
- 11 support it needed; do you agree?
- 12 A. I think he would have done so, yes.
- 13 Q. Do you remember it?
- A. Not specifically , but I'm completely happy to accept 14
- 15 that he would have done so.
- 16 Q. What was your view that morning as to the need for
- 17 additional support?
- 18 A. Well, probably humanitarian assistance would have been
- 19 amongst them. I don't think I would have been
- 2.0 sufficiently seized of the comms problems at that point
- 21 to mention them specifically, but plainly that would
- 2.2 have been a candidate as well. I think then -- and this
- 23 overlaps with the humanitarian assistance — there was
- 2.4 the setting up of facilities that begin to help those
- 25 who are bereaved as opposed to the survivors.

- 1 Q. Now, let's go back to your Project Athena interview, 2 please, at $\{RBK00029013/11\}$, and this is where, in the 3 interview, you are explaining what happened on the 4 Thursday, 15 June.
- 5 If you look at the third paragraph down, in the third line, you say this. Do you see where it says, 6 7 "What was different about Thursday"? Third paragraph 8 down, third line in.
- 9 A. Is that the paragraph beginning --
- 10 Q. It begins "I would communicate".
- 11 A. Yes, right.
- Q. Third line down, "What was different about Thursday". 12
- 13 A. Yes, got it, yeah, "What was different about Thursday".
- 14 Q. Yes. You say:

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"What was different about Thursday was that, even though we were not paying huge attention to media, the media focus was very much by that time on cause and blame. The first intimations that we were encountering criticism came on Thursday morning and the scale of the demand on the council was becoming clearer. There were also some follow up, additional auxiliary actions that the council was meant to be doing on the Thursday or soon afterwards, for example, at some point it was meant to open up a friends and family centre so that family of someone displaced by the fire would have somewhere to

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meet them. I was a little bit worried that we as the council alone didn't have the bandwidth to become involved with this next wave of things that had to be

Now, you say that the scale of the demand on the council was becoming clearer. Did you continue to believe that the council could cope on its own?

- 8 A. No. I mean, Thursday was the day the penny dropped that 9 it was beyond our capacity, at least insofar as I was 10 able to direct it.
- 11 Q. What was it that dropped the penny?
- 12 A. Well, I think a range of things, each of them not too 13 big, each of them potentially we could have dealt with, 14 but in combination they were becoming too diverse and 15 too numerous to think that we could get them all right 16 to the extent that we would want to.

So I think that enough of the media commentary percolated to make me think that there was need that we were not perceiving that we were not meeting, and I was worried that we -- my fault -- were slow off the mark with these $\,--\,$ supporting these complementary pursuits. So those were two things.

The other thing was the extent to which the council's role was compromised by having been the owner of Grenfell Tower, and that causing understandable

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anger in North Kensington.

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But the main thing was we were not getting -- we were getting enough queries, enough grounded complaint, enough sort of adverse comment of some sort or another to make it clear that we were not sufficiently far across the range of things that we should be addressing.

7 Q. Right. I mean, adverse comment is one thing, but from 8 what you could see, could you give us perhaps 9 a shortlist $\,\,--\,\,$ as short as you can make it, if you 10 can -- of the principal matters which on their own you 11 could have coped with, but which cumulatively meant that 12 you had been pushed over the edge?

13 Well, I'm afraid, I mean, at this distance it is quite hard to be that specific. I think on the day there was an accumulation of people's misgivings, people seeing 16 that there was confusion where by then there should have 17 been less confusion, and we were, you know -- I mean, 18 one of the former Cabinet Secretary's favourite words 19 was "grip", and we were plainly not gripping enough 20 facets of this crisis.

2.1 Q. Right.

> I think you mentioned that in the mix was the fact that, as you saw it at least -- is this right? -the council was compromised because of the anger over the causes of the fire and the fact that RBKC was the

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1 owner of the building?

2 A. I think that was an element in it, and I think that if 3 we had done well on other fronts, that might have been more manageable, but I don't think we were doing well 5 enough to demonstrate to people that we had their 6 interests at heart, we wanted to bring them as much 7 support as possible. There was too much 8 contraindication that we were failing in that, and that 9 was a goad to people who thought very little of the 10 council in the first place.

11 Now, it may be difficult to divide the day up into small 12 slices, but can you remember more or less when it was on 13 Thursday, 15 June that the penny dropped?

A. Well, I think it was an accumulation during the day. 14 15 You know, if there was a moment of revelation, then it 16 has escaped me. I think by the time the phone call with 17 John Barradell and others occurred, you know, I was 18 very, very worried indeed.

19 Q. Right.

> Let's take the day slightly more slowly. We start with the Gold meeting at 10.00 -- we've started already. but we're now going to the Gold meeting at 10.00 which you chaired. The minute is at {RBK00013270}, and we can see there that Mark Sawyer attended; do you see? It's the last name in the attendance list.

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Opus 2 Official Court Reporters

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. And he says in his statement to the Inquiry -- we don't
- 3 need to turn it up, it's paragraph 73 on page 14 of his
- 4 statement $\{GOL00001349/14\}$ — that he'd suggested to you
- 5 that the meeting had been very operational and not
- strategic enough. Is that right? Do you remember him 6
- saving that?
- A. I don't, but I completely accept such an observation. 8
- 9 Q. Do you remember whether the RBKC Gold Group structure or 10 strategy was changed after he'd said what he said?
- 11 A. I think I invited him to help me and whoever was Silver 12 at the time to improve the meetings accordingly. That 13 was something that he could contribute to.
- Q. Let's have his statement up, then, at {GOL00001349/11}. 14 15 I've put to you paragraph 73; let's look at paragraph 54
- 16 on page 11. He says there: 17 "However, in my opinion. I did not believe that 18 Nicholas HOLGATE had complete awareness of the scale and
- 19 complexity of what the Royal Borough of Kensington and 2.0 Chelsea were being asked to deal with, with a lack of
- 21 full situational awareness across the senior management 22 team. It was also my opinion that the Royal Borough of
- 2.3 Kensington and Chelsea had not been galvanised as
- 2.4 an organisation due to witnessing members of staff
- 25 seemingly continuing to deliver their day jobs whilst

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- 1 a small number of individuals appeared to be dealing
- with a significant number of issues at the same time." 2
- Do you agree that you didn't have, as he put it, a complete awareness of the scale and complexity of what
- 5 RBKC were dealing with?
- A. I think I do now, yes. 6
- 7 Q. You didn't at the time, I don't think, though, or did you at the time? 8
- A. I'm not sure I would have agreed with that opinion at 9 10 the time. I certainly accept that opinion now.
- 11 Q. No. I suppose you can't be aware of what you're not 12 aware of.
- 13 A. Yes.

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- 14 Q. In this case.
- 15 Were you aware that Mr Sawyer had raised with 16 Tony Redpath his concerns about the BECC not operating 17
- 18 A. I don't recall that, but it's perfectly possible that he 19 would have said it to me.
- 2.0 Q. Right.
- 21 Do you remember whether you knew that Mr Sawyer had 2.2 raised the absence of a sit rep from the BECC before any 23 RBKC Gold meeting and that that was hindering
- 2.4 situational awareness?
- 25 A. No, I don't remember that, but it sounds like a very

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- sensible observation to have made.
- Q. It's a fact -- and tell me if this is wrong -- that in
- 3 fact no situation report was produced by the BECC until
- 4 the morning of 16 June, the Friday.
- 5 A. That may be so, but I think what we were trying to do
- was to get the person in charge of or just completing 6
- 7 being in charge of the BECC to come to the Gold meeting,
- 8 but I accept that a written report would have been
- 9
- 10 Q. Yes. I mean, given that, as you described it in the
- 11 Project Athena interview, the BECC should have been the
- 12 spider at the centre of the web, can you account for why
- 13 there was no situational awareness report or sit rep
- 14 produced by it until more than 48 hours after --
- 15 A. Yes
- 16 Q -- the end of the incident?
- 17 A. Well, I would imagine that they were absolutely flat out
- 18 on other functions, including responding to emails,
- 19 phone calls and so on.
- 20 Q. And again, that comes back to why they were so flat out
- 2.1 that they couldn't give senior management within
- 22 the council a situation report.
- 2.3 A. Yeah, it does, and there were too few of them.
- 2.4 Q. Too few of them?
- 2.5

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- 1 Q. Now, do you remember after the RBKC Gold meeting at
- 10 am Rebecca Blackburn advising you to seek assistance, 2
 - invoking London Gold?
- A. I don't, but that would certainly have been one of the 5
- pennies dropping during that day.
- ${\sf Q}.$ She says in her evidence -- let me just show this to 6
- 7 you, to be precise. This is at $\{RBK00035364/8\}$,
- 8 paragraph 37, and she confirmed this when she came to 9 give evidence to the Inquiry. If we look at that, she

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- 11 "During the day, I spoke to Tony Redpath and
- 12 Nicholas Holgate about when responsibility for managing
- 13 the incident would return to the Borough. I suggested
- 14 that they seek assistance from other London boroughs
- 15 invoking London Gold. Nicholas told me that he had
- 16 received an e-mail from the Chief Executive of Southwark
- 17 Council offering assistance. He said she had particular
- 18 experience from the Lakanal House Fire. I had the
- 19 impression that senior management at the Borough were
- 2.0 reluctant to seek mutual aid, despite the fact I had
- 21 advised Nicholas Holgate and Tony Redpath to activate
- 2.2 London Gold after the Gold meeting.'

23 Now, leaving aside her impression, do you agree or 2.4 can you recall the facts to which she speaks in that

2.5 paragraph there?

- A. Well, again, I think there is this distinction between invoking London Gold and seeking and accepting specific assistance from other London boroughs. The latter was absolutely fine more or less from the start of the crisis. The former, in the course of Thursday, this was the direction I was moving in. You know, it's perfectly reasonable to say I should have moved faster.

 8 Q. Do you remember telling her, when she advised invoking
- Q. Do you remember telling her, when she advised invoking
 London Gold during the morning of the 15th, "We don't
 think we're there yet"? Do you remember that?
- A. I don't remember specifically saying that, but if she
 says I did, then I'm very happy to accept that.
- Q. Right. So can we take it that before noon on that day,
 or lunchtime perhaps on that day, you were still in the
 position of not thinking you were needing to invoke the
 London Gold arrangements?
- 17 A. I think that's fair comment, yeah.
- 18 Q. Why was that? Why did you think, come that point, that 19 the time was not yet ripe for activating London Gold?
- A. Well, my perception was that we had a great many
 officers doing what they could to, first of all, assist
 the survivors, and then carrying out quite a few other
 tasks. It was not necessarily going to be the case that
 they were going to achieve instant success or do exactly
 the right thing the first time, and I think that there

- 1 had to be a little opportunity for them to do what they thought was right, not quite get it right, adjust it and 2 3 get it right. So, you know, there's an element of having to learn as we went, given the very particular 5 circumstances of this crisis . And, you know, to some degree, that was fine, but actually the extent of 6 7 learning and the inability to sort of embody the 8 learning in the next iteration of any one task made it 9 clear that we were not getting on top of it.
- 10 Q. Does that speak to a defect in the training, or 11 an absence of training?

