

The Council's response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report

November 2024



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KENSINGTON
AND CHELSEA

Contents

1	Executive summary	3
2	Introduction	14
3	What we've heard	22
4	Ten core themes	35
	a Ensuring Council homes are safe	35
	b Being a better landlord	39
	c Rebuilding trust	43
	d Building control and safety standards	47
	e Emergency preparedness and response	50
	f Understanding our communities	54
	g Managing partnerships and contracts	58
	h A skilled and professional workforce	61
	i Governance and oversight	64
	j Listening to residents, individually and collectively	67
5	The culture of the Council and the relationship with residents	72
6	Monitoring and accountability	75
7	Conclusion	78

1. Executive summary

Introduction

- 1** The Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report describes the failures of the Council before, during and after the Grenfell Tower fire on Wednesday 14 June 2017. Seventy two people lost their lives in a tragedy that could have been avoided. The Council failed in some of its most basic duties – to keep residents safe, to listen to and act upon their concerns, and to respond effectively when disaster struck. For those failings, and for the harm that was done, we apologise unreservedly.
- 2** We accept the findings of the Inquiry. The report identifies weaknesses across multiple areas: a breakdown in relationships with residents often characterised by disrespect and indifference; a lack of professional competence in critical functions like building control and emergency planning; and failures of leadership and governance.
- 3** The Council has made significant changes since 2017 to address these failings, which are set out in full later in this report. Specifically, we have:
 - a.** Implemented the recommendations of the Inquiry’s Phase 1 report.
 - b.** Made major changes in housing management, including bringing housing services back in house to build a more direct relationship with residents.
 - c.** Made safety a key part of our £374 million capital works programme to improve housing across the borough.
 - d.** Established a dedicated in-house fire safety team, with fire risk assessments carried out by external experts.
 - e.** Strengthened our resilience function, working in partnership with communities to ensure we are better prepared for emergencies.
 - f.** Made significant changes to building control to ensure staff are properly trained and to prioritise safety.
 - g.** Involved residents in decision-making through the tenants consultative committee and other forums.
 - h.** Established a Charter for Public Participation which shows how residents are involved in decision-making.
 - i.** Ensured regular reporting to elected members and the public on corporate performance and progress on Council commitments.

- 4 Our conversations with bereaved, survivors and the community since the Phase 2 report's publication show that not enough residents can see and feel the changes we have made since 2017. We have heard concerns directly from bereaved families, survivors and residents about safety, the quality of our services, social and racial discrimination, and our willingness to listen and learn. Some feel things are worse and others have lost faith in the Council's capacity to change.
- 5 In responding to the Inquiry's findings, we must do more than simply list actions and commitments. We must understand how and why we failed. The evidence shows that at times the Council lost sight of its fundamental purpose as a public authority - to serve our residents, especially those most dependent on us. We failed to listen to and involve residents in decisions affecting their lives; we lacked proper systems of oversight and accountability; and we did not maintain the professional standards and technical competence to keep people safe. Our response is therefore built on three core principles that directly address these failures:
- 6 **Resident power and participation** – We recognise that lasting change can only come through genuine partnership with our communities. This means moving beyond simply consulting residents to finding ways to ensure their experience and expertise shapes what we do and how we do it. It also includes building new, more inclusive ways of working with the ward councillors who are elected by their communities, especially in North Kensington. In doing so, we aim to rebuild the relationship between the Council and the people it serves.
- 7 **Independent challenge and oversight** – We cannot be the sole judge of our own progress. Given the impact of our failures and the commensurate breakdown in trust, external scrutiny and challenge must be built into our approach. This includes proactive engagement with statutory regulation and inspection, using internal and external audit in ways that command public confidence, and embracing new forms of independent oversight and verification. We must be open to challenge and willing to change course based on these perspectives.
- 8 **High standards and technical excellence** – We commit to being an organisation founded on the highest standards of individual professional competence and collective service standards for our residents. That means investing in our workforce through recruitment, training and development; establishing clear standards and robust performance management; and creating systems that support and reward expertise and competence. We must create a culture where standards are upheld without compromise, where projects and priorities are delivered with sustained effort, pace and urgency, and where safety, responsiveness and quality are prioritised over convenience and cost.
- 9 We cannot undo the harm that was done, but by creating a culture like the one described above we can establish a legacy from Grenfell which honours the memory of those who died.

Ten core themes

10 Guided by these principles, this response sets out actions across 10 areas. In each we detail the specific failures identified by the Inquiry, the changes the Council has made since 2017, our assessment of remaining gaps and weaknesses, and the commitments we will make to address them. Those actions are:

11 Ensuring Council homes are safe

- a.** We will strengthen our existing ban on contractors and products implicated in the Grenfell Tower fire from use by the Council, and maintain a complete ban on the use of any combustible materials in external walls for all Council construction and refurbishment projects, regardless of building height.
- b.** We will implement a new protocol for sharing information between departments about vulnerable residents so that they can be given personal risk assessments and evacuation plans, and assisted properly in an emergency.
- c.** We will speak directly to vulnerable residents about their experience of housing safety, including through surveys, focus groups and other qualitative research methods, and act upon what we hear.
- d.** We will ensure our existing fire safety materials are accessible to all residents and available in multiple languages.

12 Being a better landlord

- a.** We will work collaboratively with residents and Housing staff to explore the lived realities of receiving and providing housing services in Kensington and Chelsea, understand barriers and key issues and identify solutions, using the findings to shape the design and delivery of services.
- b.** We will improve support for tenants, leaseholders and residents in temporary accommodation to make complaints.
- c.** We will ensure that specific impacts of new policies on social tenants and residents in temporary accommodation are routinely considered in Council decision-making through equality impact assessments, treating housing tenure in the same way as protected characteristics.
- d.** We will build more effective working relationships between Housing and other departments, ensuring tenants, leaseholders and residents in temporary accommodation feel the benefit of services provided or commissioned by the Council and have a more seamless experience.

13 Rebuilding trust

- a.** We will make regular use of restorative approaches where relationships with residents break down, including use of independent facilitation and mediation.
- b.** We will find ways to reflect together about decisions made since the Grenfell tragedy, acknowledging the harm that has been done and learning from mistakes to ensure future decision-making doesn't create further divisions.
- c.** We will share information and performance data openly and transparently, be open and honest when things go wrong and invite independent review and challenge and resident input when faced with difficult decisions.
- d.** We will ensure senior leaders maintain regular direct contact with communities through open sessions, estate walks and informal meetings, particularly focusing on social housing residents and areas where trust needs rebuilding.

14 Building control and safety standards

- a.** We commit to ensuring that 100 per cent of Building Control staff complete required professional accreditation and training, and to reporting progress regularly to senior management.
- b.** We will support the Government in its review of the national building control sector, and prepare to implement reforms and recommendations as soon as possible.

15 Emergency preparedness and response

- a.** We will implement all the Inquiry's recommendations:
 - i.** ensuring all staff are trained to regard resilience as part of their core responsibilities, and regularly participate in exercises
 - ii.** reviewing information gathering systems used in an emergency to ensure they are fit for purpose
 - iii.** improving our emergency accommodation planning to ensure displaced residents are found places to stay which meet their needs as soon as possible
 - iv.** ensuring communication channels and rest centres are equipped to provide accurate and timely information
- b.** We will include specific resilience responsibilities in all senior officer contracts and job descriptions, ensure they meet stringent competency requirements, and introduce resilience criteria into all senior level recruitment.
- c.** We will undertake a comprehensive review of our emergency planning function to ensure it remains fit to support the Council in its role as a Category 1 responder.
- d.** We will deepen our community partnerships, strengthening ways of working with residents, local voluntary organisations and ward councillors.

16 Understanding our communities

- a.** We will use the new Fairer Action Plan to develop a cross-Council approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion, underpinned by robust data about the needs and lived experience of residents, especially ethnically diverse residents and those with disabilities.
- b.** We will conduct a full review of our approach to Equality Impact Assessments, including a greater focus on the needs and experiences of residents and a more robust approach to review and monitoring.
- c.** We will take further steps to increase the number of local residents employed by the Council, building a better and more dynamic understanding of our communities.
- d.** We will ensure a more routine presence for senior officers in the community, especially in North Kensington, through regular surgeries, public meetings and other forums.
- e.** We will review the training provided to all Councillors to build a better understanding of the lived experiences of residents in North Kensington and other deprived areas of the borough.

17 Managing partnerships and contracts

- a.** We will put safety at the heart of how we manage contracts by requiring safety assessments for all major decisions, enhancing safety requirements in contracts, and creating clear procedures for raising and escalating safety concerns.
- b.** We will be more rigorous in how we monitor contractor performance by implementing a new contract management framework, tracking performance data systematically, and regularly reporting on how well contractors are delivering services.
- c.** We will give residents a genuine voice in how we select and manage contractors by creating a corporate resident procurement panel, providing training to help residents participate meaningfully, and ensuring Council-wide procurement practices are informed by the perspective and experiences of residents.
- d.** We will strengthen oversight and scrutiny of contracts by having committees regularly examine safety-critical and high-risk contracts, conducting more frequent audits, and making contractor performance information publicly available.

18 A skilled and professional workforce

- a.** We will conduct a comprehensive review of how we recruit, induct, train staff and manage performance in light of the Inquiry's findings, with particular focus on technical competence, safety awareness, public service and humanity. We will enforce high standards throughout the workforce, and take action where they are not met.
- b.** We will use new systems to track all staff qualifications and training, with clear oversight of mandatory requirements and professional registrations to ensure we maintain the highest standards of competence.

- c.** We will give residents a meaningful role in shaping our workforce by involving them in staff recruitment, service standards development and providing feedback on how staff perform.
- d.** We will ensure senior management oversight of workforce development through quarterly reviews of training completion, regular skills audits and succession planning for specialist roles, linking this directly to our service planning.

19 Governance and oversight

- a.** We will work with residents and elected members to check progress against the recommendations of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's 2019 review, ensuring they continue to guide our approach to governance.
- b.** We will transform our leadership culture through expanded systemic practice training, mentoring programmes and performance objectives that prioritise building better relationships with residents.
- c.** We will develop a comprehensive data strategy that ensures we collect, analyse and use accurate information about our services and our communities to drive decision-making and measure progress.

20 Listening to residents

- a.** We will conduct a full, end-to-end review of the Council's complaints process, focusing on resident experience, enforcement of service standards and forms of compensation and redress. It should include exploration of options for independent oversight of complaints and concerns about residents being penalised for complaining.
- b.** We will ensure additional senior officer engagement with ward councillors (especially in areas of social deprivation), helping to identify key trends and issues in casework and emerging local issues.
- c.** We will work with residents to conduct a full review of the Charter for Public Participation and the Citizens' Panel, reflecting on sharing power in decision-making, seeking to move towards more participatory approaches and considering mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and oversight.
- d.** We will experiment with more codesign and other participatory approaches to engagement (such as the 'legislative theatre' approach recently used with residents in temporary accommodation).

The culture of the Council and relationships with residents

- 21 We have discussed these 10 themes with residents over the last month and shared evidence of the specific failings identified by the Inquiry, a summary of the changes we have made and some of the initial ideas for improvement in each area. Some residents have seen and felt the changes we have made, but many have told us they do not, or they fail to address what matters most to them.
- 22 Residents have expressed concerns about persistently poor experiences of housing and other services, the attitudes and behaviours of elected members and officers, racial and social discrimination and a reluctance to share power and decision-making with residents and their elected representatives. Some have told us that they don't feel the Council cares enough about them and that they feel discriminated against.
- 23 These experiences reflect fundamental problems identified by the Inquiry. Before Grenfell, residents' views were ignored or minimised, their day-to-day concerns were belittled and brushed aside, and they were not treated with the courtesy and respect due to them. Despite the changes we have made, residents are telling us that these basic problems persist and have asked us to reflect on the treatment of people in social housing, and questions of race, disability and social discrimination.
- 24 Public meetings highlighted the gulf between the Council and some of our communities, especially in North Kensington, and the loss of trust in the Council. It is not the first time bereaved, survivors, residents and elected members have raised these issues, but conversations since the Inquiry report was published have brought them into sharper focus. People have asked us to reflect on the issue of trust and to embrace forms of independent challenge and oversight.
- 25 We therefore propose to commission an **independent external review of the culture** within this Council, primarily to examine the relationships with our residents (with a particular focus on those in Council housing and temporary accommodation and others who need the Council's support). The scope of this review would be discussed and agreed with elected members and residents, and based on community feedback received to date, it would consider questions of racial and social discrimination.
- 26 Residents have asked us to set out what kind of culture we want at the Council. We want to build an organisational culture based on fairness, respect and humanity. We want everyone who relies on the Council – no matter their background – to feel listened to, cared for and understood. We want strong relationships with residents, especially people living in our social housing or in temporary accommodation. This is what we want the lasting legacy from Grenfell to be at the Council.

