

**Submission from Mr Shah Ahmed, Thursday 7 November 2024.**

**The Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report and social housing; complacency and a missed opportunity.**

The Grenfell Tower Phase 2 report was published on 4 September. Despite searing criticism of the organisations that owned and managed the Tower, the Inquiry has missed an opportunity to recommend further reforms to the social housing sector.

The inquiry found that the organisation that managed the Tower, the Tenant Management Organisation (“TMO”), learnt nothing from two independent reports that criticised it in the years before the fire. The Inquiry found that relations between the TMO and many residents were characterised by distrust, dislike, personal antagonism and anger. The TMO failed to take resident concerns seriously. It did not treat residents with understanding and respect.

The failure to listen to and properly communicate with residents had a tangible impact on the safety of the Tower. To take one example, between 2010 and 2016 there was no fully functioning smoke ventilation system in the Tower. In March 2014, the London Fire Brigade issued a deficiency notice to the TMO because of its failure to maintain the smoke ventilation system. The Leaseholders’ Association, chaired by a resident and our client, Shah Ahmed, complained about the state of the smoke ventilation system from 2010 onwards. Rather than engage with the Leaseholders’ Association’s legitimate concerns, the Inquiry found that the Association was ignored, fobbed-off and misled. The defects were wrongly described as minor. A vital engineer’s report on the smoke ventilation system was withheld, as was the existence of the deficiency notice. The Leaseholders’ Association was not given a full and accurate picture.

This and other examples in the Inquiry report could and should have led the Inquiry to recommend changes to the law so that residents and residents’ organisations have enhanced rights to be formally recognised, properly consulted and given extra rights to information. Instead, the Inquiry pointed to the existing Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. It concluded that the powers given to the Regulator of Social Housing were sufficient so that no further recommendations were required. This is a missed opportunity. While the new powers handed to the Regulator are helpful, that does not give individual residents and resident groups powers they need to themselves hold landlords to account. By implementing relatively minor and straightforward changes, the government could make buildings safer by empowering the real experts, the residents who live in them. The lawyer who represented me at the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry, Andrew Brookes of Anthony Gold, will continue supporting social housing occupiers in their push for change.

I expressed my concern at Insight Housing. Here is the link.

<https://www.insidehousing.co.uk/news/former-chair-of-grenfells-leaseholder-association-criticises-lack-of-recommendations-for-social-housing-providers-88350>

## **Mindset,**

The question of mindset is really very important. A lot is said about it, and people acknowledge it, but at the end of the day, nothing much happens. A mindset here is essential because it governs how people govern. Suppose you have a mindset that does not include health and safety at the top, which influences how you approach the building and the community living in it. In that case, that mindset has to be changed and, of course, to see implementation, which leads to the four points related to the tenants, particularly in the vertical villages of social housing buildings. You tend to know what's wrong with it, and you have to be very blind or interested not to know what's wrong with the building. Once you know what's wrong, you want to do something about it because affecting your daily life.

## **Voice and what it means in practice:**

Here is how the King of Human Rights, Barrister Michael Mansfield KC, explained the problem of giving a voice to the voiceless, and here is his explanation. Michael Mansfield KC is the most senior and inspirational KC. I was fortunate to have him represent me at the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry, and I have yet to convince myself that politics is a force for good and respect for the ordinary people, BUT live and let live the law does harm to no one. I have attended the Grenfell Tower public inquiry regularly, and my trust always has been the Truth, Justice and Accountability must prevail through the judicial process, and I expect the government MUST take the Grenfell Tower inquiry's report, findings, and recommendations seriously and implement them without further delay.

So you have to make a provision to ensure that the tenants and leaseholders do not just have a voice because we know voices can be silenced or, circumvented, or marginalised, so talking about listening wouldn't be enough. They have to have a somewhat similar mindset. You have to change the attitude, which becomes embedded in the approach. Please see the note prepared by Joe Philp below. I am grateful to him. I had two meetings, one on 16 October and another on 4 November 2024. Here are my submissions and feedback as a resident Leaseholder of Grenfell Tower for 25 years, founder and Chair of the Grenfell Tower Leaseholders' Association (GTLA), and, of course, as one of the key and core participants of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's process.