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A. I think — well, I think you beg a very profound question about the extent to which training in emergencies has to permeate a borough. So my perception of training was that senior management had some exposure to it, and over the years they would all have had some exposure to real crises — not on this scale, but nevertheless emergencies of one sort or another. My reflection now is that I do not know, but I believe that it may be the case, that a lot of the staff who were needed to deliver difficult pieces of work in the aftermath of this tragedy would not have had much training at all, and I do not think that that would have been unusual.

My suspicion is that the model of responsiveness 154

focused on people -- focused, as it were, a lot of what 2 training there was on a relatively small number of 3 people who would have been primarily in the borough 4 emergency control centre, and I do not think necessarily 5 that much training routinely spread out much wider than that, and I think that that was a problem, if I'm right, 6 7 because it would have made those individual staff 8 members less able to judge whether they were having the 9 requisite success, and that, again, through no fault of 10 their own -- absolutely no fault of their own -- would 11 have slowed down the sort of feedback up the chain which 12 might have shown us that we were not getting to where we 13 Q. Let's turn, then, to the support of central government.

Q. Let's turn, then, to the support of central government
 Now, we know Melanie Dawes was the

Permanent Secretary to the DCLG, as it was then called.

17 A. Yeal

20 "Melanie has asked if you might be available later 21 this morning to speak?

"Melanie is currently in a meeting with the
Secretary of State that is due to finish around 10:15."
Did you speak to her that day?

25 A. I think I did.

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1 Q. Right.

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Now, we know that on that day London Resilience forwarded to you an email from the department. Let's go to that. It's at {GOL00001196}. You can see there, the second email down, that Toby Gould forwards you an email that he had received from Philip James to him at just after 10 o'clock, so about a minute into your Gold meeting on that morning, and if you look at that email at the bottom of page 1, it says:

"A further 3 things from DCLG."

And then item 2:

"We have heard from some of the residents who spent the night in the rest centre saying how there was very little or in some cases no bedding and pillows. Can you confirm that you have organisations such as the Red Cross and the Samaritans involved and that there will be better sleeping facilities tonight?"

18 Mark Sawyer responds on your behalf, if you look up: 19 "Nicholas, Mark,

"A positive response to DCLG's questions below would
be appreciated.
"Nicholas, if you would like to appoint someone to

22 "Nicholas, if you would like to appoint someone to 23 be their main point of contact for you rather than 24 through us please let me know."

25 Did you liaise with the DCLG in relation to the

- 1 sleeping facilities at the rest centre or offer of 2 support from the press office, which was the other offer 3 made? 4 A. I don't remember the offer from the press office. The point about the sleeping facilities would have surprised 5 me, because that was not a point registered with me when 6 7 I visited the Westway Sports Centre first thing that morning. So that might have been -- there would have 8 9 been, perhaps, another loop in the back and forward with
- whoever was then helping to run the Westway Sports

 Centre.
- 12 Q. Right.
- Now, according to Jo Farrar, who was the director general for local government and public services at the DCLG at the time --
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. -- she says you and she spoke around about noon on 18 15 June; do you remember that?
- 19 A. I think so, yeah.
- 20 Q. Yes. Do you remember what you discussed?
- 21 A. Not in specifics, no.
- Q. Let's look at her statement. That's at{CLG00030414/10}. This is Jo Farrar's Inquiry
- statement, page 10, paragraph 44. She says:
- 25 $\,$ "At 12.30pm [that's the time she puts on it] I spoke

- to Nicholas Holgate. I had contacted him the previous day, but this was the first time he was available to speak to me. Amongst other things, we discussed the rehousing effort, the involvement of London Resilience Partnership, emergency financial aid and counselling support."
- Just pausing there, do you remember that? Do youremember discussing those matters?
- 9 A. Not very well, but very happy to accept her account.
- 10 Q. She goes on to say:

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- "I restated the Department's broad offer of assistance; he reiterated that RBKC had plenty of support from the Department and others, including volunteers and colleagues from other local authorities, and indicated in general terms that the Council was managing well."
- Do you recall saying those things?
- A. Well, I think I was at the edge of thinking that at the
 time. I'd be surprised if I was quite that confident
 with her, because, you know, there were
 contraindications. So and I wouldn't have wanted to
- 22 give her a sort of falsely optimistic picture, frankly.
- 23 Q. Right. She goes on to say:
- 24 "I twice raised the issue of whether RBKC needed 25 support, but he was firm in his assurances that no

- 1 further support was needed."
- 2 A. Well, yes.
- 3 Q. Is that right?
- 4 A. I suspect that I did not have a specific requirement of 5 her for further support.
- 6 Q. She goes on to say:

7 "Given the scale of the disaster and the number of
8 people bereaved and made homeless as a result, it seemed
9 unlikely — based on my own experience — that RBKC did
10 not need substantial support, but Nicholas Holgate's
11 clear position was that RBKC had plenty of support."

12 Now, that's the impression she had.

- 13 A. Yeah
- Q. Would you say that, from the conversation, that was an unreasonable impression and she'd got the wrong end of the stick?
- $17\,$ $\,$ A. Well, I think that it is true, given the offers of
- $18 \hspace{1cm} \hbox{support from other boroughs and volunteers and} \\$
- $19 \hspace{1.5cm} \hbox{the Red Cross and suchlike, that we did have plenty of} \\$
- $20\,$ support. We did not have, one can say with certainty
- $21\,$ with hindsight, sufficient support. But I think it was
- as much about the brigading of the support that we had as opposed to the quantum.
- $24\,$ Q. If this is the way the conversation proceeded, then it
- doesn't sound -- is this fair? -- that the penny had yet

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- dropped, and you hadn't gone over the edge.
- 2 A. Not completely, no.
- 3 Q. Well, not at all.
- $4\,$ A. Well, as I say, I think this -- I would be surprised if
- $\,\,$ at that point on Thursday I was saying we were fine,
- 6 because I don't think by that stage I knew that we were
- 7 not fine, but we may have been at the point where
- 8 I thought things were still mendable if people were
- 9 learning and drawing on extra support where it was
- 10 possible to do so.
- 11 Q. Right
- 12 A. So I think it's just —— you know, it's not a long way
- away, but I think it's a little way away from where
- 14 I would have been.
- 15~ Q. So we can time -- she says 12.30 pm, and she has
- 16 a reference for that.
- 17 A. Yeah

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- 18 Q. We can time your continued refusal -- is this fair? --
- of central government support, at the very least, and
 - your view that you had plenty of support persisting to
- 21 at least 12.30 pm on the 15th.
- $22\,$ $\,$ A. Yes. I was not that confident that central government
- had something that we didn't have and which we needed.
- $24\,$ $\,$ So I know she has a little list there, and, I mean,
- emergency financial aid was useful, did come onstream

a few days later, but these things are relatively
high—level. They are not something that I could have
worked out how to plug in.

I mean, I don't know what she means, for instance, by the rehousing effort . You know, they didn't have properties that they could offer us, for example.

- Q. Now, do you recall also being offered assistance from the Red Cross during the course of the 15th?
- 9 A. Yes.

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10 Q. You do

Let's look at {RBK00065083}. This is an email from Michael Adamson of BRC, British Red Cross, at 19.57 on 15 June, so we have now come to the evening, 8 o'clock or so on that evening, and you can see the email at the top to you, timed at 19.57, copying or sending on to you an email that he had sent to you, I think, chiefex@rbkc, on 15 June at 13.30, "How can we help?"

Now, looking at the one at 13.30, so this is an hour after your call with Jo Farrar in central government, here is a message from British Red Cross:

21 "Dear Nicholas

"It was good to talk earlier ."

Then if you go down to the a) three—quarters of the way down your screen, he offers to help:

"a) using our Disaster Fund to make immediate cash

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donations to people who are registered residents and want it to meet short—term financial need; we have already allocated £100k from our disaster fund and would be happy to make an initial condition—free grant to each household of £250; we can use pre—pay cards, so it is 'clean'; we can also provide someone to advise the council, on how to do this, if you prefer to do it yourself."

9 That was the offer.

Do you agree that that would have been a very efficient way in which to provide financial assistance to families who needed it?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Yes.

We can see that he refers to a discussion. Do you remember that discussion?

17 A. Yes, I do, and, I mean, this is a good example of notthinking of the right answer.

So when we had that conversation and he made that offer, my concern was that the Red Cross would use up its own money in this way, when it might need that money for many other purposes, and actually the council would fund all the help that survivors and others might need. But what I should have done is seize the offer of the prepaid cards and simply agree that the council would

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1 fund them. That is what I should have done.

2 Q. Yes, I see. In fact, you refused the offer, didn't you?

3 A. That's right, because I thought that it was

the Red Cross using up money that could be put to some

5 other use, when in this case there was a source of

 ${\sf 6} \qquad {\sf funds} \; -- \; {\sf essentially, in} \; \; {\sf effect} \; , \; \; {\sf unlimited} \; -- \; {\sf that} \; \\$

7 the council itself would deploy.

Q. Did you refuse the offer during the conversation whichpreceded this email or was there a later conversation?

10 A. I think we talked mid—afternoon on the Thursday. So.

11 I mean, this is an account -- a perfectly fair account 12 of what he had offered.

13 Q. Right

Now, there was then a ministerial meeting at 3.30, 15.30, on 15 June. I think you managed to attend. You

16 dialled into it.

17 A. I'm not sure I did.

Q. Well, let's look at the minute, {CAB00002720}. You'resaying you're not sure you did.

20 A. Mm-hm. Well, if I'm dialling in, I'm dialling in.

 $21\,$ $\,$ Q. Yes, you're dialling in . You see the list of attendees

22 there. Nick Hurd in the chair.

23 A. Yes

24 Q. Alok Sharma is present as the Minister of State.

25 A. That rings a bell -- the chair rings a bell.

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1 Q. Yes. Then there is a list of names, some of which are

2 familiar, and then there is your name, dialling in.

together with Neil Jerome, who was Gold Command fromthe Met, and Dominic Ellis from LFB Gold.

Right, so can we take it you did?

6 A. Yeah

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7 Q. Then if you go, please, to page 2 {CAB00002720/2}, top,

it says:

9 "THE CHAIR opened by emphasising the need for 10 rigorous understanding of the situation affecting

individuals to inform the response."

Now, this was your first ministerial meeting. What

13 message did you provide by way of an update? Or did you

14 not say anything?

15 A. I think that they were relying on the Cabinet Office --

 $16 \hspace{1.5cm} \text{it is possible that they were relying on the} \\$

Cabinet Office CRIP report as their principal source.

18 Q. CRIP?

19 A. Yes.

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20 Q. I've seen that --

21 A. It's an acronym for --

22 Q. Yes, it is.

23 A. I can't remember what it stands for, but it was what the

Cabinet Office produced for either most or all of the

25 ministerial meetings over those days.

- 1 So I think that, for instance, I'm not sure I'd have 2 been across the fact that the A40 was closed or not, so 3 that sort of fact would have had to come from someone 4 else co-ordinating across government departments. 5 Q. Do you remember saying anything at the meeting? A. I don't remember saying anything, but if I looked 6
- through the entire account, I could pick out something 8 that might have been me.
- 9 Q. Right. Well, let's not do that.
- 10 A No

- 11 Q. In general terms, how did you think the meeting went?
- 12 A. Well. I mean, given that I can barely remember attending it. I don't think I can claim too much of an account of it, but I think that this was to some degree ministers 15 getting a more granular -- well, a more detailed 16 understanding of the facets of the crisis in the round, 17 with specifics like, you know, transport impediments or 18 whatever. I wouldn't have said that it was necessarily 19 much of a contribution to sorting something. I think it 2.0 was them getting into the idea that this was going to be 2.1 a big issue for at least a number of days to come.
- 2.2 Q. Right.