Monitoring and accountability

- 27** Responding within three months has been an ambitious undertaking but is intended to demonstrate the whole-hearted commitment of the Council to learning the lessons of Grenfell. At times this has constrained our ability to fully develop proposals that will rightly need full consultation and consideration by the Council and its communities. We will publish a more detailed action plan in early 2025, which will set out timescales, roles and responsibilities.
- 28** Our response also demands the highest standards of ongoing openness and accountability to residents. Our approach to monitoring progress must be informed by the three core principles named above: resident power and participation, independent challenge and oversight and high standards and technical expertise.
- 29** To ensure effective resident involvement in, and ongoing monitoring of, the changes we are making, we are proposing:
- a.** An **independent advisory panel**, made up of bereaved, survivors, residents and specialists with expertise in areas such as social housing, safety, customer service, restorative practice and organisational change. This panel would advise the chief executive and executive management team, providing independent oversight of the actions set out in this report and ensuring the Council remains open to external challenge, advice and scrutiny. The terms of reference for the panel would be discussed and agreed with residents and elected members, but we intend for the panel to also oversee our proposed independent review of culture. Alongside the panel, we will have a programme of regular engagement with any residents who are interested in reviewing our progress.
 - b.** Strengthened **scrutiny arrangements** to ensure a key role for democratically elected members in exercising effective oversight and scrutiny of Council decision-making and service delivery. This would include scrutiny of the progress and findings of the independent review of culture and consideration of regular progress reports from the independent advisory panel described above. Reports to the committee will be underpinned by robust quantitative and qualitative data about the changes made and will include quarterly updates on progress against the action plan.
 - c.** **Proactive engagement with external oversight**, including statutory regulation and inspection, and support and assurance provided by the local government sector. We will work closely with the Building Safety Regulator and Social Housing Regulator to meet the new regulatory standards that have been driven by the Grenfell Tower tragedy. We will seek external assurance of our emergency planning arrangements through London Resilience, and we will continue to participate in the Local Government Association's peer challenge programme.

- d. Work with the community, staff and elected members (including the independent advisory panel) to shape a programme of **learning from Grenfell**, including opportunities for staff, residents and Councillors to learn from each other, potential memorialisation at the Town Hall and ways of sharing learning with other organisations.

Conclusion

- 30 The Grenfell Tower Inquiry report set out the failings that led to the deaths of 72 people, including 18 children. This report is a statement of our ambition to honour their memory. We recognise that residents are impatient for further change, but we must be honest that the reforms and commitments proposed here are fundamental and will take time. Further work will be needed to design and develop specific changes, with full and formal decision-making shaped with residents and underpinned by rigorous impact assessments. Implementation will be overseen by regular public reporting to leadership team, overview and scrutiny committee, and full Council, as well as through the proposed mechanisms for external scrutiny and challenge.
- 31 This report is the Council's substantive response to the Inquiry report. It sets out the background to our response, the approach we have taken and the feedback from bereaved, survivors, residents and elected members that has shaped our commitments. For each of the 10 core areas identified above, it outlines the principal failings identified by the Inquiry report, the key changes we have made since 2017 and the areas where further improvement is required. Finally, it sets out the approach to ongoing monitoring and accountability and the plans to review the commitments set out here in light of the Government's final response to the Inquiry's recommendations.
- 32 This report is not an end point, but another step on the journey the Council must take to make amends and deliver lasting change. The success of this response will ultimately be judged by whether residents see and feel real change in their interactions with the Council. We invite our communities to work with us to build that change and to hold us accountable for delivering it.



The Council's response to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry

Introduction

2. Introduction

Purpose

- 1** The Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 report describes multiple failures by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea before, during and after the Grenfell Tower fire on Wednesday 14 June 2017. Seventy two people lost their lives in circumstances that could and should have been prevented. The Council failed in some of its most fundamental duties - to keep residents safe in their homes, to listen to and act upon their concerns, and to respond effectively when disaster struck.
- 2** We accept the Inquiry's findings. The report identifies weaknesses across multiple areas: a breakdown in relationships with residents often characterised by disrespect and indifference; a lack of professional competence in critical functions like building control and emergency planning; and failures of leadership and governance that allowed poor practice to persist unchallenged.
- 3** For those failings, and for the harm that was done, we apologise unreservedly. This harm is profound and lasting. The loss of 72 lives; the trauma experienced by survivors and the immediate community; the displacement of residents and disruption to their lives. We recognise that words of apology alone are not enough. What is needed is meaningful change which is felt by residents, a commitment to learning from our failings and ensuring they are never repeated.
- 4** We have heard from bereaved, survivors and residents that after Grenfell they want to see truth, justice and change. The Inquiry has found the truth of what happened. Justice is in the hands of the ongoing police investigation. This response focuses on change. It addresses the specific findings of the Inquiry as they relate to the Council's conduct and responsibilities, seeks to understand how and why we failed, and to show how we will ensure such failures can never happen again.

The Hillsborough Charter

- 5 In December 2017 the Council adopted the Charter for Families Bereaved Through Public Tragedy, now known as the Hillsborough Charter. It commits the Council to placing the public interest above its own reputation, approaching public scrutiny with candour, honesty, and transparency, and assisting the search for truth.
- 6 This commitment has guided the Council's approach to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry. Through the seven years of investigation and evidence gathering, the Council has cooperated fully and proactively with the Inquiry team. We made full disclosure of all relevant documents, correspondence and records held by the Council.
- 7 Our statements to the Inquiry made candid admissions of failure where the evidence we held showed that errors had been made, issues had been neglected, and the outcomes of the Council's work had not reached the standards expected of a public authority. We knew, however, that the Inquiry would bring to light further failures.
- 8 In paragraph 62.64 of its final report the Inquiry states that the Council's admissions to the Inquiry in relation to its building control service "did not cover the full extent of its failures". We fully accept this finding by the Inquiry, which has considered this issue in the context of evidence about the refurbishment from all core participants and with the benefit of cross-examining witnesses in person.
- 9 We can see that the Inquiry's full analysis has been able to present a fuller and more accurate picture of the service than could be constructed through the documentary evidence available to the Council. We regret that our own assessment fell short of this.
- 10 We have sought to continue to uphold the Charter's principles in responding to the Inquiry. We intend to be fully transparent about our failings as the Council, and prioritise the public interest over any reputational concerns. This response and the actions that arise from it, like everything we do as a Council, are open to challenge and scrutiny from residents and stakeholders. We will also continue to cooperate fully with the ongoing Metropolitan Police investigation.

Principles

- 11** The Inquiry's findings reveal fundamental failures in how the Council understood and discharged its responsibilities. At times, we lost sight of our core purpose as a public authority - to serve our residents, especially those most dependent on us for their safety and wellbeing.
- 12 This manifested in three ways:**
 - a.** First, the Council and Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) failed to listen to and respect residents. We did not treat their concerns and complaints as vital intelligence about problems that needed fixing. Consultation was frequently a box-ticking exercise rather than an exercise in meaningful dialogue and mutual understanding. Most seriously, the Council failed to recognise and respond to the breakdown in trust with communities in North Kensington, particularly those living in social housing.
 - b.** Second, there was a lack of sufficient contract clienting (managing), oversight and scrutiny. Warning signs were missed or ignored. Information about risks was not properly shared or acted upon. External expertise was not properly utilised. Political and managerial leadership failed to ensure rigorous scrutiny of critical functions like building control and emergency planning. When presented with evidence of problems, we were often more concerned with protecting our reputation than addressing the underlying issues.
 - c.** Third, we did not maintain the professional standards and technical competence needed to keep people safe. Critical services lacked the skills, training and resources to fulfill their duties effectively. We failed to ensure contractors met required standards. We didn't have proper systems for monitoring performance and compliance. Most fundamentally, we allowed a culture of complacency about safety to develop.
- 13 Our response to these failures is built on three core principles:**
 - a. Resident power and participation** – We recognise that lasting change can only come through genuine partnership with our communities. This means moving beyond simply consulting residents to finding ways to ensure their experience and expertise shapes what we do and how we do it. It also includes building new, more inclusive ways of working with the ward councillors who are elected by their communities, especially in North Kensington. In doing so, we aim to rebuild the relationship between the Council and the people it serves.
 - b. Independent challenge and oversight** – We cannot be the sole judge of our own progress. Given the impact of our failures and the commensurate breakdown in trust, external scrutiny and challenge must be built into our approach. This includes proactive engagement with statutory regulation and inspection, using internal and external audit in ways that command public confidence, and embracing new forms of independent oversight and verification. We must be open to challenge and willing to change course based on these perspectives.

c. High standards and technical excellence – We commit to being an organisation founded on the highest standards of individual professional competence and collective service standards for our residents. That means investing in our workforce through recruitment, training and development; establishing clear standards and robust performance management; and creating systems that support and reward expertise and competence. We must create a culture where standards are upheld without compromise, where projects and priorities are delivered with sustained effort, pace and urgency, and where safety, responsiveness and quality are prioritised over convenience and cost.

- 14** These principles will guide the specific actions set out in this response. We cannot undo the harm that was done, but by creating an organisational culture founded on these principles, we can establish a legacy from Grenfell that honours the memory of those who died.

Background

The Grenfell Tower Fire

- 15** In the early hours of 14 June 2017, a fire began in a fourth-floor flat at Grenfell Tower in North Kensington. What started as a localised fire in a defective fridge quickly spread to the building's exterior cladding system and raced up the sides of the 24-storey building. Seventy two people lost their lives, including 18 children.
- 16** The tragedy had an immediate and devastating impact on survivors, bereaved families and the community. Many residents were displaced, not only from Grenfell Tower itself but from neighbouring buildings. While the local community mobilised quickly to provide support, the Council's emergency response was inadequate, leaving many feeling abandoned by the authorities at their time of greatest need.¹
- 17** The fire damaged already fragile relationships between the Council and communities in North Kensington, particularly undermining trust among social housing residents and ethnically diverse communities. That impact continues to be felt today, shaping how residents view and interact with the Council.

The Grenfell Tower Inquiry

- 18** The then-Prime Minister Theresa May announced a public inquiry into the disaster on 15 June 2017. The Inquiry, led by Sir Martin Moore-Bick, was conducted in two phases. Phase 1 examined the events of 14 June 2017, including the cause of the fire, its spread, and the response of the emergency services. Phase 2 investigated the circumstances and decisions that led to the tragedy, and the response of public authorities in the immediate aftermath.

¹ "Certain aspects of the response demonstrated a marked lack of respect for human decency and dignity and left many of those immediately affected feeling abandoned by authority and utterly helpless." (2.105)

- 19** The Inquiry’s conclusions were devastating in their scope. It found failures across multiple organisations and institutions: manufacturers who deliberately misled the market about dangerous cladding products (2.19)²; a regulatory system that proved inadequate (2.4); construction companies who showed a casual disregard for fire safety (2.82); and government departments where a deregulatory agenda dominated at the expense of public safety (2.13). The London Fire Brigade was found to have significant organisational failings, particularly in learning lessons from previous fires (2.91).
- 20** The findings about the Council were equally stark. It found multiple, serious failures in our oversight of the Tenant Management Organisation (TMO), our building control service, and our emergency planning and response. More fundamentally, it identified significant problems in how we related to and served our communities, particularly in social housing. As the Inquiry says directly, “those who emerge from the events with the greatest credit, and whose contribution only emphasised the inadequacies of the official response, are the members of the local community” (2.114).