I have been informed by Joe Philp that I need to send my submission and feedback to the RBKC's overview and scrutiny Committee, and it is up to them to consider my submissions and feedback as part of their response. I find it quite shocking and unacceptable, and again, RBKC is acting like Judge/Jury/Executioner and an insult to injury for the reason I need to go back in time to May 2013, for example, during the catastrophic power surge in May 2013 and when we lost every electrical and electronic item.

### **Power surge in May 2013 and Scrutiny committee's involvement.**

I tirelessly collected a petition signed by 94 residents (GTI ref: MET00042500/1), which was part of my 536 exhibits of disclosures, along with three witness statements I submitted to the Grenfell Tower inquiry. The petition went through the Scrutiny Committee and was represented by our former Cllr Judith Blakeman, with whom I always maintained close communications as a long-standing local councillor.

Here is the link

MET00041426\_Exhibit JMB\_1 to Judith Blakeman's MET statement dated 07.07.2017 - Email from Grenfell Tower Leaseholder to Judith Blakeman regarding Loss of Water and Power Surge at Grenfell.pdf Former Director of Housing Ms Laura Johnson's assertion ((MET00042500/1)

Since Mr Maddison became aware of the problem, he has ensured that appropriate action has been taken to ensure that this problem is addressed, and we have no evidence to support the view that he has failed to take the health and safety of residents seriously.

The RBKC scrutiny committee believed everything the former Director of Asset and Management, Peter Maddison of KCTMO, and the former Director of Housing for RBKC, Ms Laura John, conveyed to the Scrutiny Committee, not people like those who lived through four major incidents in Grenfell Tower.

### **The Maria Memoli Reports**

#### **From VOL-3**

33.2 In July 2008, RBKC asked Maria Memoli, retired Solicitor, to investigate longstanding complaints made against the TMO by residents of its properties and to establish whether there were any common themes that could inform a plan for improvement.

33.3 Robert Black, who had become the TMO's chief executive officer in May 2009, said that although he had been made aware of the Memoli report, he could not remember having been given a copy of it.

This report was part of my (AHMED) exhibit of disclosure 179(IWS00001462), 178(IWS00001462/3), 192(IWS00001462/4), 194(IWS00001462/4)

This document belongs to the RBKC/KCTMO. It was part of my disclosure, and the RBKC/KCTMO failed to make the disclosure as part of the inquiry process. Has this damning report gone through the scrutiny committee debate process in 2009? If not, why not?

RBKC/KCTMO failed to disclose the complete petition( ref: RBK00000181), and despite the GTI process ending, I had to intervene directly with the GTI team and my lawyer to put things right.

### **Modular Management Agreement(MMA)**

You have to change the role of tenants and leaseholders so that they participate in decision-making and policy-making. If anyone looks at the MMA agreement between RBKC and KCTMO, it does include a role to be played. It was right about that, but they didn't implement it. Hence, it's just a case of having a rule; you have to make sure the mindset allows the people in charge to ensure a role to be played.

Why was the Grenfell Tower Leaseholders' Association(GTLA), as a bona fide organisation, NOT allowed to participate in decision-making and policy-making in Grenfell Tower or in GTRP?

Why did RBKC/KCTMO refuse funding for GTLA to inspect the building, including its Health and safety concerns, including ACM cladding, only two weeks before the disaster when we were entitled to request funding from RBKC/KCTMO?

Has MMA been reviewed annually by the scrutiny committee to check its integrity? Why was it left to the Director of Housing to monitor, not the Scrutiny Committee, and never updated?

### **Dedicated Service**

For a period of 6 years, there were fundamental things that could have been improved in how DS provided the service to the BSRs, whether the process went through scrutiny committee approval or not. Providing everyone with the standard of services for the families of GT was unreasonable and unfair when you called us Bereaved, Survivors, and Residents(BSRs). It should always be based on giving priority to bereaved families, not treating everyone equally, no matter who was the loudest. Knowing that fact I was actively involved with collaborate, involved to shape the future support. I tried to shape their final module 4, by giving absolute priority to bereaved families.