2.3 Now, I want to just put a couple of instances of 2.4 those who were there and their impression of what your 2.5 contribution was.

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1 A Sure

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Q. Can we please go first to {CLG00030412/21}. What I'm showing you is Katherine Richardson's witness statement to the Inquiry, paragraph 77.

Now, Katherine Richardson was, as you may have remembered, the deputy director of RED, the resilience and emergency division of the DCLG, and she says here at paragraph 77 that she attended this meeting, and she savs in the second sentence:

"Nick Holgate, RBKC Chief Executive, was not able to answer detailed questions about the situation on the ground and appeared quite defensive, trying to assure Ministers that no additional help was required."

Now, just pausing there. Leaving aside her impression of your being defensive, was it the case as a fact that you were not able to answer detailed questions about the situation on the ground?

- 18 A. I mean, it's quite possible that they had specific 19 questions to which I did not know the answer.
- 2.0 Q. Did you try to assure ministers that no additional help 21 was required?
- 2.2 A. I'd be very surprised if I was so straightforward in 23 that respect. What I would probably have said is 2.4 something along the lines of, "Here is what we think we
 - are doing, you know, as it were, I'm not sure where the 166

- gaps are, there will be gaps, but I'm not sure what 2 additional help you can offer".
- 3 Q. Did you form the impression in your own turn about what

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- 4 impression she had and those others at the meeting had
- 5 about whether you were providing adequate reassurance to them? 6
- 7 A. I don't think I would have gained the impression that 8 they would have been satisfied. I think that they would 9 have been rightly concerned.
- 10 Q. Let's go next to Katherine Hammond's statement, $\{{\sf CAB00014764/18}\},\ {\sf please},\ {\sf paragraph}\ 62.$ 11

12 Now, Katherine Hammond from whom we'll be hearing in 13 this module later, was the Cabinet Office director of 14 the civil contingencies secretariat, or the CCS. She 15 says here in paragraph 62:

16 "The meeting opened with an update on the current 17 situation ... "

18 Then she goes on to sav:

19 "However, I recall being a little concerned that 20 there was an absence of data which a local authority 21 might have been expected to have readily available (most 22 notably the numbers of tenants in Grenfell Tower). 23 Mr Holgate was also unable to articulate any plan beyond 2.4 the immediate for rehousing or supporting those

2.5 affected, or what resources would be needed from outside

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- 1 RBKC for that to occur. My overall impression from
- 2 Mr Holgate at the 15 June 2017 meeting was that RBKC was
- 3 overwhelmed by the requirements of its role in relation

4 to the fire."

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Do you remember being unable to give

- 6 Katherine Hammond any assurance about the numbers of
- 7 tenants in Grenfell Tower or matters of that nature?
- 8 A. I am surprised at that, because I've had a figure of
- 9 129, or very near offer, you know, on my mind for a very 10 long time.
- 11 Q. Well, those are the numbers of flats --
- 12 A. That's right, that's right.
- 13 — not the numbers of tenants.
- 14 A. No, no, but as a starting point --
- 15 Q. Right.
- 16 A. -- I would have known that number, I think. But you're
- 17 right, I wouldn't have known the number of tenants in
 - each flat and been able to add them up to a total, that
- 19 is true.
- 2.0 Q. Right.

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- 21 From what you could tell at the meeting, do you
- 2.2 think that they did have the impression to which
- 23 Ms Hammond speaks, namely that RBKC was overwhelmed by
- 2.4 the requirements of its role?
- 25 A. I would not have wanted to give them a false assurance.

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- 1 Q. Right.
- A. So, you know, I'm sure that they had questions left 2 3 unanswered, absolutely.
- 4 Q. Right. I mean, was it not clear to you by the time of this meeting -- 3.30 in the afternoon of the Thursday, 5 15 June 2017 -- that everybody was telling you that RBKC 6
- 7 could have extra help and needed it?
- 8 A. I was clear that there were offers of help. I was 9 hopeful that where we knew we wanted specific help, we
- 10 would get it. And, I mean, by this stage I was reaching 11 the conclusion that we were not succeeding nearly well
- 12 enough on several fronts and it was getting beyond us.
- 13 Q. But you didn't tell them that at the meeting.
- 14 A. Well, you know, I was in the throes of trying to work 15 out what I thought, I think.
- 16 Q. Do you accept now that your approach at the time was 17 completely misguided and that you should have been 18
- asking for help a lot earlier? 19 A. I think what I wanted to do was be sure what help we 20 wanted so that we knew how it would work and complement
- 2.1 and fit in with what the council was doing, and so for
- 22 me, offers of general help were reassuring and were
- 2.3 someone to go back to later if I thought that there was
- 2.4 a match, but what I wasn't able to cope with was lots of 25 offers of general help.

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- 1 Q. Now, can we then turn to a meeting with John Barradell 2 later that day. It's 5 o'clock now. We've come from
- 3 3.30 to 5 pm. 4 Do you remember that there was a telephone call that 5 you convened, at Mark Sawyer's suggestion, with
- John Barradell, Eleanor Kelly and Mark Sawyer? 6
- 7 A. I remember there was such a conversation then, yes.
- 8 Q. Do you remember what its purpose was?
- 9 A. Well. I thought it was the second in the series.
- 10 Whether or not I convened it, I thought that there had 11 been an expectation from the phone call on Wednesday
- 12 that there would be a similar phone call at a similar
- 13 time on Thursday.
- 14 Q. I see.
- 15 Did you intend to invoke the Gold resolution on that 16
- A. Yes, I think I -- by that stage, I thought, you know, 17 18 given some of the things we've talked about and, as 19 I say in my statement, there were three -- in a sense, 2.0 three categories of problem which I couldn't begin to 21 convince myself by that stage we were going to succeed
- 2.2 at.

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- 2.4 Now, does that tell us that you had come to the 25 conclusion that you needed to invoke London Gold between
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- the end of the ministerial meeting at 3.30 on the 2 afternoon of 15 June and 5 pm that day?
- 3 A. Well, I think that's giving it a precision which it 4 probably doesn't deserve. I think that the concerns had
- 5 been growing in the course of the day, and the Thursday
- telephone meeting was a chance to, in a sense, confront 6
- 7 them myself, confront the shortcomings myself, and to 8
- say, "This isn't working", or, "I cannot say this is 9 working"
- 10 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{Q}}.$ Well, you say it's undeserved precision. The reason
- 11 I put it to you that way is because there's no hint at
- 12 all in the minute of the 3.30 ministerial meeting from
- 13 you that you were even contemplating invoking LLAG Gold,
- 14 let alone intending to do so.
- 15 A. Yes, I don't think that that is quite right as to what
- 16 I was prepared to say or could say at that meeting.
 - I think, again, it's a distinction between a willingness
- 18 to accept help, yes, a willingness to take up specific
- 19 help where we knew we needed it, versus a sort of
- 2.0 general —— a general acknowledgement of insufficiency,
- 21 which I didn't think we were quite at that role, and
- 22 I fear, with hindsight, that they may have taken my
- 23 unwillingness to acknowledge insufficiency more or less
- 2.4 across the board as a belief that at least in some
- 2.5 respects we were performing adequately.

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1 $Q.\;\;$ Now, let's go to your statement, then, at page 7 $\{RBK00035426/7\},$ paragraph 38, your main statement, and

2 3 you say there: 4 "It was my decision [it was my decision] to invoke

London Gold in a phone conversation with John Barradell and others on the evening of 15 June. There were essentially three reasons why I chose then to hand the response over to London Gold. First, a time would come when doing what we were day after day would not be manageable: staff would become exhausted and thus less capable of assisting the survivors and those left homeless. Second, under the contingency planning guidance, there are many other duties that have to be carried out as time goes on and in the long term we might not have managed due to the scale and complexity of the disaster. Third, residents of north Kensington were angry with the Council, assuming perhaps that it should be held responsible for the fire. I believed

Now, let's just break that down, if we can, because there's a lot in the paragraph.

that escalation to London Gold would help to deflect

this belief from affecting our work with survivors from

- 2.4 A. Yeah.
- 2.5 Q. You say first, if we go back, please, to page 7, in the

1 third line: 1 statement {RBK00035426/8}, please, you say in the first 2 "First, a time would come [a time would come] when 2 3 doing what we were day after day would not be 3 "There is no formal procedure for handover to London Gold." 4 manageable ..." 4 Given that you say a time would come, did you 5 5 You have corrected that -believe that at that point your staff were managing the A. Yeah. 6 6 7 response and were capable of assisting those affected by 7 Q. -- in coming in today. Then you say: 8 8 "But I was clear that others on the phone call had 9 A. I think in at least some ways they were doing so, but 9 also reached the view that Kensington and Chelsea should 10 10 they were not doing so across the board. no longer lead on these responsibilities .' 11 11 Was it clear to you what the reasons were for those Q. Right. 12 12 A. And, I mean, you have given examples already -others on the call having reached that view? 13 13 A. Well, I think that they had been taking probably an ever A. $\,--\,$ where we were failing to communicate, for example. 14 14 closer interest in how the tragedy was being reported, 15 Q. Yes, and then you say: 15 and they were very sensibly and correctly putting two 16 16 "Second, under the contingency planning guidance, and two together, and they could see that there wasn't 17 17 there are many other duties that have to be carried out a sense of positive development: there was criticism and 18 as time goes on and in the long term we might not have 18 there was dismay and there was unmet need in the way 19 managed due to the scale and complexity of the 19 that the councillors had identified 2.0 20 Q. You see, really what I'm seeking to get at is whether, disaster." 21 So does that tell us that at that moment you thought 21 when the decision was made, you were making it because 22 your staff were managing in the short term, and that 22 you thought you could cope now but might not be able to bringing in London Gold was essentially a projective 23 23 cope in the longer term, but the others on the call 2.4 2.4 activity? wanted you to invoke London Gold because they thought 25 A. I think a mixture of the two. I think that with the 2.5 you couldn't cope now. Is that a fair way of looking at 173 175 1 comms team as an obvious example, the housing department 1 it? 2 less so, and then the humanitarian assistance as another 2 A. No, I think we were very -- well, I mean, in a sense, 3 example, I think, you know, we were not safely achieving 3 it's too fine a distinction for people to hang anything everything that it was necessary to achieve. So, very significant on it. I thought that we were doing 5 you know, I think this undersells it a bit, I have to 5 some things just about well enough, but we were 6 6 certainly not doing well enough across the piece. Q. Right. 7 7 Q. Yes, and your third reason is what you said earlier: 8 8 it's the compromise that had arisen as a result of Was it the case that, in fact, by finally agreeing 9 people blaming the council for the $\,{\rm fire}\,\,.$ 9 to trigger London Gold at 5 pm on the evening of the 10 10 15th, you were reluctantly responding to external 11 Q. None of those reasons that you've set out there suggest, 11 pressure due to growing concerns about the council's 12 do they, that the council was at that time, in your view 12 inability to lead on the response effort? A Yes 13 at that time, incapable of managing the response? 13 MR MILLETT: Yes. 14 A. I think we were getting very close to -- I mean, with 14 15 15 hindsight, one can see that we were not managing the Mr Chairman, is that a convenient moment? 16 response. Individual departments or individual 16 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes, it is, thank you very much. 17 activities were going more or less well, and, for 17 We will have a short break now, Mr Holgate. We will 18 instance, the housing department had done, I think, 18 come back at 3.30, please. 19 quite well to find so many people and to offer 19 THE WITNESS: Certainly. SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: And, again, please don't discuss 2.0 accommodation, albeit imperfectly and with mistakes and 2.0 21 21 so on. But I do not think that across a breadth of your evidence while you're out of the room. 2.2 quite demanding, complicated activities, we were hitting 2.2 THE WITNESS: No. 2.3 23 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you.

the mark, and I think, you know, it was more present and

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Q. Now, if you go to paragraph 39 on the next page of your

less future than this implies.