The Council’s role and responsibilities

- 21** The tragedy occurred against the backdrop of the Council’s wide-ranging responsibilities as a local authority. These included:
- Acting as landlord for social housing residents, with direct responsibility for their safety and wellbeing.
 - Clienting the Tenant Management Organisation on behalf of the Council’s tenants and leaseholders.
 - Enforcing building regulations and safety standards through our building control function.
 - Planning for and responding to emergencies as a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
 - Promoting equality and tackling discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.
 - Ensuring effective democratic oversight through scrutiny and other governance mechanisms.
- 22** The Inquiry examined the way the Council carried out these duties in relation to the management and refurbishment of Grenfell Tower and its engagement with its residents. This response addresses those findings in detail.
- 23** The legislative framework governing these responsibilities has evolved significantly since 2017, particularly through:
- The Building Safety Act 2022, which introduced major reforms to building safety regulation.
 - The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which strengthened standards for social housing providers.
 - The anticipated Hillsborough Law, which will place new duties on public authorities around transparency and accountability.

² Numbers in brackets in the format (xx.xx) refer throughout this response to the relevant paragraph number in the Grenfell Tower Inquiry Phase 2 Report.

The Council's response to the Inquiry's recommendations

- 24** The Grenfell Tower Inquiry has made recommendations across both phases of its work. The Phase 1 report, published in October 2019, made specific recommendations about building safety and emergency response. Since then, we have worked to implement these recommendations, particularly in relation to:
- Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for vulnerable residents.
 - Regular inspections of fire doors and lifts.
 - Information sharing with emergency services.
 - Enhanced building safety information and management.
- 25** A detailed update on our progress implementing the Phase 1 recommendations is provided in Appendix 1.
- 26** The Phase 2 report makes 58 recommendations for change. While many are directed at central government, fire and rescue services and industry bodies, several have direct implications for local authorities, particularly regarding:
- Building control processes and competence.
 - Emergency preparedness and response.
 - Housing management and resident engagement.
 - Information management during incidents.
 - Support for vulnerable residents.
- 27** Our response to these recommendations is integrated throughout the 10 themes addressed in this report. A comprehensive mapping of recommendations to actions is provided in Appendix 2.
- 28** Some recommendations require coordinated action across London or nationally. We are working actively with the London Resilience Forum, London Councils, and other partners to support their implementation. We will also contribute to ongoing discussions about legislative and regulatory change where needed to strengthen the recommendations' impact.
- 29** The Prime Minister has committed to responding to the Inquiry's final report within six months of its publication. When the Government sets out its plans, we will review our commitments and action plan, and report publicly any changes that may be required.
- 30** We recognise that implementing recommendations alone is not sufficient - we must embed the spirit and intention of the Inquiry's findings into our organisational culture and practice. Our response therefore goes beyond technical compliance to address the deeper changes needed in how we work with and serve our communities.
- 31** Regular updates on our progress implementing both Phase 1 and Phase 2 recommendations will be provided through public reporting to the leadership team and the overview and scrutiny committee. These updates will be published on our website and shared directly with residents.

Methodology and structure

- 32** This response has been developed by a dedicated project team, working under the direction of the chief executive. They first produced a detailed analysis of the Inquiry's findings as they pertained to the Council, published as 'Implications for the Council' on 16 September 2024, and debated at full Council on 9 October 2024.
- 33** The Council committed to an extensive community engagement process. This began in late August 2024 and will continue into early 2025 and beyond to ensure ongoing community involvement in implementing changes. A full account of this, together with a summary of the feedback gathered, and can found in Chapter 3 of this report.
- 34** The team also undertook extensive consultation with Council departments to document and test changes made since 2017, identify remaining gaps, and develop proposals for future improvement.
- 35** This report is the Council's substantive response to the Inquiry report. First, we give an account of what we have heard from bereaved, survivors, residents, elected members and staff. Then, in the following chapters, we address 10 core themes we have identified from the Inquiry report:
 - a.** Ensuring Council homes are safe
 - b.** Being a better landlord
 - c.** Rebuilding trust
 - d.** Building control and safety standards
 - e.** Emergency preparedness and response
 - f.** Understanding our communities
 - g.** Managing partnerships and contracts
 - h.** A skilled and professional workforce
 - i.** Listening to residents, individually and collectively
 - j.** Governance and oversight
- 36** For each of these areas, we outline the principal failings identified by the Inquiry report, the key changes we have made since 2017 and the areas where further improvement is required. We also address the issue of organisational culture and the Council's relationship with its residents.

- 37** The Inquiry details the failings of a web of public bodies, companies and regulators, with differing relationships and interdependencies. Our response focuses on the failings attributable both to the Council and to the TMO, which managed the Council's housing stock on its behalf. We are responding in this way for two reasons: first, despite the arrangements with the TMO, the Council retained the ultimate responsibilities for its tenants and leaseholders; and second, housing services were handed back to the Council in 2018. Any criticisms levelled at the TMO then are therefore a benchmark against which to consider what has changed.
- 38** Finally, the report sets out the approach to ongoing monitoring and accountability and the plans to review the commitments set out here in light of the Government's final response to the Inquiry's recommendations.
- 39** Responding within three months has been an ambitious undertaking but is intended to demonstrate the whole-hearted commitment of the Council to learning the lessons of Grenfell. At times this has constrained our ability to fully develop proposals that will rightly need full consultation and consideration by the Council and its communities. The response will therefore require further formal decisions over the coming months, involving consultation and engagement with residents.

3. What we've heard

Feedback from bereaved family members, survivors and the community

- 1 The Inquiry found that residents of Grenfell Tower were not listened to by the Council and the Tenant Management Organisation. We accept that our response will be inadequate if it does not reflect the views and concerns of all those to whom the Council bears a responsibility, particularly the bereaved and survivors of Grenfell, the immediate local community and all those who live in social housing in the borough.
- 2 An essential part of this response has therefore been to invite open dialogue about the report with our communities, embracing their challenge, scrutiny and ideas. We accepted from the outset that there remains a deep-seated mistrust of the Council in some parts of the community, and scepticism about whether community voices will be heard and whether the views and sentiments expressed will be acted upon. We are grateful to everyone who shared their views with us in spite of their reservations, including those for whom speaking to us was painful or otherwise difficult. We are committed to honouring their participation through meaningful action.
- 3 Since 4 September 2024 the Council has embarked on a wide-ranging programme of engagement, including the following engagement events and activities:
 - Two drop-in sessions for bereaved and survivors on 17 and 26 September, attended by 10 people in total.
 - Two drop-in sessions for residents on 19 September (Kensington Leisure Centre) and 1 October (Chelsea Theatre), attended by 40-50 people and 20-30 people respectively.
 - One dedicated meeting for bereaved and survivors to discuss the implications of the report for the Council, attended by over 30 people.
 - Two public meetings for the community to discuss the implications of the report for the Council on 7 October (Morley College) and 24 October (Notting Dale Methodist Church), each attended by over 50 people.
 - A further dedicated meeting for bereaved and survivors in early November to discuss the draft outline response, attended by over 20 people.
 - A further public meeting for the community to discuss the draft outline response on 7 November (Maxilla Social Club), attended by approximately 60 residents.
- 4 Alongside this, elected members and officers have met with interested residents individually and in groups to discuss the implications of the report for the Council.

- 5 All speakers at full Council were invited to meet with the Leader of the Council and where other groups and individuals have requested meetings, we have tried to arrange these. All bereaved and survivor stakeholder groups and Notting Dale residents' associations were offered meetings.
- 6 In addition to public engagement and individual meetings, a number of bereaved, survivors and residents have also given feedback in writing to the project team via GTI.contact@rbkc.gov.uk.

Drop-in sessions

- 7 We heard a range of feedback through the drop-in sessions:
 - Residents raised a variety of specific casework issues, mainly relating to outstanding repairs and the condition or quality of homes.
 - We heard from some people that they feel the Council still doesn't listen to residents, with comparisons to our failure to listen to residents in Grenfell Tower.
 - People told us they wanted to see better communications with residents and greater responsiveness from Council staff.
 - Some residents raised concerns about the culture of the Council and the attitudes and behaviours of staff and elected members.
 - People raised wider issues, including questions about the future of the Grenfell Tower site.
 - Residents wanted to know more about the specific changes the Council has made since Grenfell, especially in areas such as housing and building control.
 - Residents wanted to see improved ways of working across the Council, with better communication between teams.

Public meetings

- 8 The public meetings were independently facilitated by the former Bishop of Liverpool, the Right Reverend James Jones KBE (former Chair of the Independent Hillsborough Panel), and gave bereaved, survivors and residents the opportunity to share their views with the Leader of the Council and the chief executive. They were attended by other elected members and Council officers, who had a chance to hear first-hand from residents about what mattered most to them.
- 9 The first three meetings were focused specifically on the implications of the Inquiry report for the Council and were an opportunity for people:
 - To hear from the Leader and the chief executive about the failings identified in the Inquiry report and the changes the Council has made since 2017.
 - To tell the Council whether they have felt those changes, what they think still needs to change and what they should do next.

10 Most of the time at the meetings was given over for residents to address the Leader and the chief executive directly. The discussions focused on four broad themes: (i) safety, including fire safety, (ii) how we manage your homes, (iii) culture, treating you with care, respect and dignity, and (iv) holding the Council to account for change.

11 The key issues raised by bereaved, survivors and residents at these early meetings were:

- Some residents do not feel like the Council has changed since 2017 and some think things have got worse.
- Where they have seen change, they feel it has been too slow and that the basic culture of the Council hasn't changed.
- Residents want to see fundamental culture change at the Council, including greater empathy and humanity.
- Residents are concerned about the lack of diversity in the Council's leadership and senior management team.
- Some residents mentioned that they perceive that within the Council racism and discrimination continues after seven years.
- Residents are still concerned about safety issues in their homes (especially fire safety) and support for vulnerable residents.
- Residents want to see safety information available in a range of different languages.
- Residents want to see more meaningful involvement in refurbishment projects.
- Residents are concerned about the treatment of vulnerable residents, non-English speakers and recent immigrants.
- Some young residents speaking mentioned the lack of respect and care for the Muslim community, particularly children and young people, as the Council did not understand their needs.
- Residents living in Council properties have raised a range of ongoing issues in their homes that have not been resolved.
- Some feel that the Council isn't proactive in addressing issues and that residents have to fight to get results.
- Bereaved, survivors and residents want greater assurance about the oversight and management of contractors.
- When things do go wrong, they feel the Council's complaints procedure does not work well and lacks independence.
- Some do not feel the current arrangements for reporting repairs and other housing issues are working well.
- Bereaved, survivors and residents struggle to escalate key concerns and questions to more senior members of staff.
- Residents have raised concerns about the turnover of staff and the fact that teams don't speak to each other.
- Residents feel that the onus is on them to report issues and that there is a lack of proactive checking and monitoring.
- Residents are concerned about what they see as a reactive approach to health and safety issues (including damp and mould).

- Residents are tired of giving the same feedback to the Council and don't feel it is being acted on.
- Residents raised the need for dedicated forums for people to raise housing issues.
- People feel that there needs to be more independent scrutiny of the Council's work.
- Residents want to see more meaningful involvement in Council decision-making.
- The Council should be more sensitive to the impact of its actions on bereaved, survivors and residents.
- People want to see action, not words.

12 Two further meetings took place in November, where bereaved family members, survivors and residents were able to give feedback on the draft outline of the Council's response to the Inquiry, published on Tuesday 5 November.

13 At these meetings, bereaved, survivors and residents were invited to:

- Hear from the Leader and chief executive about the Council's draft final response to the Inquiry report and what the Council intends to do next.
- Tell the Council whether the response includes the things most important to them, what is missing, and what should happen next.

14 The themes from the October meetings were echoed again at the November meetings, with a greater emphasis on what residents felt was missing from the response.