### **Inferno Letter dated 3rd September 2010.**

Why did GTLA and its chair, Shah Ahmed, have to endure a national disaster in Grenfell Tower on 14 June 2017 and wait until the Module 3 Closing statement on Monday, 25 October 2021, RBKC to apologise to Michael Mansfield KC on a live GTI oral submission concerning GTLA's letter, as GTI dubbed it an inferno letter( TMO10037439) dated 3 September 2010, 7 years later, NOT directly to the GTLA/Shah Ahmed?



Module 3 Closing Statements - Monday 25th October 2021 (1/2) Fast forward, please listen from 1.58 concerning Chronicle of Shah Ahmed

**Prepared by Joe Philp and assisted by Mr Callum Wilson, the Draft notes from meeting with Mr Ahmed on 4/11 about the Council's response to the Inquiry**

- You feel that the notes from the last meeting capture the key points we discussed but you want to see the Council act on your feedback, not just capture it.
- You feel it is important that the Council recognises and acknowledges your unique experience and your long history of engaging with the Council and the TMO.
- You would like your feedback to be attributed to you personally when it is written up and would like to consider making a formal submission to the Council.
- You would like me to review the write-up of the feedback in the most recent report with this in mind.
- It is not enough to focus on resident 'voice'; instead we must focus on sharing power and decision making so that residents have a real seat at the table. Voice has to mean something.
- It is important for you that in the response to the Inquiry the Council recognises the importance of housing as a fundamental human right, acknowledging that improved standards in housing will also improve living standards and life chances for residents.
- Only when people live in a safe, decent home can they achieve their potential and secure positive outcomes for themselves and their families.
- It's not enough to change regulations, instead you have to change culture and the way people behave to ensure that staff recognise they are serving their fellow human beings.
- What helps to change people's mindset is residents and staff coming together around the same table to solve problems and address issues.

- It is important to hear from as many people as possible and to listen to everyone, rather than letting loud voices dominate.
- It's vital to recruit people with empathy, listening skills and the right attitudes. Residents might be angry or hostile, but staff need the right skills to be able to engage and listen. This could be achieved by testing people's character and attitudes as part of the recruitment process.
- Need to have consequences when staff don't meet the standards that are expected of them.
- It is important to move beyond party politics to effect change, working with residents to find shared solutions.
- It's vital that the Council gives away power to residents and involves them in decision making so that it is not acting as 'judge, jury and executioner'.
- The Council needs to recognise residents as experts in where they live and treat what they say seriously.
- This will ensure residents are involved in driving change.

### **The Social Housing Advisory Hub (SHAH) proposal**

You strongly believe that your Social Housing Advisory Hub project needs to be pursued to demonstrate your commitment to a lasting legacy from Grenfell.

It could be a platform to ensure residents know their rights and are empowered to take action, helping to rebalance the power relations with the Council.

I look forward to hearing from you soon. It is of national and public importance. Unfortunately, I have no control over the outcome, but I have given everything wholeheartedly. If you do anything wholeheartedly, is it bound to have a fruitful result, or is the world a stage where we are playing our part? Let's do the right things. It may gratify some but astonish the rest, and we may have to wait and see.

Soon after the Grenfell Tower disaster, I always added this sentence to every significant correspondence I made with the government/RBKC and others: ***"The Grenfell Tower history MUST be written by the victims of Grenfell Tower, NOT by the victors (like RBKC/KCTMO or others)"***. Now, my trust and confidence in RBKC are shallow, and I feel that RBKC is trying to write the history of Grenfell Tower as a victor/Defendant of a manmade disaster called the Grenfell Inferno.

We fail to realise one becomes a doctor, politician and elected elite in society ultimately to serve fellow human beings, and we die one day, BUT we should not die in such horrific circumstances in this society or Grenfell Tower.

This manmade Towering Inferno took away so many innocent lives on an unprecedented level. 2,000 years later, more of the Colosseum built by the ancient Romans exists than

in the 21st century, which recently refurbished the Grenfell Tower. That tells you all you need to know about the atrocious fire and safety standards followed by RBKC/KCTMO/RYDON/ARCONIC and others. This happened in one of the so-called greatest cities in the world. This is an international embarrassment, which even one month, plagues news channels across the globe.

Best wishes and your sincerely

Shah Ahmed

Former resident Leaseholders of Grenfell Tower for 25 years

Founder and Chair of Grenfell Tower Leaseholders' Association(GTLA)