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(Pause)

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Thank you, Mr Millett. 3.30, please.

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 $\begin{array}{lll} 1 & & {\rm transpired}\,. & {\rm This}\,\,{\rm is}\,\,{\rm an}\,\,{\rm email}\,\,{\rm from}\,\,{\rm you}\,\,{\rm to}\,\,{\rm David}\,\,{\rm Kerry}\\ \\ 2 & & {\rm early}\,\,{\rm in}\,\,{\rm the}\,\,{\rm morning}\,\,{\rm of}\,\,{\rm the}\,\,{\rm 16th}\,\,{\rm at}\,\,{\rm 02.53}\,\,-- \end{array}$

3 A. Yeah.

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4 Q. — you see that, telling him that the LLAG has been invoked:

6 "Have invoked llag. Hope J Barradell will join by 10 today to help expand our capacity."

Why did you leave it until almost 3 o'clock in the morning on the 16th to tell David Kerry that the LLAG had been invoked?

A. I think that — by then I don't think I had seen a note of the meeting, indeed I don't think I'd seen a note of the meeting at all, and it was on my mind, as you can see, as it was round about 3 am, and that was my understanding of John Barradell's plan. I thought I probably hadn't shared it yet, so I was sharing it then.

Q. You say, "to help expand our capacity". Was it your
 understanding that, in fact, London Gold would be
 assisting RBKC by expanding your capacity, but that you
 weren't handing over control?

22 A. No, I think that --I can't remember the terms on which 23 the phone conversation had concluded, but I was 24 certainly expecting to be, in effect, superseded, and,

 $1 \, \mathrm{mean}$, "to help expand our capacity" is a sort of round

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about way of saying, you know, we're going to draw on the resources of at least some if not many other London boroughs in a more full—on sense than we've done so far.

Q. I wonder if that's right.

Can we look at an email you sent a little bit later that morning at {RBK00005673}. This is an email sent by you at 06.14 on the 16th, so three and a half hours after you sent the message to David Kerry we've just looked at, to him again, copied to Tony Redpath and Stuart Priestley, and what you're doing is sending to them as an FYI an email you sent the minute before to Carolyn Downs, Charlie Parker at Westminster and Kim Dero at Hammersmith and Fulham; yes? In that you

"Thank you for your several offers of help. Last night I invoked London wide (LLAG) arrangements so we may be seeking help from many colleagues. However I suggest that, given the location of the Tower, our four boroughs form a nucleus."

Did you think that you, or RBKC at least, would still be leading the relief effort, the response, but with support now from Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham and perhaps other boroughs?

A. No. I think the sentence "Last night I invoked London
 wide ... arrangements so we may be seeking help from

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many colleagues" meant we, as in London Gold with RBKC working to London Gold, may be seeking help from many colleagues, meant that, I mean, any London borough could be asked to give support.

5 Q. Right.

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6 A. But I was conscious that these four boroughs were all
7 close to — relatively close to the Westway Sports
8 Centre, and I think I was worried, given some of the
9 feedback you've already touched on, that we weren't
10 doing well enough there, so here was something we could
11 do in the meantime if they were amenable.

12 Q. Yes, I see.

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Now, in the preparatory questionnaire for your Project Athena interview, which was done, as I've shown you, in early 2018, you indicated that, by invoking LLAG, you were "agreeing to cede Gold responsibilities to John Barradell" {RBK00060379/5}. I'm not going to show it to you unless you want to see it, but that is what you say.

Was that your belief at the time, that you were ceding Gold responsibilities to John Barradell, or is it just a description of what occurred?

A. I think because I had understood that John was going to
 come to the council the next morning, that he was going
 to be the London Gold to begin with, and, I mean, I was

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{CAB00014768}. This is a Cabinet Office document. 1 conscious of the rota that chief executives formed, so 2 I probably didn't think he was going to do it for a long 2 Now, if we can just go, please, to page 1 of this 3 time, but I think I thought he was the first of 3 document, I can show you what it is. It's a lessons 4 a series 4 learnt document: $\mathsf{Q}.\;\;\mathsf{I}\;\mathsf{see}.\;\;\mathsf{Did}\;\mathsf{you}\;\mathsf{think}\;\mathsf{you}\;\mathsf{were}\;\mathsf{going}\;\mathsf{to}\;\mathsf{remain}\;\mathsf{in}\;\mathsf{charge}$ ${\rm "Grenfell\ Tower\ tragedy} - {\rm lessons\ for\ the\ central}$ 5 5 in practical terms into Friday, until John Barradell had 6 6 response.' 7 in practical terms taken over? 7 I would like just to show you page 3 A. I think the answer is no. I think that if you had asked 8 8 {CAB00014768/3}, please, and explore paragraph 12 with you. It says: 9 me round about 8 o'clock in the morning, I would have 9 10 1.0 said: I am introducing John to the various people "CRIPs were issued daily based on information 11 working hard across the council and he is going to start 11 sourced via a number of departments and, in particular, 12 12 taking decisions and, you know, showing us where we have from Gold via DCLG. 13 gone wrong and giving himself a freer hand than I had 13 Then it goes on halfway down the paragraph: 14 14 given myself to draw on potentially large numbers of "There was also uncertainty over the respective role 15 people from other boroughs. 15 of the Council and 'Recovery Gold' - COBR understood SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Am I right in understanding that he 16 16 that the latter (John Bar[r]adell) had taken control of 17 17 assumed the position of Gold simply by virtue of being the response on the ground, but it subsequently 18 in that point on the rota? 18 transpired he was only responsible for the residents of 19 19 the Tower itself, not all those affected in the wider 20 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: He wasn't chosen for his particular 2.0 community or adjacent properties which remained the 2.1 21 responsibility of the RBKC." expertise? 2.2 A. That might be so, Mr Chairman. I felt that he --22 Was that your understanding at the time? 2.3 2.3 A. No. insofar as London borough chief executives had any 2.4 expert, it was he. He and Eleanor Kelly, working in 2.4 Q. What did you understand at the time? 25 support of him, I think, were the two chief executives 25 A. Well, as I've just said, I would have thought that there 181 183 1 who, as it were, specialised in how the boroughs should 1 were -- there was a sufficient commonality of problems 2 work singly or together to provide emergency support, 2 afflicting residents, even though those, of course, in 3 and I was not sure -- I mean, I wouldn't have been able 3 Grenfell Tower itself had suffered far, far more than to tell you whether he was the person on the rota or any others, but I would have said that it needed to be 5 5 managed as a totality. 6 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Right, thank you. 6 Q. Did it occur to you during those days -- 16th/17th, 7 7 MR MILLETT: What was your understanding of the role London perhaps -- that John Barradell's view of his role was 8 8 Local Authority Gold held in relation to the limited to the residents of the tower? 9 9 responsibility for the Grenfell Tower residents and A. Well. I mean, the astonishing —— frankly astonishing 10 wider evacuees, evacuees from other buildings? 10 thing is that this was not a topic of conversation, 11 A. I would have said that the tragedy had to be managed --11 a sort of currency of conversation over those days that 12 however multifaceted it was, it would probably have to 12 I can recall. I mean, I can attempt to work out why 13 13 be managed as a single programme, and therefore even if that might be so, but I simply don't recall this being 14 London Gold was willing in practice to delegate some 14 a matter of dialogue to the extent that I was involved 15 15 particular function to another borough, that would be in it once he had taken over. 16 his decision. 16 Q. Do you not recall any reporting, any feedback from 17 So, you know, a very good move they made, I think, people like Teresa Brown in the TMO or anybody else from 17 18 early the following week, if not sooner, was to put 18 the TMO coming back to you and explaining what 19 Ealing borough in charge of the Westway Sports Centre, 19 difficulties they were having with residents who had

after the fire and after the after effects,

and that was a very good way of bringing senior people

something that obviously hadn't had enough order before

Q. Now, let me show you a document from central government

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and a largish number of people to bring order to

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been evacuated from the walkways?

A. I do recall that at various times the groups of

residents affected fluctuated, and sometimes it included

the finger blocks and, of course, Grenfell Walk. What

between the plights of those groups of residents and the

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I don't remember is an interaction or an interplay

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- 1 range of responsibilities being run from what turned 2 into the Westminster-owned BECC.
- 3 Q. Did anybody tell you things like, "We've got a problem 4 in accommodating 450 or 800 residents from the walkways 5 and we don't know where to put them, people are sleeping rough"? Did anybody ever come back to you with that 6
- A. Well, which days are we talking about? 8
- 9 Q. Well, 15th, 16th, 17th.

sort of information?

- 10 A. I think that we were trying to provide accommodation 11 support for people beyond the tower itself.
- 12 Q. Right.

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- 13 A. But we weren't always succeeding. I think quite a lot 14 of people had to stay with friends, relatives, 15
- neighbours, not in the affected buildings but nearby.
- 16 Q. But was there any discussion that you had with 17 John Barradell about the limits of his role once he had 18 taken over Gold?
- A. I do not recall any discussion of that sort of issue, 19 20 no, I don't.
- 2.1 Q. Right. Let's come back to that in a moment.
- 22 In your statement you say, as we've seen, and 2.3 I think you've now corrected, that there was no formal 2.4 handover procedure to London Gold. That's paragraph 39

25 {RBK00035426/8}, as we've seen.

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- 1 Was there a handover?
- A. Well, he came -- I think he came, actually, about 2 3 8 o'clock in the morning on the Friday, and he sat in
- on, as an observer, the first Gold meeting, and I think
- 5 I say in my statement that, you know, I offered him
- the chair of the meeting, because I thought that that 6
- 7 was what was going to happen. He wanted to be
- 8 an observer. I thought that was absolutely fine, if
- that was his way of finding out what we were doing and 9 10 not doing. Then, going on from that, we had the
- 11 ministerial meeting in the afternoon, and we attended
- 12 that by telephone as a sort of double act, I would say.
- 13 Q. Right.
- A. Yeah. 14
- 15 Q. Right. We'll get to the 10 o'clock Gold meeting on the 16 morning of 16 June in a moment.
- 17 Before we do, let me just ask you this: once the 18 decision to activate London Gold had been made by you, 19 is it right that, in fact, John Barradell took 2.0 responsibility at or from 2 o'clock in the afternoon on 21 16 June?
- 2.2 A. Well, I think that is broadly right, in the sense that
- 23 I was happy to, in most respects, defer to him as the 2.4 spokesman for local authorities when we had the meeting
- 25 with the Prime Minister and others on the phone.
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- Q. Let's just go to his second statement, then, 2 $\{GOL00001706/15\}$. We can see there at paragraph 82 he 3
 - "It was agreed by Nicholas that we would activate the London Local Authority Gold arrangements that afternoon [that's the 16th] and my records are that I took on that responsibility at 1400. I am aware that an email was circulated by London Resilience at 13.27 $\{GOL00000157\}$. The request was made by Nicholas at between 1300 to 1330 on the 16th June and we dialled into the Ministerial COBR meeting at 1400, where we informed the group of the activation.