15 Bereaved family members and survivors told us that:

- There remains significant work to do in housing, particularly with respect to the attitudes of officers and the conduct and oversight of contractors.
- They felt that issues of culture (and cultural change) had not been given sufficient prominence in the draft outline response.
- People had explicit concerns about racism within the Council, referencing the racist comments of a former mayor.
- The Council needed to ensure adequate external scrutiny alongside resident involvement, including robust ways of measuring changes in culture.
- The Council should consider an independent assessment of cultural issues, similar to the London Fire Brigade's approach to addressing racism and problems in organisational culture.
- Problems were not just confined to housing and there were problems in other areas of Council services, with the 2022 investigation into Holland Park School cited as one example.
- There were concerns about the treatment of vulnerable and disabled residents.
- There were examples of poor record-keeping and documentation, with residents having to undergo multiple assessments and to repeat their stories.
- There needs to be more robust oversight of contractors, especially on works with safety implications.
- There were concerns about the disparity in the treatment of Grenfell and non-Grenfell residents, given that everyone deserved a good service.

16 At the community meeting at Maxilla Social Club, residents emphasised similar themes, particularly:

- Concerns about housing management services, especially repairs, and lack of effective tracking of housing issues, with residents having to fight to get answers.
- The importance of getting the basics right and being honest about progress.
- The need for better communication with residents, including a wider range of channels, greater clarity about who to contact about what and more timely responses.
- Ongoing concerns about safety issues, with residents still not feeling like safety issues are being prioritised and addressed effectively.
- The importance of more robust oversight of contractors.
- The need for more support for vulnerable residents and those with disabilities, especially social tenants and those in temporary accommodation.
- The importance of ensuring the relevant services are properly resourced to provide support to residents.
- Calls for greater independence in the investigation of complaints, including an independent complaints function, to avoid situations where services are ‘marking their own homework’.
- The importance of the Council exerting greater pressure on housing associations to improve services for all residents.
- Concerns about divisions and harm created within the community following Grenfell, including through the compensation process and through actions taken by the Council in the aftermath beyond the first week considered by the Inquiry.
- Concerns about areas where residents do not feel we are adhering to commitments on transparency, governance and participation, with the future of Canalside House given as an example.
- Calls for external scrutiny and challenge to ensure independent oversight of the Council’s progress and accountability to residents.
- The need to end stigma around social housing and address concerns about racial and social prejudice.
- The importance of acknowledging the power imbalance between the Council and residents and finding ways to share power more effectively in decision-making.
- The need to listen to ward councillors, who have deep knowledge and understanding of their communities, and to support them to resolve casework.

Meetings with individuals and groups and other feedback

- 17** In addition to the drop-in sessions and public meetings, we heard a wide range of views through further engagement, including conversations with individuals and groups. Many residents echoed points that have been raised above:
- Residents have raised individual casework issues, especially in housing, that raises wider issues for the Council to address.
 - The Council must think about who the response is for. It should be first and foremost for residents.
 - The Council needs to find ways to listen to residents who might not usually come forward, not just the loud voices.
 - Residents feel that it is not enough for the Council to say sorry or just accept the findings; it must show what it will do differently and how.
 - People feel that social and racial discrimination played a part in the treatment of residents before Grenfell and since.
 - A lack of responsiveness from officers, with residents often feeling they have to chase responses and fight to get issues resolved.
 - Residents need to feel confident to complain without fearing repercussions.
 - Residents raised an issue about the treatment of the immediate community and the need to heal divisions, especially in Notting Dale.
 - There needs to be a greater focus on the Council's failings beyond the immediate aftermath.
 - Instead, residents must be involved in the process of driving change and must be listened to and empowered to take action.
 - The Council must end the culture of treating residents in social housing as second-class citizens and assuming that tenants should be 'grateful' for what they have.
 - The Council needs to recognise the power imbalance that exists with residents, learning to value them as human beings and recognising that housing is a basic necessity and a fundamental right.
 - It's not enough to change staff; it is vital to change the culture among officers and members.
 - The Council can't judge itself; residents and external experts must be involved in this process.
- 18** Those who shared feedback were from a range of backgrounds with a variety of experiences of the Council. These included individuals with a long history of making representations to the TMO and the Council about Grenfell, such as representatives from the Grenfell Compact and Mr Shah Ahmed from Grenfell Tower Leaseholders' Association (GTLA), who feel passionately that Grenfell must be a catalyst for change (especially in housing). Those we have heard from since the report was published also included established residents' associations in the local area, individual bereaved and survivors and others, including newer groups and organisations which have emerged since Grenfell.

Public speaking at full Council

19

Ten bereaved, survivors and residents also gave feedback via public speaking slots at the full Council meeting on 9 October 2024. Some of the issues raised by the speakers included:

- Residents want to see accountability, change and justice.
- The Council needs to put safety at the heart of its plans and demonstrate that we care about the safety and wellbeing of residents.
- Some residents feel the Council is still not treating them with respect, dignity and humanity and that a culture of indifference, arrogance and paternalism persists.
- People feel strongly that the culture of indifference and disregard (especially for residents in social housing) is what puts lives at risk.
- People want to be heard, respected and taken seriously, regardless of their background.
- The Council should conduct an audit of racial and social discrimination so that bereaved, survivors and residents have confidence that the Council is not discriminating against residents.
- The failures in the aftermath continued beyond the first seven days and they began long before Grenfell.
- The immediate community felt abandoned in the aftermath and the Council didn't have regard to the cultural and religious needs of its residents.
- Young people are just beginning to grapple with the depth of the tragedy and trauma has cast a long shadow over the local community.
- The Council has a responsibility to change and this has to start at the top.
- The pace of change hasn't been fast enough and there have been too many empty promises.
- People want to see a ban on materials and companies identified in the Inquiry report.
- The Council needs to improve transparency and accountability, especially in Housing.
- The Council needs to cooperate fully with the police investigation so that justice can be served.
- Residents want an honest assessment of how much has changed with independent scrutiny.
- Trust has to be earned and there needs to be a clear plan for improving services, supporting recovery and ensuring justice and accountability.
- The Council won't make lasting changes if it doesn't listen to residents and work more closely with them to drive improvements and create a lasting legacy from the tragedy.
- The Council needs to recognise the impact on residents of living in close proximity to a major disaster site, especially in an area where major works have been taking place for over a decade.
- There should be long-term support for families affected by the tragedy.

Other feedback from residents

- 20** Several residents wrote to the team to raise issues about the response. Their feedback included:
- The need for independent resident scrutiny and a call to establish a Social Housing Forum.
 - The need for the Council to exert greater pressure on housing associations to ensure high standards for all social tenants.
 - Concerns about members of staff who were here before the tragedy and are still employed by the Council.
 - The need for more effective tracking and follow-up of repairs and other housing issues.
 - Concerns about inconsistent service standards and unfairness, with perceptions that some residents are treated better than others.
 - The need for a more robust action plan to accompany the Council's final response.
 - The importance of stronger working across teams and departments.
 - The need to explain clearly what outcomes the actions taken as part of the response to the Inquiry will deliver for residents.
 - The need to increase transparency and communication, sharing concerns and problems and giving residents the opportunity to raise questions and propose solutions.
 - Requests for more inclusive and participatory approaches to future meetings, reaching out more effectively to those who might not usually participate in meetings.
 - Calls to establish a mechanism for residents to track the Council's progress and hold us accountable.
 - The importance of acknowledging mistakes openly and honestly and working actively with residents to build trust and strengthen the relationships between the Council and the community.
- 21** Any further formal written submissions which residents have asked us to make publicly available will be published on the Council's website: <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/grenfell-response-and-recovery/grenfell-tower-inquiry>.

Feedback from elected members

Overview and scrutiny committee

- 22** In considering the 'Implications for the Council' report at its meeting on 18 September 2024, the overview and scrutiny committee raised a number of key points for officers to consider when preparing the final response.
- 23** Following the discussion at its meeting, the overview and scrutiny committee made a **formal reference** to the leadership Team, including suggestions for matters to be included in the final response. This followed a formal reference from the housing and communities select committee earlier in September. The overview and scrutiny committee recommended that:

- Culture change should form a big part of reflections as the final response is developed. It needs to be embedded within the organisation and measurement mechanisms developed so the Council is working better for residents.
- Accountability, especially what it means for residents, was identified as a key theme. There is broken trust between the Council and the community, and a leap of faith is needed for the Council to have legitimacy in areas it has failed in the past. The committee did not wish to pre-judge community conversations in making its suggestions. The final response needs to be wider than the Public Inquiry Report as it does not cover the last seven years. It should consider matters raised by the community including racial and social injustice which is referenced in the Public Inquiry report (paragraph 1.18). External scrutiny should be explored and considered as a robust way to review and examine the commitments previously made by the Council as well as those being developed as part of the final response.
- Consultations including time scheduled for resident feedback – the committee felt deadlines are not always realistic or feasible. Any change in approach, including the availability of community spaces, must include asking residents for their views and suggestions. The housing and communities select committee has included the themes of consultation and complaints in its Work Programme for 2024-25.
- The approach to data needs to be developed as the Public Inquiry found weaknesses, including that the Council did not have sufficient data and it did not use what it had to good effect particularly in the aftermath of the Tragedy. There needs to be a more rigorous and analytical approach to data. Scrutiny committees, as well as developing regular performance reports for the portfolios they cover, should be made aware of the suites of data that their relevant Lead Members review on a regular basis.

24 The overview and scrutiny committee then considered the Council's draft outline response at its meeting on 11 November 2024. Following the discussion at the meeting, the committee made a further formal reference to the Leadership Team, with the following recommendations:

- A report setting out progress by the Council in meeting the commitments included in the Final Response Report. The report should be provided within 12 months and address the form and frequency of further reporting.
- A report to the committee, within six months, setting out proposals for the arrangements for evaluation and monitoring of the commitments made in the Final Response Report.
- Review the final response report to ensure plain English and coherent structure.
- Explore the role of ward councillors and how their experience could be better used to deliver the Council's commitments including getting closer to our communities and improving organisational culture.
- Develop a data strategy to provide assurance on the reliability of the information held by the Council both in terms of the method by which it is gathered and that it is current and not out of date.
- Review which elements of emergency training should be mandatory for staff.

Full Council

- 25** The Inquiry report was debated at full Council on 9 October. In addition to the issues raised by bereaved, survivors and residents who spoke at the meeting, a range of issues were raised by elected members during the debate. These included the following points:
- The importance of reflecting on the profound impact of the tragedy and the pain people feel when they are disrespected and ignored.
 - The need to acknowledge the grief and trauma experienced by those affected, including those living in the area around the Tower.
 - The need to ensure that changes are felt on the ground, including by those bereaved, survivors and residents who spoke at the full Council meeting.
 - The importance of kindness and compassion in our response, overcoming the legacy of contempt, neglect and prejudice.
 - The importance of having access to robust data to demonstrate the changes made.
 - The importance of the Council being accessible, listening to residents, and acting on their concerns.
 - The need to look honestly at the past and acknowledge mistakes.
 - The need for the Council's response to address concerns about racial and social discrimination, including racism and islamophobia.
 - The importance of support for vulnerable residents.
 - The need for transparency and information sharing to ensure a robust process of checks and balances and better scrutiny.
 - The need to ensure robust oversight and scrutiny of third-party organisations, including contractors.
 - The need for independent scrutiny of the Council.
 - The importance of changing culture and attitudes to residents and being more outward-facing, working with communities to address major challenges.
 - The importance of considering the specific needs of the immediate community in the area around Grenfell Tower, including tackling inequalities and addressing deprivation.
 - Concerns about defensiveness and the need to embrace opportunities to work with residents to make change, including on refurbishment and development projects.
 - The importance of the Council building a better understanding of its communities and demonstrating cultural competency in the provision of services.
 - The importance of acknowledging and celebrating community-led work to support recovery from the tragedy, including in the immediate aftermath.
 - The need to ensure that the final response reflected residents' views and concerns.
 - The need to support ward councillors still dealing with the impact of the Grenfell tragedy in their communities and the importance of working more closely with them.
 - The need to ensure support for elected members in scrutiny roles to enable them to learn from the lessons identified in the report.