Do you agree with what he says there?

- 14 A. Well, we may well have had a conversation where he said, 15 "I'm taking over now", and that is how I would interpret the 1.00 to 1.30 thing. But I would describe it 16 17 slightly differently. I think that it was his to assume 18 when he chose to do so from any time from the Thursday 19 evening phone call onwards, and my interpretation of the 2.0 delay from -- what I saw as a delay from Thursday 21 evening to Friday lunchtime is that he thought he would 22 do a better job as London Gold via a period of
- 23 observation first than, in a sense, you know, leaping in
- 2.4 and having to cover both operational short-term
- 25 decisions, while -- at the same time as doing what he

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- 1 had done by the Saturday morning, which is design a very
- 2 significant management structure for running the
- 3 Grenfell fire recovery taskforce or whatever it was
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- 5 Q. So was it his decision, the decision having been made at
- 6 5 pm or so on the 15th, to delay practical takeover of
- 7 Gold until 2 o'clock the next day?
- 8 A. That would be my interpretation, yes. As I say, in
- 9 practice. I think there is less of a difference there 10
- than, you know, might appear to be so. I think he was 11
- on the case. I mean, he was on the case anyway, because 12 he'd been part of the phone calls on Monday -- on the
- 13 Wednesday and Thursday evenings, he was present in the
- 14 Town Hall from reasonably early on the Friday morning,
- 15 so to me he was assuming responsibilities and, you know.
- 16 if he had seen something he didn't approve of -- and,
- 17 indeed, there was something he disapproved of in the
- 18 morning of that Friday -- he made his views known to me.
- 19 So, you know, I was, in the most constructive way 20 possible, being man-marked, if you like, but he was 21 assuming understanding of and then control of the
- 2.2 recovery process.
- 23 Right. So who was Gold? Who was occupying the Gold 2.4 role between 5 pm on the 15th and 2 pm on the 16th?
- 25 A. Well, I think, by default, it was still me.

1 Q. It was still you, but there was -- is this right? --2 essentially a parallel support track offered by 3 John Barradell from LLAG Gold during that overlap 4 period? A. Well, he -- my interpretation of his role on the Friday 5 morning was as observer and, when he wanted to, to 6 7 comment or contribute in the course of that morning, and 8 that was a role that I think he wanted to take in order 9 that he could think about the future while not being 10 overly assailed by the present. That's my 11 interpretation. 12 Q. Now, you may remember that on the Saturday. 13 Nicholas Paget-Brown, the then leader, had an interview with the BBC. The programme was The World This Weekend. 14 15 He is recorded as -- well, let's look at it . It's 16 {RBK00035001/27}, paragraph 121. He says: 17 "The scale of the tragedy was now developing 18 additional dimensions, including the increased pressure 19 presented by surrounding homes close to the Tower having

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to be evacuated, and those residents also requiting

humanitarian assistance. Additionally, families and

information about loved ones. This quickly became a crisis on a scale that London had not witnessed since

the end of the War and that no local plan alone could

friends of residents of the Tower were arriving, seeking

1 accommodate "

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He told the BBC that no one borough alone would be able to cope with the scale of it, saying that:

"The magnitude of this disaster on Wednesday is such that one borough alone would [not] be able to

7 Would you have agreed? Do you agree?

- 8 A. Well, I agree now. When did the leader make the 9 statement?
- 10 Q. On the Saturday.
- 11 A. Yes. Well, I think that we had all agreed by then that 12 no one borough could have coped, even with selective 13 reinforcement.
- 14 Q. Let's then go -- and this is a slightly later document 15 still -- to {TMO10033161/2}, second half of page 2, 16 email to colleagues on 18 June, that's the Sunday.

If you look at the email halfway down, 15.21, from you to Kevin Bartle and Tony Redpath and a number of others, including Councillor Paget-Brown, "Colleagues", it says:

"As Tony Baker e—mailed vesterday, the response to the tragedy has moved into a new phase under London Local Authority Gold. The Council has recognised that the scale, the possible duration and the range of implications are such that a significantly larger and

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more complex response is required, drawing on officers from across London boroughs to be sustainable. There is also a growing contribution from central Government, which is also welcome even if coordination is therefore at an even greater premium."

Then it goes on in the third paragraph:

"The Royal Borough is a proud Council with a reputation for delivering outstanding services. It is understandable that some members of staff will feel that the new arrangements are a sign that we have failed and that others are now coming in to take over. Neither is the case. On the contrary, by calling in support we have demonstrated our ability to make the right call at the right time. Our duty now is to use our best endeavours to make the new arrangements succeed."

Now, when you say there that RBKC had demonstrated its ability to make the right call at the right time. looking back on the material we've covered, that was not correct, was it?

- 20 A. No, it was the right call at the wrong time, you're 2.1 quite right. I think that that was -- I think it was 22 trying to cheer people up, basically.
- 2.3 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{Q}}.$ So it was what other witnesses in this Inquiry might 2.4 have called puff?
- 25 A. Puff, I think, is a very fair and generous assessment.

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1 Q. Yes.

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Let's then go to the Gold meeting on the 16th, come 2 3 back to it. That's the first Council Gold meeting on that day. John Barradell was present, you say, as 5

Did you have any conversation with John Barradell outside that meeting about the status of the response that morning and what the immediate requirements were?

- 9 A. I'm sure we did talk, because I think he came about 10 two hours earlier, so I think -- I'm sure we did, but I don't remember details of the specific conversation.
- 11 12 Q. Now, following that meeting, I think you say that
- nothing changed very quickly; yes? A. Yes 14
- 15 Q. Yes, and if we go to {MOL00000036}, this was an SCG 16 meeting at 11 o'clock that morning, so strategic
- 17 co-ordination group minutes, 11 o'clock, 16 June,
- 18 teleconference; you see that?
- 19 A. Yeah.
- Q. If you go, please, to page 6 {MOL00000036/6}, you will 2.0
- 21 see there the list of attendees. Do you see that there?
 - Well, it starts on page 5 {MOL00000036/5}, in fact. But
- 23 if you go there, you can see from London Resilience
- 2.4 Group we have John Hetherington and others, and we can
- 25 see that from local authorities, you and John Barradell;

1		yes?	1	this point.
2	Α.	Yeah.	2	Can we go to $\{RBK00010176\}$. This is an email thread
3	Q.	Yes.	3	on 16 June, earlier on in the day, and it contains
4		Now, if you go, please, to "Any urgent business",	4	an email from Barbara Brownlee in the second half of
5		which you'll find on page 1 $\{MOL00000036/1\}$, first item,	5	your screen there on page 1, and she is from Westminster
6		it says:	6	City Council, and it's forwarded through the BECC at
7		"The chair discussed what does recovery look like	7	RBKC to Laura Johnson and Stuart Priestley, as you can
8		and the transition into this should be starting to be	8	see from the top email on the screen.
9		considered. John Barradell confirmed that this is the	9	Looking at that second email down, Barbara Brownlee
10		case. The ongoing community tensions are the reason for	10	says this:
11		this change over not taking place as yet."	11	"There are currently unofficial calls for
12		Is that right?	12	assistance "
13	Α.	I'm not sure what that means.	13	I'm sorry, I should time this. It's 11.51 on
14	Q.	No.	14	16 June. So this is at a time between the two meetings,
15		Do you accept that the reason the response hadn't	15	between the Gold meeting and the strategic co-ordination
16		transferred to recovery and, as such, to be led by the	16	group meeting, and it says:
17		local authority was because RBKC was not ready, rather	17	"There are currently unofficial calls for
18		than due to community tensions?	18	assistance, coming from K&C's TMO for help. They have
19	Α.	Well, I think that we certainly weren't in a stable	19	used what's app to send out a message to some London
20		situation and, in that sense, you know, if what you mean	20	councils saying that their staff are exhausted and they
21		by recovery is that everything is in place in support of	21	need resources on for the weekend.
22		the bereaved and the survivors, then I don't think we	22	"I also now have emails from housing consultancies
23		could claim to have reached that situation on the Friday	23	saying the same thing.
24		morning. But community tensions are a reason why we	24	"This is a disorganised and very unofficial way to
25		escalated. Not a huge reason, but one reason amongst	25	raise help after we have been offering it since the very
		-		
		193		195
1			1	
1 2	O	several .	1 2	beginning.
2	Q.	several . If you go to page 2 $\{MOL0000036/2\}$, under the heading	2	beginning. "I am concerned that too many inexperienced staff
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2 3 4 5 6	Q.	several. If you go to page 2 {MOL0000036/2}, under the heading "Local Authority", the first bullet point says: "General community feeling is of hurt and anger. This is being stoked by a small number of known local instigators who continue to fabricate stories in order	2 3 4 5 6	beginning. "I am concerned that too many inexperienced staff [will] descend upon the respite centres without any planning and simply make the situation worse. "Please can you raise with K&C BEC. "Thanks
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cannot be extended to the TMO, as there is a direct

 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{Q}}.$ Now, can I ask you one or two questions about the TMO at

1 impact on our tenants and staff safety.

"Can you please raise this with GOLD?"

3 Then at the top of the page, as you can see,

4 Amanda Johnson sends this to Laura Johnson and you the 5 same day. This is the 20th now, so we're now at the

"I am really quite concerned about GOLD's response please see below.'

Now, as I say, this is some days after the 16th, but when did you first learn of this problem, this problem about the TMO struggling to mobilise staff to assist evacuated residents from the walkways?

13 A. I'm sorry, I just don't remember when that would have --14 when I would have learnt of that. Plainly I would have 15 learnt of it through this email.

Q Yes 16

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Tuesday:

A. But I wouldn't have -- I don't remember knowing of it 17 18 before this email.

19 Q. Who would you have expected to brief you if there had 20 been a problem with the London Gold resources not 2.1 extending far enough so as to be able to assist the TMO 2.2 in their role?

2.3 A. Well, I think that —— I mean, London Gold was in charge 2.4 of a lot of RBKC staff by, at the very latest, the

25 Saturday morning, and any of them could have noticed --

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1 I mean, I suppose it's more obviously going to be

2 housing staff than others, but any of them could have

said, "There is a mismatch here, you know, isn't this

going to be a big problem?"

5 Q. Do you know why this was a problem?

A. Why the failure of TMO staff to turn up and so on? 6

7 Q. Well, why resources weren't being made available from

8 London Gold to assist TMO?

9 A. Well, it looks as though this is a further example of 10 the issue that $\operatorname{\mathsf{Gold}}$ -- London $\operatorname{\mathsf{Gold}}$ interpreted their 11 role as being just that of the tower as opposed to

12 associated problems on the wider estate.

13 Q. Right. Did you learn that or did you have that 14 perception during the first seven days after the event?

15 A. No.

3

16 Q. You didn't?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Can I then turn to the ministerial visit to the Westway.