- The importance of accelerating the pace of change.
- The need to reinstate the Grenfell Recovery Scrutiny Committee which had been abolished in 2019.
- The need for the Council to adhere to the Charter for Public Participation and Hillsborough Charter which were passed after the fire.
- Concerns about some major development proposals being promoted by the Council being incompatible with the Charter for Public Participation's commitments to resident-led codesign and steer, including but not limited to the present Kensal Canalside and previous Cheltenham Estate proposals.
- The need to address the impunity inherent in the political imbalance, and the Council's reaction when that impunity is challenged.
- The need for leadership team and Council to respect the democratic mandate of elected North Kensington Councillors.

26 The leadership team considered the draft outline response at its meeting on 13 November 2024. Lead Members emphasised:

- The importance of explicitly addressing the Inquiry's recommendations in our response, while acknowledging that most are not addressed directly to the Council.
- The need to recognise the consistent feedback from residents about the culture and mindset of staff and Lead Members.
- The importance of ensuring learning across the Council, including sharing best practice (e.g. in Children's Services) with other teams.
- The need to explore the idea of 'trust' further and consider what kind of trust we want to build and how we can effectively measure it (e.g. through resident surveys and other mechanisms).
- The importance of understanding our communities better by building stronger relationships with residents and ward councillors and using data more effectively.
- The need to ensure that the response is not just focused on housing and to explain more clearly the implications of the report for other areas of the Council.
- The importance of recognising the progress made in emergency planning and resilience, including lessons learnt from the effective response to the fire at Emperor's Gate.

Feedback from ward councillors

27 Officers met separately with Notting Dale ward councillors, who had valuable feedback on the response. They emphasised:

- The importance of Lead Members and senior officers keeping ward councillors informed of decisions that affect their wards and their residents.
- The need for Lead Members and senior officers to find more ways to engage routinely with ward councillors and involve them in discussions about and meetings or visits in North Kensington.
- The need to ensure that ward councillors are treated with respect and their feedback and concerns given proper weight, given their role as elected representatives and the findings in the Inquiry report.

- The importance of sharing power and control, especially when it comes to matters that affect North Kensington.
- A suggestion to reinstate the Grenfell recovery scrutiny committee (or a similarly named select committee) for the purpose of monitoring and accountability of the Council's progress and commitments.
- The need to provide better support to residents' associations (especially smaller residents' associations), develop stronger working relationships with them and support better connections between them.
- The importance of addressing the lack of responsiveness from Council officers to ensure residents do not feel they have to chase responses or fight to get issues resolved.
- The need to provide clearer information about who to contact about what (with a clear organisational structure).
- The need for a robust approach to service improvement, focused on residents' experience and their journey through services.

Feedback from staff

- 28** In addition to views from elected members, staff have also shared feedback in a number of ways. We have held two 'K&C Live' events (online meetings) for staff, both dedicated to the Inquiry report and both attended by hundreds of people, and there was an all-staff event shortly after the report was published to discuss the implications with staff.
- 29** Some of the key areas for improvement identified by staff are:
- Improving service delivery and support to residents. This included further investment in social housing, providing person-centred services and streamlining resident contact to make things easier for residents.
 - Improving our relationship with residents. This included improving mechanisms for listening to, engaging and involving residents, focusing on repairing broken relationships and having a greater resident and community focus. Staff also raised the importance of improving communications with residents to build a better understanding of changes that have been made.
 - Addressing equality, diversity and inclusion. This included making better use of Equality Impact Assessments to monitor outcomes for residents, improving understanding and support for tackling racism and discrimination, building a more diverse workforce and having a stronger focus on equalities through data and other sources of intelligence.
 - Emergency response and resilience. This included building a better understanding of resilience and emergency planning across the organisation, involving staff more consistently in the work being done to improve our readiness to respond to emergencies.
 - Governance and decision-making. This included further increasing transparency and community understanding of decision-making, improved monitoring, scrutiny and quality assurance and ensuring consistently robust advice and challenge is given to decision-makers, including Lead Members.

- Procurement and monitoring of contracts. This included stronger oversight of contractors, better risk management, securing greater social value/investment opportunities and ensuring third-party contractors adhere to the Council's values and behaviours.
 - Improved ways of working across the Council and with partners. This included improved connections across the Council, better communication between teams to overcome silo working and stronger relationships with voluntary sector and community partners.
 - Safety (including fire safety). This included more training for staff, improving responsiveness to health and safety issues, prioritising safety of life at all times and demonstrating greater leadership on safety.
 - Staff training and culture. This included maintaining a focus on organisational culture, ensuring a focus on Grenfell learning in recruitment and induction, improved training for staff, more focus on embedding values and behaviours, developing a culture of curiosity and challenge, recruiting more local residents and learning from other teams and other local authorities.
- 30** There were also reflections from some specific teams, including the Council's Dedicated Service. Staff in the service raised the following points:
- Concerns about a return to the previous culture at the Council, with some staff showing limited empathy and compassion for residents.
 - The need to address double standards of service to ensure all residents get a good service.
 - The importance of maintaining an ongoing dialogue with residents, not just when we need their feedback.
 - The importance of treating people with respect and dignity, even when officers can't do what a resident is asking them to.
 - The need for managers to respect staff and empower them to provide the best possible support to residents.
 - The need to share learning and best practice across the Council, including from the Dedicated Service.
 - The need to recognise the impact of trauma and the legacy of mistrust on residents and their implications for how we deliver services.

Using the feedback

- 31** The feedback from residents, elected members and staff has profoundly shaped the final commitments we are making in this response.
- 32** In particular, the feedback on the draft outline response led to a significant change of approach, ensuring a specific focus on culture and the Council's relationship with the community it serves, set out in Chapter 5.

4. Ten core themes

4a. Ensuring Council homes are safe

Our failings

- 1 The Inquiry found fundamental failures in how the Council and TMO approached fire safety in our homes. Most critically, it identified “a persistent indifference to fire safety, particularly the safety of vulnerable people” (2.58). This indifference manifested in multiple ways.
- 2 The Council failed to maintain proper oversight of fire safety work by the TMO, with the Inquiry finding that “fire safety was not subject to any key performance indicator” and there was “no independent or rigorous scrutiny by RBKC of the TMO’s performance of its health and safety obligations” (2.59).
- 3 This lack of oversight allowed serious deficiencies to develop. The TMO accumulated “a huge backlog of remedial works” and failed to treat safety defects with appropriate seriousness (2.64). There was no proper system for regular inspection and maintenance of critical safety features like fire doors, with the result that missing or defective self-closing devices went unidentified (2.65-66).
- 4 The Inquiry found a failure to identify and support vulnerable residents. As the report states, there was “a basic neglect of its obligations in relation to fire safety” (46.90) when it came to collecting information about vulnerable residents that would assist proper evacuation planning. The TMO failed to prepare Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) for vulnerable residents, nor did the Council check or challenge them sufficiently (46.35-37).
- 5 The Council in one case resisted increasing funding for essential safety works. The Council preferred a five-year rather than three-year programme for replacing self-closers on flat entrance doors, with financial factors being the main reason for this decision (41.67).

Our progress

- 6 Since bringing housing management services back in-house in 2018, the Council has worked to establish the highest quality systems and processes for managing the safety of our homes:
- 7 *Strengthened safety management* – All 34 of our high-rise buildings now have dedicated Building Safety Managers to oversee structural and fire safety management and to work with residents. Fire Risk Assessments (FRAs) are managed by a dedicated Fire Safety Team and carried out by Oakleaf, a company independently certified as meeting national quality standards for fire risk assessment.³ Higher-risk buildings (including those over 18 metres tall as well as sheltered housing and hostels) are reassessed every two years, with other properties assessed every three years. An independent contractor (Osborne) has been appointed to undertake quality assurance reviews of the FRAs for 49 higher risk buildings.
- 8 A new contract for fire entrance door inspections uses qualified inspectors under the Fire Door Inspection Scheme (FDIS). Annual checks are conducted on all flat entrance doors above 11m, with quarterly checks on communal doors by trained caretaking staff.
- 9 Nonetheless, there are technical limitations that can affect safety related processes. Better systems are needed to allow information to be collated quickly and maintenance and repairs to be tracked adequately. The service is working hard within its capacity and resourcing constraints.
- 10 *Investment in safety* – We have invested £374 million into a Capital Works Programme prioritising safety improvements. For example, £59m was spent in 2022/23 and £74m in 2023/24 on essential works including window replacements, fire safety improvements to external walls, and mechanical and electrical upgrades.
- 11 While the Council has prioritised addressing issues with high-rise residential buildings to meet the terms of the Building Safety Act, there are currently a number of overdue actions from Fire Risk Assessments relating to other higher-risk buildings to be completed within the capital works programme. These are being addressed as a matter of priority.
- 12 *Support for vulnerable residents* – We have increased the proportion of tenants for whom we hold vulnerability data from less than nine per cent to nearly 70 per cent; completed over 800 Person-Centred Fire Risk Assessments (PCFRAs) and developed over 400 Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs). All safety information is recorded by the Fire, Health and Safety Team and stored in Secure Information Boxes for use by emergency services. All Council tenants and leaseholders have received a booklet explaining the evacuation procedure that applies to their block. The booklet is available in 10 other languages.

3 This certification (known as BAFE SP205) provides assurance that they have the right expertise, processes and quality controls to assess fire safety properly

- 13 We accept, however, that the current model for working with vulnerable residents, which mostly relies on self-identification for PCFRAs, has limitations. We should make better use of opportunities to identify vulnerabilities, and we need to improve how we share information between departments.
- 14 There is also a need to consider vulnerabilities more systematically in the assessment of housing needs and the allocation of social housing, to use more resident insight and intelligence to understand potential vulnerabilities and barriers for disabled or vulnerable residents, and to consider the coexistence of vulnerabilities with other potential needs, e.g. language barriers or specific cultural and religious needs.
- 15 *Enhanced oversight* – The Corporate Assurance on Building Safety Group, chaired by the executive director of housing and social investment, provides oversight of fire safety work. Monthly performance and compliance information is given to the Social Housing Regulator.
- 16 There is a need to ensure that individual complaints and concerns with safety implications are given even greater priority, investigated thoroughly and risks effectively mitigated. More support is also needed for non-technical staff to identify potential safety concerns and be supported to resolve or escalate where necessary.
- 17 *Temporary accommodation* – In addition to meeting our safety obligations for Council tenants, we now carry out enhanced safety checks on properties before residents in housing need are placed in temporary accommodation. We need to continue to work with landlords and residents to ensure any safety concerns are escalated and addressed properly.

Our commitments

- 18 The Council has established safety of homes and buildings as an over-riding priority. As well as the actions of the TMO and the Council, the Inquiry report describes the “systematic dishonesty” of those who made and sold cladding and insulation (2.19). It also shows that the companies involved in the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower failed to carry out the design and work to safe and competent standards (2.69-2.87).
- 19 We will therefore ban contractors and products implicated in the Grenfell Tower fire from use by the Council, as well as maintaining a complete ban on combustible materials in external walls, going beyond current regulatory requirements. This clear stance will help ensure the highest safety standards across our entire housing stock.

“We will ban contractors and products implicated in the Grenfell Tower fire from use by the Council, and maintain a complete ban on the use of any combustible materials in external walls for all Council construction and refurbishment projects, regardless of building height.”

- 20** While we have increased the proportion of residents for whom we hold vulnerability data from nine per cent to just under 70 per cent, we know our current systems have limitations. Different Council departments, particularly social services, hold valuable information about residents' needs and vulnerabilities, but we need to work more imaginatively and collaboratively to ensure this knowledge helps inform our emergency planning and response. A new protocol for sharing information between departments will ensure that knowledge held by different teams - from housing to social care to emergency planning - is properly shared and acted upon, enabling us to better protect our most vulnerable residents.

“We will implement a new protocol for sharing information between departments about vulnerable residents so that they can be given personal risk assessments and evacuation plans, and assisted properly in an emergency.”

- 21** Our current model also relies heavily on residents self-identifying as vulnerable, which means we may be missing people who are reluctant to come forward or face barriers to engagement. By proactively seeking out vulnerable residents' experiences through surveys, focus groups and other research methods, we can better understand their needs and concerns, identify gaps in our current approach, and design more effective safety measures.

“We will speak directly to vulnerable residents about their experience of housing safety, including through surveys, focus groups and other qualitative research methods, and act upon what we hear.”

- 22** Finally, language should never be a barrier to safety. While we provide some translated materials now, we must do more to ensure all residents can access and understand critical safety information. This reflects our fundamental obligation to protect all residents, regardless of their background or English language proficiency.

“We will ensure our existing fire safety materials are accessible to all residents and available in multiple languages.”

- 23** Together, these commitments reflect our comprehensive approach to safety - addressing physical safety measures, identification and support of vulnerable residents, and clear communication with all residents. They directly tackle key failings identified by the Inquiry while strengthening areas where we know we still need to improve

4b. Being a better landlord

Our failings

- 1 The Inquiry report finds that the Tenant Management Organisation “failed over the course of years to treat residents of the tower and the Lancaster West Estate with the courtesy and respect that was due to them” (1.22).
- 2 The Inquiry notes that “[s]ome, perhaps many, occupants of [Grenfell] tower regarded the TMO as a bullying overlord that belittled and marginalised them, regarded them as a nuisance, or worse, and failed to take their concerns seriously” (2.55). More generally, it finds that “between 2011 and 2017 relations between the TMO and many of the residents of the tower were increasingly characterised by distrust, dislike, personal antagonism and anger” (33.67).
- 3 In fact, the report finds that there had been a “troubled” relationship between the TMO and residents for many years. It notes that “serious flaws” had been identified in that relationship long before Grenfell, including in two independent reports commissioned by the Council (2.53; see also 33.2 to 33.6). The 2009 Memoli and Butler reports made “serious criticisms of the TMO’s relationship with its tenants, leaseholders and some freeholders” (33.2). However, the Inquiry notes that the TMO, and, by extension, the Council, failed to act on these findings and that “eight years later the TMO had shown little sign of any change and appeared to have learnt nothing about how to treat, or relate to, residents” (33.6).
- 4 More broadly, the Inquiry finds that the TMO “lost sight of the fact that the residents were *people* who depended on it for a safe and decent home and the privacy and dignity that a home should provide. That dependence created an unequal relationship and a corresponding need to ensure that, whatever the difficulties, the residents were treated with understanding and respect” (2.56). The Inquiry concludes that ultimate responsibility for the state of the relationship “fell not on the members of that community, who had a right to be treated with respect, but on the TMO as a public body exercising control over the building which contained their homes” (2.56).
- 5 Alongside evidence of the serious deterioration of the relationship between the TMO and its residents, the Inquiry also finds that one reason that the Council failed to meet the needs of bereaved, survivors and the immediate community in the aftermath was the inadequacy of information about those who lived in the Tower and the surrounding area (see, for example, 105.48). This was part of a broader failure by the Council (and the TMO) to know their residents and understand their needs prior to the fire.

Our progress

- 6 *Building a more direct relationship with residents* - In 2018, the Council brought housing management services back in house from the TMO. This has allowed the Council to build a more direct relationship with tenants and leaseholders and has enabled more direct oversight of housing services, including day-to-day repairs and major works. Since services were brought back in house we have seen an improvement in tenant satisfaction (from 52 per cent in 2018 to 63 per cent in 2023) and in leaseholder satisfaction (from 26 per cent in 2018 to 45 per cent in 2023).
- 7 We now involve residents routinely in shaping and designing our services through the **tenants consultative committee** and resident task and finish groups in key areas. In housing needs, we have a **resident reference group** which brings the perspectives of residents in temporary accommodation and others with experience of housing services to bear on housing policy and service delivery.
- 8 However, as the satisfaction figures above show, there are still significant numbers of residents who are not satisfied and many do not have confidence in housing services. There remains more work to do to improve the relationship with residents, ensuring consistency in service provision and factoring in the needs and perspectives of residents in social housing and temporary accommodation into wider Council decision-making.
- 9 More work is also needed to strengthen ways of involving residents in the design and delivery of services, learning from their experiences to improve standards and meet their needs more effectively.
- 10 *Improving the treatment of residents* - The Council is currently implementing the Government's new **consumer standards** for social housing set out in the 2023 Social Housing Regulation Act. Housing services are subject to independent scrutiny, including inspections, by the Regulator of Social Housing. Since 2017, we have made a range of improvements to customer service in housing and have made further changes to meet the consumer standards.
- 11 Alongside the consumer standards, we have also introduced new, co-designed **service standards** across the Council so all residents, including our tenants and leaseholders, know what to expect when they contact us.
- 12 We are rolling out **systemic practice** and other training in the housing needs and housing management teams, to support better relationships with residents and improved ways of working with residents, including greater empathy and humanity.
- 13 Following feedback from the resident reference group in housing needs, we have introduced a new pilot project to improve the relationship with residents who have been in temporary accommodation for long periods of time. This aims to better understand their needs and experiences with a view to securing improved housing and other outcomes for them.

4 RBKC Tenant Satisfaction Measures - <https://www.rbkc.gov.uk/housing/consultations-publications-and-policy/policies-and-publications/tenant-satisfaction-measures>

- 14 However, residents still express concerns about persistently poor experience of service delivery and disrespectful treatment. We need to do more to embed the national consumer standards and local service standards to ensure residents can expect consistently to be treated with respect and humanity. In particular, more work is needed to communicate the standards to residents so that they know what to expect and to measure (and report transparently on) our progress against them. Alongside this, we must take further steps to uphold and enforce these standards among our staff, with a greater focus on resident experience and learning from when things go wrong.
- 15 We also need to do more to support residents to complain and seek redress when they are not treated with respect and dignity, giving people greater assurance that their concerns will be followed up and action taken as a result.
- 16 We need to work more collaboratively with our residents to understand what might get in the way of treating residents with greater dignity and respect, reflecting together on the lived experience of both residents and staff and working in partnership to find solutions.
- 17 *Building a better understanding of our residents' needs and ensuring they feel the benefit of the support the Council provides* - We now conduct regular tenancy audits to ensure a fuller understanding of the needs of all of our residents living in Council-owned homes. This process includes identifying additional support they might need from housing and other services.
- 18 However, we recognise that we must do more to build a more comprehensive understanding of our residents' needs and to ensure that we provide the support they need in housing and other areas. This should include making greater use of a range of insight and intelligence and further work to link residents in social housing and temporary accommodation to other Council teams and services, ensuring residents can feel the full benefit of broader Council support.

Our commitments

- 19 In light of the Inquiry's findings, the Council commits to further strengthening the relationship with residents, especially our tenants, leaseholders and residents in temporary accommodation. In particular, we will redouble our efforts to treat residents with the dignity and respect they deserve, acknowledging the fundamental importance of housing for people's lives.
- 20 We can only do this by working more closely with residents and staff, ensuring their experiences, perspectives and knowledge help to shape our approach to improving service and recognising that residents are experts in their own homes and their own lives.

"We will work collaboratively with residents and Housing staff to explore the lived realities of receiving and providing housing services in Kensington and Chelsea, understand barriers and key issues and identify solutions, using the findings to shape the design and delivery of services."

- 21** In addition to treating residents with respect and dignity, we will ensure that residents are empowered to express their dissatisfaction and seek redress when things go wrong, that they are taken seriously when they complain and that they are treated with dignity and respect.

“We will improve support for tenants, leaseholders and residents in temporary accommodation to make complaints.”

- 22** The Inquiry highlights the fundamental importance of the landlord/tenant relationship and the obligations that the Council has to its tenants, leaseholders and residents in temporary accommodation. We will consider the needs of residents to whom we have a housing duty, and our responsibilities to them, more routinely in wider Council decision-making, ensuring we identify opportunities more effectively to meet their needs.

“We will ensure that specific impacts of new policies on social tenants and residents in temporary accommodation are routinely considered in Council decision-making through equality impact assessments, treating housing tenure in the same way as protected characteristics.”

- 23** In the same vein, we will take further steps to connect tenants, leaseholders and residents in temporary accommodation with the Council’s wider services, ensuring residents to whom we have a fundamental housing duty get the broader support they need.

“We will build more effective working relationships between Housing and other departments, ensuring tenants, leaseholders and residents in temporary accommodation feel the benefit of services provided or commissioned by the Council and have a more seamless experience.”

- 24** Taken together, these measures are designed to further strengthen our relationship with residents, ensuring that the Council fulfils its fundamental responsibilities to our residents, works with them to address issues and treats them with respect and humanity in every interaction.

4c. Rebuilding trust

Our failings

- 1 The Inquiry recounts a concerning disconnect between the Council, TMO, and the community they served. It notes that relations between the TMO and many residents were “characterised by distrust, dislike, personal antagonism and anger” (33.67).
- 2 It finds that there was a “complete breakdown of trust” and a “toxic atmosphere” between the TMO and residents of Grenfell Tower (2.55) and that “relationships had deteriorated to the point at which they could be described as hostile” (30.4). It concludes that this fundamental disconnect between residents and the TMO (and, by extension, the Council) underpinned many of the specific failings identified.
- 3 The report is clear that the responsibility for the state of the relationship “fell not on the members of that community, who had a right to be treated with respect, but on the TMO [and, by extension, the Council] as a public body exercising control over the building which contained their homes” (2.56). It concludes that there was a fundamental failure (by both the TMO and the Council) to address the breakdown of trust and to take steps to repair the relationship with residents.
- 4 The Council’s failings in the aftermath further undermined trust with bereaved family members, survivors and the local community. The Inquiry finds that “many of those affected felt that in the hours and days that followed the fire they were abandoned by the authorities at the time of their greatest need” (98.1) and had been “comprehensively failed by those to whom they looked for protection in the wake of a major disaster” (100.4). The Inquiry notes that the Council’s response “created ‘hierarchy and a division’ within the community which, before the fire, had been one” (100.29).
- 5 As the Inquiry notes, “[s]afety and security are as much to do with the perceptions of those affected as they are with the actions of those responsible for providing protection” (100.4). Once again, the Council’s failure to command the trust and confidence of the community undermined its capacity to support and care for them effectively.

Our progress

- 6 We recognise that working with residents to improve services is the only way to rebuild trust, sharing problems with them, being open and honest and developing solutions together. Since 2017, we have introduced new values and behaviours for staff, ensuring respect, integrity and working collaboratively with residents are at the heart of our stated ambitions. We have also made specific commitments on ways of working with residents, both in Housing and across the Council. In particular, we have committed to high standards of consultation and engagement, as set out in the [Charter for Public Participation](#).