19 Do you remember that on the morning of 16 June, the 2.0 Friday, there was a visit at 9 am at the Westway from 21 the Secretary of State at the DCLG, who was by then 2.2

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Sajid Javid? Do you remember that?

I think I knew that he did visit that day, yes. 23

24 Q. You weren't in attendance, I think.

2.5 A. No, no. Q. Why did he visit? Or, rather, why were you not there?

A. It may just be that I wasn't invited. I think the

3 leader of the council was there, or if he -- I'd be quite surprised if either the leader or deputy leader of 4

the council weren't there, and if they weren't there, it 5

might have been almost a deliberate act on the part of 6

7 the Secretary of State. But I would have thought either

the leader or deputy leader would have been there. 9 Q. Right. I mean, my question was: did you decide not to

10 go or did you not learn that there was to be a visit?

11 A. I think I knew of the visit, but I think my high 12 priority that morning was to help John.

13 Right. Did somebody decide you shouldn't be there or 14 did you decide not to go?

15 A. I don't remember deciding not to be there. I think 16

I had a prior engagement, in effect. 17 Q. Now, those from the department who attended the meeting

18 at the Westway included Jo Farrar, and she was critical

19 about, among other things, the absence of senior RBKC

2.0 officers at the rest centre. That's how she observed

21 it. Do you have anything to say about that?

22 A. Well, I accept her criticism . I think she's probably

2.3 right, and I think it was an issue for much of the --

2.4 for much of this period that we under-resourced the

2.5 coverage of the Westway as a -- as the management of

199

1 a centre.

2 Q. Should you have attended and given assurances to central

3 government or perhaps asked central government for

further assistance?

5 A. I think that is something that they could have done.

They could have rounded up some civil servants and said, 6

7 "Please make sense of or support the council's services

8 in these respects at this location", yeah, I think that

9 would have been feasible.

10 Q. Do you remember having a meeting with Jo Farrar a little 11 bit later that morning, at about noon, at the Town Hall?

12 A. I don't remember that.

13 Q. You don't.

16

14 Let's go to {CLG00030414/16}, what I'm showing you 15 is Dr Jo Farrar's statement, and if we go to page 16 in

> it, please, paragraph 78, she says at the foot of the page:

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18 "I went to see Nicholas Holgate as planned and was 19 surprised that he was not available to see me. I had to 2.0 wait for some time. When I was shown to his office, 21 John Barradell was present and in discussion with 2.2 Nicholas Holgate."

23 Pausing there, does that accord with your 2.4 recollection?

2.5 A. I don't remember this meeting, but of course, you know,

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1 if she says it occurred, it occurred, you know. executives, and you can see it's sent on behalf of 2 Q. Right. Then she goes on: 2 John Barradell and you, and he confirms this. He says: 3 "My recollection is that John stated he was there to 3 "Good afternoon, 4 support Nicholas Holgate, and that there would be 4 "Following a request from RB Kensington and Chelsea 5 a Chief Executive rota as part of the London Resilience 5 for strategic support due to the increasing complexity and severity of the Grenfell Tower fire the London Local 6 arrangements.' 6 7 Do you remember John Barradell telling Jo Farrar 7 Authority Gold operations have been activated. This is 8 to ensure that London Local Government collectively 8 9 A. No. 9 supports RBK&C during these extremely challenging times. 10 Q. Then she savs: 1.0 "John Barradell is supporting RBK&C and will be 11 "I did not think this sounded sensible and felt we 11 supported by further Chief Executives as required, those 12 12 needed an experienced person to be in the lead, rather Chief Executives are aware and on standby. 13 13 Is that a correct summary or summation of matters as Do you remember any discussion around that or about 14 14 you understood them at that time, 13.27 on 16 June? 15 15 A. Well, I mean, I think it is phrased sort of delicately that? 16 16 A. No, but it does make sense, given the ministry's opening or circumspectly. I think that it is actually 17 17 statement that they were very pleased that he had agreed a reasonably enough clear implication of this that John 18 to become the London Gold. 18 is really in charge, and, if you like, the giveaway is, "John Barradell is supporting RBK&C", which is a polite 19 Q. Was the original position in fact that John Barradell 19 way of putting it, "and will be supported by further 20 2.0 was going to support you, rather than to lead the 2.1 response, albeit in a limited way? 21 Chief Executives as required, those Chief Executives are 2.2 A. I think there are two different things: there's 22 aware and on standby". I'm afraid that to me is an invocation of London Gold and then there is who that 23 2.3 a tactful way of saying London Gold is in charge. 2.4 2.4 London Gold might be and how quickly someone would be in Why was the tact necessary? 25 place, and I had made the assumption, given his 25 A. I think probably they thought it might be offensive or 201 203 embarrassing or something just to say, "We've had to 1 appearance, that it was him. 1 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{Q}}.$ Did the intended position change in any way after this shoulder RBKC aside and, you know, get a grip". But 2 2 3 meeting with Jo Farrar? 3 that is, I think, what they are really saying. 4 A. Well, I mean, according to John's own account, he took Q. Let's then turn to the post-activation period from 5 up the role at 2 o'clock. 5 2 o'clock on 16 June. 6 Q. Yes, but did he only take the role up at 2 o'clock as 6 What was your role once John Barradell took up the 7 7 a result of Jo Farrar's intervention? reins at 2 o'clock? 8 A. That is a possible interpretation . I accept that that 8 A. Well, I think to facilitate and to -- you know, if he 9 9 could be such, but I was expecting him to have done wanted something or he wanted clarity over who in 10 10 the council was doing such and such a thing, then that SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Can you just help me with this: 11 11 would be -- I would be one of the people who would help 12 I get the impression from a number of answers you have 12 him do that. 13 given that you were under the impression -- rightly or 13 Q. Is it fair to say that you considered your role to 14 wrongly, I don't actually know — that whoever was 14 entail significantly fewer actions in relation to those 15 15 London Gold as a result of the invocation of the leading the response from 17 June onwards? 16 arrangements had some right to come in and take over 16 A. Well, even from the 16th. 17 from you. 17 Q. Or from the afternoon of the 16th. 18 A. Yes. 18 A. Yeah 19 SIR MARTIN MOORE—BICK: And that was your understanding of 19 Q. I think it's right that RBKC did not participate in any

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22 A.

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until 20 June.

you were to:

of the strategic co-ordination meetings from 18 June

You say in your statement —— it's paragraph 46 at page 9

 $\{RBK00035426/9\}$ — that by 17 June, that's the Saturday,

That's probably true, yes, I can't remember.

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the arrangement?

A. Absolutely, Mr Chairman, yeah,

SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right, thank you very much.

MR MILLETT: Let's go to {RBK00028809}. This is an email

at the time, at 13.27 to all local authority chief

from John Hetherington, deputy head of London Resilience

"... look after logistics in RBKC. Several knew 2 better how to handle the situation than I did and ... 3 I agreed there was a need to demonstrate a renewed 4 effort ' 5 When was it that you first realised that? A. What, the fact that we needed to --6 7 8 A. Where are we? 9 Q. Can we go to your statement, please, at paragraph 46 on 10 page 9 {RBK00035426/9}. Let me just show you the exact 11 word you used. In the last sentence you say: 12 'Several knew better how to handle the situation 13 than I did and they and I agreed that there was a need 14 to demonstrate a renewed effort." 15 When did that need first occur to you? A. Well, I thought the implication of London Gold taking 16 over was that there would be significant input from 17 18 numerous other London boroughs, and that this -- as it 19 were, there needed to be quite a different scale, let 20 alone look and feel, to the local authority presence in 2.1 North Kensington. Q. In terms of how RBKC communications with the public were 2.2 2.3 controlled after this point, what was it that changed in 2.4 any way by the activation of LA Gold? 25 A. Well, I think by the Saturday, first of all, our head of 205 1 media and communications had resigned, and secondly $--\,$ 2. Q. Was that Martin Fitzpatrick? 3 A. Indeed. 4 Q. Right. 5 A. And, secondly, I think that John had looked to Julia Corkey, who was the head of communications at 6 7 Westminster, to be on point for how the Grenfell 8 recovery taskforce would communicate with any audience, 9 notably residents of North Kensington. 10 Q. Right. Why had Martin Fitzpatrick resigned? 11 A. I think that it is a very delicate matter and a matter 12 of considerable sadness that I think that he felt that 13 he could not cope, to put it politely. 14 Q. Were you aware that the Prime Minister spoke with the 15 leader of the council on the evening of 16 June 2017? 16 A. I probably was aware, because I would imagine that the 17 leader would have shared that with me, but I don't 18 remember the import of what she said. 19 Q. Right.

Can we look at $\{RBK00021098\}$. This is an email from

Lorna Gratton, the second email down, to Sue Redmond on Saturday, 17 June at 6.03 pm, as you can see. We looked

at this with Sue Redmond when she gave evidence --

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See page 2 $\{RBK00021098/2\}$, if you can go to that, 2 please. She says there on page 2, under "Specific requests from residents": 3 "Council should proactively contact Clement James 4 5 Centre representatives (To note: PM requested the council leader to make contact with all mosques, 6 7 churches and temples by end of day Friday when she spoke 8 to him on Friday evening - this doesn't appear to have 9 been done)." 10 Were you aware of that? Were you aware of the 11 Prime Minister's command? A. I don't think I was. 12 13 14 Were you aware of whether any proactive contact was 15 made with the Clement James Centre and the other faith 16 centres listed here? 17 A. I think it's quite likely that the councillors will have 18 been doing that, not necessarily in response to the 19 Prime Minister, but I'm sure they will have been all the 20 keener to do so given her instruction. I mean, the 21 leader had been on the board of management or something 22 like the board of management of the Al Manaar Mosque, 23 and I think there was another councillor on the board at 2.4 that time, and I think there were quite good links 2.5 between councillors and a number of the bodies that she

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would have had in mind. So --1 2 Q. But this is Number 10 telling your HALO that the 3 Prime Minister had made a specific request to the council leader to make contact with these faith 5 groups and places and it hadn't been done. Can you 6 account for that? 7 A. No. But, as I say, I think that it is quite likely that 8 councillors had been in contact with some of them and 9 there were already links, for example between the leader 10 of the council and the Al Manaar Mosque, so it may well 11 be that they thought they were in compliance with this, 12 even if they weren't quoting her instruction to do so. 13

Q. Right.

Can we go to {CAB00006343}, where I think we see an email about the call that the leader had had with the Prime Minister on the Friday evening, 16 June. This is from Alastair Whitehead to a number of others, including Lorna Gratton and Gavin Barwell, as you can see, and it's cc "Private Office Support Team". "READOUT", is the subject, "Prime Minister call with Leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council":

"All,
"The Prime Minister called the Leader of Kensington

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"The Prime Minister called the Leader of Kensingtor
 and Chelsea Council this evening – herewith a readout."
 Then the first bullet:

I hen the first bullet:

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A. Yes.

Q. -- earlier this week.

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said:

 $^{\prime\prime\prime}~\dots$ a sense of panic prevailed . Needed some

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-1		WITH DAM at the Control of the Control	1		
1		"The PM reported that, from her visit, the	1 2		clear positive and calm leadership.'
2		overwhelming message from those affected was that there			"'Senior leadership across the council seemed slow
3		had been no communication from the Council, and people	3		to co-ordinate action and make decisions. This meant
4		didn't feel that the Council was coordinating things	4		that frontline staff were struggling to get answers to
5		properly."	5		support questions or faced different responses depending
6		Now, just pausing there, was that a fair	6		who they talked to.'
7		observation?	7		"'An immediate response on the ground. I felt it
8	Α.	Well, I mean, I think communications had been poor,	8		took too long to be deployed by which time we had lost
9		absolutely right, and I think that our co-ordination was	9		the trust of the residents and community. Lack of
10		poor, I think that is true, but I would say that I think	10		leaders to send staff out in the first few hours."
11		that we were beginning to maintain $$ working out how to	11		Now, is there anything that you would say to those
12		maintain regular contact with survivors of the fire .	12		comments? Would you say they were fair or would you say
13	Q.	Working it out two days later?	13		they were unjustified?
14	Α.	Well, if I recall correctly, there had been attempts to	14	A.	Well, I'm sure there is justice in all of them. I don't
15		visit people for whom we had found accommodation on the	15		think that there was a sense of panic prevalent
16		Thursday, but quite often, for very understandable	16		throughout the period. I'm sure there were at least
17		reasons, appointments had not been kept. So, I mean,	17		moments of panic or examples of panic, but I don't think
18		I think we were trying to do the right thing for those	18		that was true, as it were, ordinarily through those
19		most severely affected, even as —— I mean, it's not	19		early days. I think that there were positive and calm
20		early, but even as soon as the Thursday.	20		members of senior management. So, you know, there was
21	Q.	Then the second bullet point:	21		some, there may not have been enough of that. We may
22	•	"Leader reported there had been a big response from	22		have been slow on occasion.
23		the voluntary sector, and that Council officers were	23		I think that it is fair to say that there was, as
24		engaged — but there had been some confusion and the	24		I said earlier, a long gap between people having to
25		Council is not held in the highest regard."	25		evacuate the tower and then the council providing
23		Council is not neid in the highest regard.	23		evacuate the tower and then the council providing
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1		Was that something of an understatement?	1		a source of assistance, and that is, I think, very
2	Α.				
		Well, I think it is true by the Friday evening that that	2		difficult to overcome given the state of arrangements
3		Well, I think it is true by the Friday evening that that was so, yes.	2		difficult to overcome given the state of arrangements even if the council had been $$ had had more people in
3 4		was so, yes.			even if the council had been $$ had had more people in
4		was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to $\{RBK00068075\}$, finally. This	3		even if the council had been $$ had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if $\mbox{we'}\mbox{d}$
4 5		was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by	3 4 5		even if the council had been $$ had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there
4 5 6		was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured $$ or	3 4 5 6		even if the council had been $$ had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at
4 5 6 7		was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured $$ or purported to capture, at least $$ the learning from the	3 4 5 6 7	0	even if the council had been $$ had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day.
4 5 6 7 8		was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured $$ or purported to capture, at least $$ the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across	3 4 5 6 7 8	Q.	even if the council had been — had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is
4 5 6 7 8 9	Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured $$ or purported to capture, at least $$ the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond.	3 4 5 6 7 8 9	Q.	even if the council had been — had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local
4 5 6 7 8 9	Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm.	3 4 5 6 7 8 9	Q.	even if the council had been — had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can
4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm. If we go, please, to page 13 {RBK00068075/13} at	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	Q.	even if the council had been — had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can see at the bottom left—hand corner that it bears the
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm. If we go, please, to page 13 {RBK00068075/13} at annex A, we can see some of the comments, and two—thirds	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Q.	even if the council had been — had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can see at the bottom left—hand corner that it bears the date of July 2013.
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm. If we go, please, to page 13 {RBK00068075/13} at annex A, we can see some of the comments, and two—thirds of the way down the page:	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Q.	even if the council had been — had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can see at the bottom left—hand corner that it bears the date of July 2013. Just looking at the first page, is this a document
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm. If we go, please, to page 13 {RBK00068075/13} at annex A, we can see some of the comments, and two—thirds of the way down the page: "Theme: Leadership."	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	Q.	even if the council had been —— had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can see at the bottom left—hand corner that it bears the date of July 2013. Just looking at the first page, is this a document with which you were familiar during your time as chief
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	Q. A. Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm. If we go, please, to page 13 {RBK00068075/13} at annex A, we can see some of the comments, and two—thirds of the way down the page: "Theme: Leadership." Do you see that?	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14		even if the council had been —— had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can see at the bottom left—hand corner that it bears the date of July 2013. Just looking at the first page, is this a document with which you were familiar during your time as chief executive, do you think?
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16	Q. A. Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm. If we go, please, to page 13 {RBK00068075/13} at annex A, we can see some of the comments, and two—thirds of the way down the page: "Theme: Leadership." Do you see that? Yes.	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	A.	even if the council had been —— had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can see at the bottom left—hand corner that it bears the date of July 2013. Just looking at the first page, is this a document with which you were familiar during your time as chief executive, do you think? I wouldn't be sure.
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	Q. A. Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm. If we go, please, to page 13 {RBK00068075/13} at annex A, we can see some of the comments, and two—thirds of the way down the page: "Theme: Leadership." Do you see that? Yes. It says:	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16	A.	even if the council had been —— had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can see at the bottom left—hand corner that it bears the date of July 2013. Just looking at the first page, is this a document with which you were familiar during your time as chief executive, do you think? I wouldn't be sure. No. Well, let's look at page 53 {LFB00061161/53}.
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	Q. A. Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm. If we go, please, to page 13 {RBK00068075/13} at annex A, we can see some of the comments, and two—thirds of the way down the page: "Theme: Leadership." Do you see that? Yes. It says: "The majority of comments focussed on the lack of	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	A.	even if the council had been —— had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can see at the bottom left—hand corner that it bears the date of July 2013. Just looking at the first page, is this a document with which you were familiar during your time as chief executive, do you think? I wouldn't be sure. No. Well, let's look at page 53 {LFB00061161/53}. These are the principles about recovery at
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	Q. A. Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm. If we go, please, to page 13 {RBK00068075/13} at annex A, we can see some of the comments, and two—thirds of the way down the page: "Theme: Leadership." Do you see that? Yes. It says: "The majority of comments focussed on the lack of direction and visibility of senior management	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	A.	even if the council had been —— had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can see at the bottom left—hand corner that it bears the date of July 2013. Just looking at the first page, is this a document with which you were familiar during your time as chief executive, do you think? I wouldn't be sure. No. Well, let's look at page 53 {LFB00061161/53}. These are the principles about recovery at paragraph 123, and if you look at the last bullet point
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	Q. A. Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm. If we go, please, to page 13 {RBK00068075/13} at annex A, we can see some of the comments, and two—thirds of the way down the page: "Theme: Leadership." Do you see that? Yes. It says: "The majority of comments focussed on the lack of direction and visibility of senior management immediately after the fire. Some comments indicated	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	A.	even if the council had been —— had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can see at the bottom left—hand corner that it bears the date of July 2013. Just looking at the first page, is this a document with which you were familiar during your time as chief executive, do you think? I wouldn't be sure. No. Well, let's look at page 53 {LFB00061161/53}. These are the principles about recovery at paragraph 123, and if you look at the last bullet point on that page, it says this:
4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	Q. A. Q.	was so, yes. Now, can we go, please, to {RBK00068075}, finally. This is a report which was commissioned and created by the council after your departure, and it captured — or purported to capture, at least — the learning from the Grenfell Tower fire, and members of staff from across the council were invited to respond. Mm—hm. If we go, please, to page 13 {RBK00068075/13} at annex A, we can see some of the comments, and two—thirds of the way down the page: "Theme: Leadership." Do you see that? Yes. It says: "The majority of comments focussed on the lack of direction and visibility of senior management immediately after the fire. Some comments indicated that this may have hindered the ability to provide an	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	A.	even if the council had been —— had had more people in the borough emergency control centre and even if we'd had more training. Actually, there was a problem there of geography which was not easy to overcome at all at that time of day. Finally, can I show you {LFB00061161}. This is a Cabinet Office document entitled, "The role of Local Resilience Forums: A reference document", and you can see at the bottom left—hand corner that it bears the date of July 2013. Just looking at the first page, is this a document with which you were familiar during your time as chief executive, do you think? I wouldn't be sure. No. Well, let's look at page 53 {LFB00061161/53}. These are the principles about recovery at paragraph 123, and if you look at the last bullet point on that page, it says this: "Recovery management is best approached from the
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active participation of the affected community and

a strong reliance on local capacities and expertise.

1 Recovery is not just a matter for the statutory agencies 1 2 the private sector, the voluntary sector and the wider 2 Do you accept that there was insufficient training, 3 community will play a crucial role.' 3 especially in relation to the humanitarian aspects of 4 Then over the page $\{LFB00061161/54\}$: 4 recovery? A. Yes, I do. Though I would like to add a rider that 5 "• Recovery management is most effective when 5 agencies involved in human welfare have a major role in I think that, with hindsight, on a tragedy of this 6 6 7 all levels of decision-making which may influence the 7 scale, actually probably the training would need to go well-being and recovery of the affected community. 8 8 rather further than even a compliant authority might 9 "• Recovery is best achieved where the recovery 9 have imagined necessary. 10 10 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{Q}}.$ Did you or anybody in the council ever take steps to process begins from the moment the emergency is 11 identified. It is recommended that, if resources allow, 11 examine the systems you had in place, examine these 12 12 the RCG is set up on the first day of the emergency." principles, which involve preparedness and engagement 13 13 I won't ask you what the acronym stands for. with the community, and satisfy yourself that the 14 14 systems you had in place were compliant with the 15 "Recovery planning and management arrangements are 15 requirements of the Equality Act 2010? 16 16 A. I think we might have thought that, although relations most effective where they are supported by training 17 programmes and exercises which ensure that the agencies 17 in North Kensington were not as good as in the rest of 18 and groups involved in the recovery process are properly 18 the borough, I think we might have thought that the 19 prepared for their role." 19 sense of partnership we had with community bodies there 2.0 I think RCG is a recovery co-ordination group, but 2.0 would have formed a basis for recovery, were a disaster 21 I'll be corrected about that if that's wrong. 21 to occur. I don't think that adds up to what you said, 22 22 Then: but I do think it would have been, and in other 2.3 "Recovery is most effective where recovery 23 circumstances it could have been, a good place to start. 2.4 2.4 MR MILLETT: Thank you. management arrangements provide a comprehensive and 25 integrated framework for managing all potential 2.5 Mr Chairman, those are all my prepared questions. 215 1 emergencies and where assistance measures are provided 1 I have got a clutch of other questions which I think in a timely, fair and equitable manner and are 2 2 I will have to put to Mr Holgate perhaps after the 3 sufficiently flexible to respond to a diversity of 3 community needs." may come in. Now, my first question is: were you familiar with SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Yes. 5 5 6 those principles, even if not specifically this 6 7 7 document, before June 2017? 8 8 A. I think I was familiar with the idea of the recovery 9 9 process beginning from the moment the emergency is to check he has not left anything out. 10 10 THE WITNESS: Certainly.

11 Q. Right.

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12 A. Yes, I think I would have been familiar with thoseprinciples , yeah.

Q. Had you systems in place whereby you were approaching
 preparedness from the perspective of community
 development?

17 A. I think we would -- I think I would struggle to ... no. I would struggle to say that we were ready to engage or develop with the community in the recovery from the tragedy.