- 7 Against the backdrop of low levels of trust in the Council, especially since Grenfell, we have worked in new ways to build some trust with bereaved and survivors through the Dedicated Service and, more recently, with the immediate community through new approaches to consultation and engagement in the Grenfell Partnerships Team. In particular, through the 2022/23 **Grenfell Legacy** conversation and 2023/24 **Future Grenfell Support** consultations, we have found new ways of working with communities that acknowledge the persistent lack of trust. The latter has benefitted from independent advice and challenge from the External Scrutiny Team and restorative practice experts.
- 8 More broadly across the Council, we have found ways to share power with residents more effectively on particular projects, working collaboratively with them through resident panels, steering groups and task and finish groups. We communicate with the public more regularly and transparently on our key commitments, routinely sharing **information** about the Council's performance and progress on the Council Plan.
- 9 We have strengthened governance and scrutiny arrangements, following the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's **independent review** of governance in 2019, to build greater confidence in the Council's decision-making. Changes we have made including inviting resident participation in Council meetings, providing opportunities for public speaking at every full Council meeting. Alongside this, Lead Members, including the Leader and Deputy Leader meet more regularly with residents and community groups, attend community events, and maintain an ongoing dialogue with local groups.
- 10 We have begun to roll out systemic practice training for some staff, especially in housing, encouraging them to reflect on power imbalances and inequalities in relationships with residents and to develop approaches to public service that are adapted to a low trust environment.
- 11 There have been some positive signs that the relationship between the Council and its residents is improving. For example, the proportion of our tenants who report that they are satisfied that the Council listens to tenant views and acts upon them has increased from 41 per cent in 2018 to 59.5 per cent in 2023.
- 12 However, we must recognise that we must do more to repair and rebuild the relationship with residents. Of the almost 400 residents who responded to the 2022/23 **Grenfell Legacy** conversation, 56 per cent said they felt that the Council hadn't changed since 2017 (and 6 per cent said it had changed for the worse). A similar picture has emerged from the Future Grenfell Support consultations with the immediate community around Grenfell Tower and from the recent engagement on the Inquiry report, which point to low levels of trust in the Council, particularly in Notting Dale and, more broadly, in North Kensington. In particular, there are concerns about specific initiatives and projects where residents are unsure about the Council's motivations or do not have confidence that it is acting in good faith.
- 13 In some areas, particularly the immediate community around Grenfell Tower, trust has been further undermined since Grenfell. A recent independent report by the External Scrutiny Team (appointed to oversee the Future Grenfell Support Consultations) found

that some residents did not “experience the wider Council as restorative and trauma informed, or as desiring to become more restorative and trauma informed. This affects willingness to engage with the Council, as some people who are willing to work together with the Council, do not yet have a concrete sense that the Council is willing to work with them in return” (read page three of the [External Scrutiny report](#)).

- 14** We recognise that many residents still do not trust the Council, that change has felt piecemeal to many and that the Council’s response to the tragedy created exclusion and divisions that further undermined trust, particularly for bereaved family members, survivors and the immediate community around the Tower. Some of the actions of the Council and other organisations have caused further harm and we must acknowledge this and work with residents to repair these relationships.

Our commitments

- 15** In her speech to full Council on 31 January 2024, the Leader of the Council acknowledged that “we still haven’t done enough on the ground, face to face, where it matters. People don’t need to be told about change; they need to see and feel the changes”. In light of this, she committed to “a fundamental change of culture across the entire organisation”.
- 16** Chapter 5 of this response sets out our plans to address the broader culture of the organisation but, alongside this, it is important to acknowledge the breakdown of trust and to consider immediate steps we can take to address it.
- 17** In light of the Inquiry’s findings about the “toxic atmosphere” (2.55) between the TMO and its residents and the failure by both the Council and the TMO to take action to address this, we will ensure that where there is evidence that relationships with residents have broken down or are otherwise compromised, we will acknowledge this and find ways to repair the relationships. This includes situations where dynamics have become hostile or attritional, in which both staff and residents could benefit from independent support, advice and challenge.
- 18** In particular, we will reflect more systematically on where restorative approaches might be helpful in the specific context of working in situations where harm has been done by one party to another and with communities which have experienced trauma.

“We will make regular use of restorative approaches where relationships with residents break down, including use of independent facilitation and mediation.”

- 19** Alongside this, we will learn from where decisions after the Grenfell Tragedy were made quickly and caused unintended harmful divisions in the community. We will also learn from what we have heard about times when Council inaction affecting parts of the community also created division. This learning will include work with bereaved and survivors and the immediate community around the Tower to reflect on learning from Grenfell, its aftermath and some of the work done since, and to articulate some core principles for rebuilding trust.

“We will find ways to reflect together about decisions made since the Grenfell tragedy, acknowledging the harm that has been done and learning from mistakes to ensure future decision-making doesn’t create further divisions.”

- 20** More broadly, it will be vital to communicate openly and transparently to our residents to give them confidence that we are making the changes we have promised and for them effectively to hold us to account for them. We want to develop an approach that works collaboratively with residents, using more creative forms of participation, committing to honest investigation and inquiry and inviting external challenge and scrutiny. In particular, we will work with residents and make use of independent advice and expertise in cases where there is disagreement or where residents may not have confidence in the Council’s judgement.

“We will share information and performance data openly and transparently, be open and honest when things go wrong and invite independent review and challenge and resident input when faced with difficult decisions.”

- 21** We recognise that trust will only be rebuilt through ongoing connection and dialogue with our communities. We will ensure more regular contact between officers and elected members and residents, especially in North Kensington and other areas with high concentrations of social housing. This will include building on feedback from the public engagement on the Inquiry report to develop regular meetings where residents can speak directly to senior staff, raise issues and hear directly from officers about actions the Council is taking in key areas.

“We will ensure senior leaders maintain regular direct contact with communities through open sessions, estate walks and informal meetings, particularly focusing on social housing residents and areas where trust needs rebuilding.”

- 22** We acknowledge that repairing the Council’s relationship with our communities will take time, and that talk of ‘rebuilding trust’ risks assuming that it was there to begin with. More work is needed to reflect on the specific kinds of trust we need to build with residents and how we can demonstrate trustworthiness in these areas and give residents greater confidence that we want to work with them. In some cases, greater trust can be built by delivering on commitments, but it also requires open, honest dialogue, respect and care. Without improved trust and confidence, we know that the other actions we are committing to in this response will not succeed. The actions identified above are therefore designed to ensure that the concern with trustworthiness runs through all of the commitments we are making in response to the Inquiry report.

4d. Building control and safety standards

Our failings

- 1 In examining the failures associated with the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower between 2012 and 2016, the Inquiry was highly critical of a number of companies and entities, finding that they all, to different degrees, bore responsibility for the disaster.
- 2 At the heart of these failings was “a fundamental misunderstanding among many of those who work in the construction industry, contractors, building control bodies and others, that the function of building control is to provide a service to applicants rather than to enforce the regulations robustly for the benefit of the community at large” (62.14).
- 3 In respect of the Council, the Inquiry concluded that “RBKC’s building control department failed to perform its statutory function of ensuring that the design of the refurbishment complied with the Building Regulations” and that it “therefore bears considerable responsibility for the dangerous condition of the building immediately on completion of the work” (2.86).
- 4 While specific failings were attributed to individual officers, the Inquiry found that “shortcomings in the management of the department... played a significant part in [the officer’s] failure to carry out his role properly” (62.63).
- 5 Officers showed “very limited understanding of the risks associated with the use of ACM [aluminium composite material] panels” (62.49). There was “a failure to obtain full information about construction at the application stage” (62.17) and they “failed to carry out methodical reviews of documents or notice obvious errors” (62.27). The department also “failed to ensure that officers within the department received the training they needed to do their work properly” (62.57).
- 6 The department was “hampered by excessive workload and poor management” (62.54) and “inadequate steps were taken to ensure officers had time and knowledge for complex projects” (62.60). “Record-keeping was poor and poor practice went unchallenged” (62.61), while the “absence of a quality management system meant defects in work were not identified” (62.60).

Our progress

- 7 Since 2017, we have implemented fundamental reforms to our building control service, backed by a four-fold increase in funding. These changes have coincided with the most significant reform of building control since 1984 through the Building Safety Act 2022.
- 8 We have transformed our approach to professional standards and competence. All members of building control are working towards professional accreditation with

either the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Chartered Association of Building Engineers (CABE), or the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB). Some staff members hold additional specialist accreditation with the Institution of Fire Engineers or Institution of Civil Engineers. We no longer provide training in-house, instead working exclusively with accredited bodies like Local Authority Building Control to ensure the highest standards of professional development.

- 9 Under the new competence assessment regime established by the Building Safety Regulator, staff are registered in Class 1, 2 or 3 categories. This classification system defines the type of applications and buildings they can work on independently, replacing our previous internal system. To obtain the necessary registration, staff must undertake competency assessment programmes from external bodies licensed by the Building Safety Regulator.
- 10 We have also made significant improvements to quality management. A quality management system was instituted in 2018, with a new ISO 9001:2015 quality management system introduced in September 2024. We have introduced a “four eyes” principle - meaning that all decisions require review by two qualified professionals - that exceeds standard Local Authority Building Control requirements. In practice, this means a technical manager must independently review all case files and completion checklists before signing off any completion certificate. If further information or changes are required, the manager will not approve the certificate until the Building Control Surveyor has completed all necessary actions. This dual review process provides an additional layer of scrutiny and helps prevent any oversights or errors. This system is supported by regular internal and external audits to ensure consistent compliance.
- 11 We acknowledge, however, that challenges remain. The higher competency standards required by the Council and the Building Safety Act mean we face increased risks around recruitment and retention of staff with the necessary technical expertise. Changes to the regulatory framework suggest that further capacity and resourcing will be required in the future. We also recognise the need for better coordination between building control and other departments, particularly with Housing Management’s fire safety team.
- 12 Most fundamentally, we must ensure that the culture of the department continues to transform. The Inquiry found that we saw our role as providing a service to applicants rather than enforcing regulations for public benefit. While we have made progress in shifting this mindset, we must remain vigilant to ensure that commercial considerations never again compromise our fundamental duty to protect public safety through robust enforcement of building regulations.

Our commitments

- 13** The failures in building control cannot be repeated, nor can we allow commercial considerations or industry practices to compromise our fundamental duty to protect public safety through robust enforcement of building regulations.
- 14** The Council failed to ensure officers had the training and competency needed for their roles. While we have made progress in professional development, we must go further. This means every officer will achieve appropriate professional registration with bodies like RICS, CABE or CIOB, and maintain their competency through ongoing training and development. Fire engineers working within building control and housing management will have the training and development support needed to be competent and effective in their roles. Reporting issues of training and competency to senior management represents a decisive break from the past, when the Inquiry found there was “no system to inform senior management” about whether we were meeting required standards.

“We commit to ensuring that 100 per cent of building control staff complete required professional accreditation and training, and to reporting progress regularly to senior management.”

- 15** The failures identified at the Council were not unique to our borough but reflected wider systemic issues in the building control sector. The Inquiry recommended the establishment of an independent panel to review the building control sector. The Council believes that Registered Building Control Approvers should no longer be permitted to undertake restricted activities and that a locally-based service, utilising local knowledge, would best serve local residents. We will actively engage with national policy developments, sharing our learning from the changes we have made, and being ready to implement new requirements ahead of statutory deadlines. We will not wait to be compelled to make changes but will instead position ourselves at the forefront of reform in the sector.

“We will support the Government in their review of the national building control sector, and prepare to implement reforms and recommendations as soon as possible.”

4e. Emergency preparedness and response

Our failings

- 1 The Grenfell Tower Inquiry found failings in how the Council prepared for and responded to emergencies. It concluded that “RBKC’s systems and leadership were wholly inadequate to the task of handling an incident of such magnitude and gravity” (2.103).
- 2 The chief executive “was not capable of taking effective control of the situation and mobilising support of the right kind without delay. He had no clear plan and did not receive all the information he needed... He was unduly concerned for RBKC’s reputation” (2.108). The Council refused offers of assistance from other public bodies because it “did not wish to appear incapable of managing the situation but did not have sufficient regard to an objective analysis of its needs” (102.32). As the Inquiry notes, “RBKC should have asked for assistance far sooner [than the evening of 15 June 2017]” (102.48).
- 3 The Council was “systemically ill-equipped to deal with a serious emergency” (101.65). The Inquiry found “RBKC did not have an effective plan to deal with the displacement of a large number of people from their homes” and had “no contingency arrangements for obtaining a large amount of emergency accommodation at short notice” (2.105). The risk of a tower block fire had not even been identified in the Borough Risk Register, despite previous fires at Lakanal House and Adair Tower (99.29-31).
- 4 The Council “had failed to train its staff adequately. They did not have a sufficient understanding of the importance of resilience or sufficient commitment to it. Exercises had not been held regularly and staff had not been required to attend the training sessions run by the London Resilience Group” (2.106). The Inquiry found that “over a number of years, the capability of its staff to respond to a major emergency had been allowed to decline” despite “clear warnings to senior management that it did not have enough trained staff and that contingency plans were not practised enough” (101.65).
- 5 The Council’s response in the critical early hours was slow. The Inquiry found that “the BECC [Borough Emergency Control Centre] was not operational at the Town Hall until about 06.00 on 14 June 2017; it should have been opened between about 03.00 and 04.00. That was a substantial delay that had significant consequences for RBKC’s response, not least in identifying the number and location of the rest centres that had by then opened spontaneously. As hundreds of displaced people poured onto the streets of North Kensington in need of support, RBKC was already many hours behind in assessing and meeting those needs” (104.11). This delay was compounded by the absence of Council staff from community rest centres - “by 10.30 none of its staff had arrived at any of the other places of shelter which had opened during the morning to accommodate the growing number of evacuees. Its absence was noted by many survivors and added to the sense that they had been abandoned by the Council” (104.29).