Q. Did it matter, was it relevant, that key directors like
 Sue Redmond and Laura Johnson had no developed training
 on contingency management and no understanding of the
 services available from the LLAG?

A. Yes, I'm sure it does matter.

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break, because they may go with further questions that Well, Mr Holgate, even though counsel has reached the end of what he thinks are his prepared questions, we have to have a break at this point to give him a chance SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Equally importantly, we have to give 11 12 an opportunity for those who are following the 13 proceedings from elsewhere to suggest questions which 14 maybe we should put to you. So we will stop now and 15 have a ten-minute break. We will come back at 4.40, and 16 at that point we'll see whether there are any more 17 questions for you. 18 THE WITNESS: Thank you. 19 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right? And again, please don't 2.0 talk to anyone about your evidence. 21 THE WITNESS: Certainly. 2.2 SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much. Would you go 23 with the usher, please. (Pause) 2.4

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Thank you, Mr Millett. 4.40, then, please.

MR MILLETT: Thank you. 1 2 (4.30 pm) 3 (A short break) 4 (4.43 pm) SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: All right, Mr Holgate. Well, let's 5 see if there are any more questions for you. 6 7 Yes. Mr Millett. MR MILLETT: Yes, Mr Chairman, just one or two. 8 9 First, can we just look at the [draft] transcript 10 for this morning, please, page 43, line 19 and 20 $\{{\sf Day273/48:12\!-\!19}\}.$ I was asking you at line 19 why you 11 12 remember it was 4.30 particularly, and you said that: 13 " ... I was busy on email and the phone for a while. I had retrieved the copy of the emergency plan in the 14 15 flat, and then after a while my wife got up and we 16 agreed that it would be a very sensible thing to go and 17 look at the circumstances around Grenfell Tower. So we 18 probably set off around 4.00, something like that." 19 Did you take your wife down there? 2.0 A. Well, she took me down there because I don't drive. 2.1 Q. Right, I see. All right. 22 Why was it a topic of discussion about whether you

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lies behind my question is: was it not obvious that you

would go down there and look at the circumstances? What

A. Well, I think it was. It was more a case of when and 2 how. Yeah. 3 Q. What did you expect to learn by going to the scene? A. I wanted some impression of the activity around the 5 rest centres in particular, and some idea of what the 6 environment felt like, not just the tower, but the 7 sort of environment around the tower, and I didn't 8 really know what to expect, and I thought that some 9 sort of first -hand exposure was sensible because I was 10 conscious -- as I said also this morning, I was 11 conscious of the expectation that Gold didn't stray far

from the BECC thereafter, so it was probably the only 13 opportunity to have some sense for myself of what was 14 happening. 15 Q. Right.

Next question, next topic.

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should?

Was there any discussion at any stage of ringfencing a part of the budget so that you always had a sure fund to be able to pay for the right number of staff and the right number of trained staff who could respond across the whole field of London Resilience if called upon?

2.2 A. I don't remember anything of that nature. It sounds 2.3 like a perfectly good idea. I think it might founder on 2.4 boroughs' autonomy. So, of course, the fire may have 25 made quite a big difference to how boroughs plan to

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2 a thing forward before the fire, you might have found 3 quite a bit of resistance to borough funds being 4 pre-empted or presumed by some entity beyond the 5 boroughs themselves. Q. Now, I asked you earlier in your evidence about the 6 7

co-operate together in future, but if you had put such

reasons for not invoking London Gold on the morning of 14 June, and one of the things you said was that the 8 9 housing department was going to work as a department 1.0 pretty much entirely on the task to reach survivors. 11 Did you discuss with Laura Johnson that question?

12 A. I'd discussed what she thought we could do. I think 13 I had a telephone conversation with her even before we 14 both got to the Town Hall.

15 Q. Right. Did you explore with Laura Johnson what her 16 understanding of the LLAG system was?

17 A No

18 Q. And what about with Sue Redmond, who became the HALO? 19 Did vou discuss with her --

20 A. I don't believe -- I don't recall doing so.

2.1 Q. Right.

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Was one of your errors in proceeding without calling in LLAG Gold at an earlier point not properly testing with those two individuals, at least, and perhaps other executive officers, whether they were equipped to cope?

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1 A. Yes, I think that's a very fair point indeed. What I should have done -- I mean, really I should have done 2 3 something like that as soon as realistically possible, and, failing that, I could have done it adjacent to the 5 Gold meeting at 11 o'clock.

6 Q. Now, I haven't asked you about David Kerry.

Was it your impression, at least by the 14th, later on on the 14th -- he had gone home, but when he came back on the 14th -- that he was. I think as he put it.really zonked and inoperable?

I wouldn't have formed that impression, no. I think

12 I was aware that he -- obviously I was aware that he had 13 been up most of the night and I accepted his decision to 14 hand over to others mid-morning. So -- and I appreciate 15 from my own point of view I would not necessarily have 16 got much sleep in the course of the day, so it wouldn't 17 have surprised me if he wasn't feeling on top form by

18 that evening. But, as a practitioner of long standing, 19 I might have expected him to say, "I can't do this", or,

2.0 "I need someone else to come and do it with me", or 21 something like that. I don't recall him saving that he

2.2 felt unequal to that challenge.

23 Both Rebecca Blackburn and Sue Redmond in their evidence 2.4 have referred to raising concerns with you and

2.5 Tony Redpath about David Kerry. Do you recall that?

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- A. Again, as ever, if they say that, I'm sure they did that. I don't think either of them would have had the chance to do that on the 14th. They may well have had the chance to do so later.
- Q. Did you come to a view that David Kerry was really
 incapable in the circumstances of running the BECC as
 Silver?
- 8 A. No.

May 5, 2022

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9 Q. Right.

Do you remember whether you were asked by
Rebecca Blackburn about Gold and by Redmond about the
need for structure? Do you remember being addressed by
them on those topics?

- $\begin{array}{lll} 14 & \text{A. No, but I'm more than happy to assume that they are} \\ 15 & \text{right} \, . \end{array}$
- Q. Did you feel that you were receiving sufficient support
 and advice, reliable advice, from those in the
 contingency department within the council during those
 first two days?
- A. I think that it is very hard to know what you could reasonably expect of a not very large group of people operating under considerable stress in unprecedented circumstances, and, if I may say so, I do not think that another training exercise or two would have clarified that situation. I think there is a very considerable

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- difference between training and practice on the one
 hand however sensible and however necessary they are,
- and they would have made a difference —— and the
- actuality of something like the Grenfell Tower fire.

 5. O Finally, do you accept having seen the evidence that we
- Q. Finally, do you accept, having seen the evidence that we
 have been going through together, that at least
 an aspect of your reluctance to invoke LLAG Gold until
 late Thursday the 15th was that it would have been

9 politically damaging to the council?

- 10 A. No, I don't accept that, actually. I don't think --11 again, it comes back to a hugely obvious and important 12 distinction between substance and presentation. You 13 know, in the Treasury, in the DCMS, in the local authority until then, I was always about the substance. 14 15 If I'd thought that RBKC could not cope, then it would 16 have been madness to have carried on just because it was 17 embarrassing to admit as much. It would -- you know,
- $\begin{array}{lll} 18 & & \text{that would not } -- \text{ that is not part of my make-up.} \\ 19 & \text{Q. Looking back on it now, and based on what you know now} \\ 20 & & \text{and the evidence we have examined together over the past} \end{array}$
- day of your evidence, is there anything in your role that you would have done differently, Mr Holgate?
- A. Yes. Well, we've spent most of the day, really,
 exploring that. So the most obvious thing should have
- been to have activated London Gold more or less at 3.20

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on the Wednesday morning.

Failing that, as Laura Johnson said yesterday, to have paid more attention to what the council was trying to communicate and, if necessary, to shut out the reactive work that absorbed, I think, too much time of the media team and to have focused on proactive work.

And I should, of course, even having made the first mistake of not invoking London Gold straight away, I should have got on with the humanitarian assistance on the Wednesday as well.

I mean, those are just the headlines. I think there is more besides that one could list.

- Q. Is there anything else you would like to say to add to your evidence that perhaps I haven't covered with you that perhaps would help us with our investigations?
- 16 A. Well, again, with the benefit of hindsight. I think 17 that -- and if you'll forgive me reverting to the 18 sort of policy analyst in the civil service that I once 19 was, I think that the ability to deal to the quality 2.0 that we would all want, our ability to address the needs 21 of the survivors, the bereaved and others after 22 a tragedy of this scale, would require an intensity and 23 an extent of preparation which to me in all probability 2.4 goes well beyond what was then expected even of

a compliant authority. And I may be wrong about that,

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because I've been wrong about quite a lot, but I think that is true.

To take just one example, I'm very glad, for the council's sake, that they now have two tests a year instead of one, but I wonder whether those tests are done without warning, for example. And running full—scale tests without warning is a major call, and would obviously involve foregoing service to other customers of the council during the period over which you would run such a thing, but that is the kind of choice that I think authorities in the aftermath of the Grenfell fire have to confront and have to be explicit about what they are aiming to achieve and the standards they expect to set themselves, and I don't think that was the case before the fire.

16 MR MILLETT: Thank you.

Well, Mr Holgate, I've come to the end of all of my questions, and it only remains for me to thank you very much for coming to the Inquiry and assisting us with our investigations. We are extremely grateful to you. So thank you.

22 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

May I say how profoundly sorry I am to the survivors and the bereaved and other residents for the fire itself and for the failures of the council to cope in the

and for the failures of the co 25 and for the failures of the co

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         aftermath in the way that it would have expected of
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         itself under any other circumstance. I am profoundly
                                                                              2
                                                                                                                                   PAGE
                                                                                   MR NICHOLAS HOLGATE (sworn) ......1
 3
         sorry .
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            Thank you.
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     SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well, thank you, Mr Holgate. It's
                                                                                         Questions from COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY ......1
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                                                                              5
         right that I should add the thanks of the panel to those
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         expressed by Mr Millett. It's been very helpful to us
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         to hear what you have to tell us about how you tried to
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         handle things in the days immediately following the
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         fire. It's been not only interesting but very useful,
         and we are very grateful to you for coming to give us
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         your evidence. So thank you very much indeed.
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     THE WITNESS: Thank you.
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     SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: And now, of course, you're free to
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     THE WITNESS: Thank you very much, Mr Chairman.
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                       (The witness withdrew)
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     SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Well, thank you, Mr Millett. That's
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         all for today, and we shall resume on Monday morning at
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         10 o'clock with another witness.
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     MR MILLETT: Yes, Mr Chairman.
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            Can I express our gratitude to the panel for sitting
                                                                             2.2
2.3
         late on a Thursday evening, and also to the transcriber
                                                                             2.3
24
         and to the Opus operators for doing the same. We're
                                                                             24
         very grateful to you for the accommodation.
                                  225
                                                                                                               227
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             Yes, Monday morning, TMO witnesses.
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     SIR MARTIN MOORE-BICK: Thank you very much. You're quite
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 3
         right to thank them, because we can't operate without
         the support of all those who deal with the technical
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         side of things. So I'm very glad we were able to finish
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         Mr Holgate's evidence today, and thank you all of you
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         who were prepared to sit late to do that.
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            Very good. 10 o'clock on Monday morning, then,
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         please.
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     (4.56 pm)
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                 (The hearing adjourned until 10 am
12
                       on Monday, 9 May 2022)
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