- 6 The Council “failed to give any, or any adequate, consideration to the needs of the members of the various faith, religious, cultural and minority ethnic communities who were affected by the fire” (104.71). The Inquiry found evidence of racial discrimination in how survivors were treated in the immediate aftermath (1.22). The Council also failed to make effective use of local voluntary organisations or have adequate arrangements to enable them to be called upon in emergencies (2.114).
- 7 The Council’s “inability throughout that period to obtain, maintain and record in full information about the situation was a significant failing and delayed support being directed to those who were in need” (104.22). The Council’s communications systems were “quickly overwhelmed” and failed to “provide the public with clear, consistent information” (104.90). No dedicated helpline was established to enable displaced residents to obtain information or advice (104.91).

Our progress

- 8 Since 2017, the Council has undertaken fundamental reforms of its emergency planning and response capabilities, while remaining focused on continuing challenges and gaps.
- 9 We have established new structures for leadership and oversight of emergency planning. The Contingency Planning Assurance Group, chaired by the chief executive, provides strategic direction and accountability. Supporting this is a new resilience team of five permanent, full-time staff who maintain and develop our emergency response capabilities. This team coordinates a rota of 250 staff trained and ready to respond to emergencies, with clear reporting lines to the chief executive established to ensure effective command and control.
- 10 Training and exercising have also been enhanced. All Gold and Silver commanders, including the chief executive, now receive comprehensive training from the Cabinet Office Emergency Planning College. We have developed our own training programme to ensure staff in emergency response roles understand their responsibilities and how to discharge them effectively. This training is reinforced through regular exercises - we have conducted eight major exercises since the beginning of 2023 to test and improve our response capabilities.
- 11 Perhaps most importantly, we have worked to build stronger connections with our communities to support emergency response. Through the Faith Communities Partnership, which now includes 70 organisations, we have developed deeper understanding of our diverse communities and their needs. We have held a Community Resilience conference which brought together voluntary sector partners, faith groups and community organisations to strengthen our collective preparedness. We have also established partnerships with local organisations to provide emergency rest centres.
- 12 However, we must be candid about continuing challenges. Our housing and emergency accommodation plans require further development - we remain too dependent on commercial hotel accommodation and specific officers’ knowledge. Despite

the improved training programme, we face persistent challenges ensuring officers undertake sufficient resilience training alongside their regular work. Recent incidents have shown continuing risks in out-of-hours response, with issues contacting staff when on call and confusion around immediate financial support provision.

Our commitments

- 13** We make four core commitments to strengthen our emergency preparedness and response capabilities:
- 14** First, we will implement all recommendations made by the Inquiry relating to emergency planning and response. This means ensuring all staff understand that resilience is not an optional extra but a fundamental part of their role, backed by regular participation in emergency exercises. We will review our information gathering systems to ensure we can quickly build an accurate picture of who needs help and what support they require during an emergency. Our emergency accommodation planning will be improved to ensure we can rapidly secure suitable places for displaced residents that meet their specific needs and keep families and communities together. Finally, we will ensure our rest centres and communication channels provide clear, accurate and timely information to those affected by emergencies.

“We will implement all the Inquiry’s recommendations:

- a.** ensuring all staff are trained to regard resilience as part of their core responsibilities, and regularly participate in exercises
- b.** reviewing information gathering systems used in an emergency to ensure they are fit for purpose
- c.** improve our emergency accommodation planning to ensure displaced residents are found places to stay which meet their needs as soon as possible
- d.** ensure communication channels and rest centres are equipped to provide accurate and timely information.

- 15** Second, we will embed resilience responsibilities throughout our senior leadership structure. This means explicitly including emergency planning and response duties in all senior officer contracts and job descriptions. We will develop clear competency requirements for these roles and ensure they are tested through training and exercises. Most importantly, we will make resilience capabilities a key criterion in recruitment of senior managers, ensuring we have a leadership team with the skills and experience to handle major incidents effectively.
- 16** Third, we commit to undertaking a comprehensive review of our emergency planning function. As a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, we have

specific statutory duties to assess risk, maintain emergency plans, share information with partners and cooperate with other responders. Our review will examine every aspect of how we discharge these responsibilities, from our staffing structure and training programmes to our plans and procedures. We will benchmark against best practice from other local authorities and seek external challenge and validation of our arrangements. This review will ensure we have the capabilities and capacity needed to protect our communities and will explicitly address questions about emergency assistance and the use of key workers, which are identified in the Inquiry's recommendations (see Appendix 2).

- 17** Fourth, we will strengthen our partnerships with communities and voluntary organisations. The Inquiry showed clearly how local community groups provided vital support when official responses fell short. We will build on the relationships developed since 2017 through deeper engagement with residents, faith groups, voluntary organisations and ward councillors. This means involving them in emergency planning, training and exercises, establishing clear protocols for working together in emergencies, and ensuring we can quickly mobilise community resources when needed. We recognise that effective emergency response requires strong partnerships built on trust and mutual understanding.

“We will deepen our community partnerships, strengthening ways of working with residents, local voluntary organisations and ward councillors.”

4f. Understanding our communities

Our failings

- 1 The Inquiry concludes that the Council failed both to consider and effectively to meet the specific cultural, social and religious needs of residents of the Tower and the immediate community in the aftermath of the fire. The Inquiry finds “evidence of racial discrimination in the way in which some of those who survived the fire were treated in the days immediately following it at a time when they were at their most vulnerable” (1.22).
- 2 The Inquiry finds that the Council did not give sufficient consideration to the specific needs of its communities in its emergency planning, did not have adequate information about those who lived in the Tower and the surrounding area (see, for example, 105.48) and failed to adapt its plans to accommodate the community’s needs as they emerged in the aftermath.
- 3 Specifically, the Council failed to give “sufficient consideration to the needs of particular groups” (especially families with young children, pregnant women, people with mobility issues, families observing Ramadan) (100.18). Many residents who had “particular religious, cultural or social needs” therefore “suffered a significant degree of discrimination in ways that could and would have been prevented” (2.105). The Inquiry identifies a failure to communicate with residents whose first language wasn’t English, including a significant delay in producing and distributing information leaflets in multiple languages. (104.95ff)
- 4 The consequence of these failings was that “many of those affected felt that in the hours and days that followed the fire they were abandoned by the authorities at the time of their greatest need and had been comprehensively failed by those to whom they looked for protection in the wake of a major disaster” (98.1).

Our progress

- 5 Since 2017, we have transformed our approach to resilience and emergency planning, incorporating intelligence and insight about residents’ needs into our plans and building stronger relationships with voluntary and community organisations, including faith groups. This includes the 70 local organisations who are part of the Faith Communities Partnership who are involved in planning for future emergencies.
- 6 There are now six Emergency Centre Managers and 18 Emergency Centre Officers who have specific training in the responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act to respond to residents’ diverse needs. There is now a 24-hour rota for trained Gold/Silver/Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO) staff, including volunteers who can be mobilised quickly in the event of an emergency, all of whom are trained to consider residents’ specific religious and cultural needs in an emergency and to use community intelligence to support effective decision-making that prioritises local needs.

- 7 We now make more routine use of data and insight about our communities across the borough, including the needs of diverse communities, to inform the development of policies and strategies and shape Council decision-making. We take a more consistent, cross-Council approach to Equality Impact Assessments, with a new template developed for all key decisions to ensure that the specific needs of those with protected characteristics are systematically considered in decision-making and that we make use of all available data and insight.
- 8 We have developed more in-depth understanding of residents' needs, including through the most recent **Grenfell Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)**, other JSNA work, the development of new ward profiles based on the 2021 census information and qualitative and quantitative work on discrimination, inequality and deprivation to support the new **Fairer Action Plan**, due to be finalised in 2025.
- 9 Through the Council's Grenfell Partnerships, communities and housing teams, we have developed stronger connections with communities in key areas of the borough, helping to develop a deeper understanding of their specific needs, including through the **Grenfell Legacy** and **Future Grenfell Support** consultations. We have established a borough-wide **Citizen's Panel**, made up of up to 2,000 residents who have agreed to give their views on consultation topics throughout the year. Panel membership is broadly representative of the borough's population to ensure that we hear a diverse range of voices.
- 10 We have introduced cultural competency training, including specific equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives for Council staff. Building on work in Children's Services, we are providing **systemic practice** training for staff, including in housing, which includes explicit reflections on how to take into account the specific needs of communities when designing and delivering services.
- 11 Across our housing stock we are gradually improving our understanding of the characteristics and needs of our residents, including those with disabilities and from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Alongside this, we are piloting work in temporary accommodation to ensure a more up-to-date understanding of residents' specific needs to improve housing outcomes for them and connect them to other support.
- 12 However, we acknowledge that we must do more to build a stronger central understanding of residents' needs (especially those in social housing) to inform service provision across the borough on a more routine basis. In particular, we need to use quantitative data and qualitative insights to better understand the reach and impact of Council services on vulnerable and ethnically diverse communities and identify barriers to access.
- 13 We have heard clearly through the public engagement since the Inquiry report was published that many residents still do not feel that the Council understands them and considers their needs in decision-making. This applies both to officers and to elected members. They have asked us to reflect explicitly on questions of race, disability and the treatment of residents in social housing.

- 14 A relatively small percentage of our staff live in the borough. We must do more both to increase the number of local people we employ and to improve all staff members' understanding of the communities they serve. We must build stronger and more resilient relationships with residents and community groups, including regular contact through both formal and informal channels, to ensure a dynamic and up-to-date understanding of community needs.
- 15 In addition to strengthening our connections to residents, we also need to ensure more routine communication and engagement with ward councillors across the borough, especially in North Kensington and other areas of social deprivation. We must do more to involve them in decisions which affect their residents, recognising that they have a unique understanding of their communities and an in-depth understanding of their needs.

Our commitments

- 16 The steps outlined in Chapter 5 set out our plans for an independent review of culture, including issues of racial and social discrimination. This will help to deepen the Council's understanding of, and connections to, our communities and to strengthen our relationships with our residents.
- 17 In light of the Inquiry's findings and the feedback from residents over the past seven years, we commit to using quantitative data and qualitative work to build a more robust understanding of our residents and to ensuring that information informs both decision-making across the Council and our approach to tackling inequality in the borough in a more consistent way.
- 18 The new Fairer Action Plan will be an important vehicle for this ambition. The Plan will both be underpinned by evidence of the needs of our communities, especially residents in social housing, those from ethnically diverse backgrounds and those with disabilities or other vulnerabilities, and will seek to improve our understanding of those needs in key areas.

“We will use the new Fairer Action Plan to develop a cross-Council approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion, underpinned by robust data about the needs and lived experience of residents, especially ethnically diverse residents and those with disabilities.”

- 19** Alongside this, we will build on existing work to ensure that equalities considerations are factored into Council decision-making from an early stage of policy development and that assessments are regularly checked, reviewed and updated. In doing so, we will ensure greater consistency in our approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion and reflect explicitly on questions of race, disability and the treatment of those in social housing in light of Grenfell.

“We will conduct a full review of our approach to Equality Impact Assessments, including a greater focus on the needs and experiences of residents and a more robust approach to review and monitoring.”

- 20** To improve officers’ connections to, and understanding of the borough’s diverse communities, we will both employ more local people and ensure officers, especially senior officers, are present more routinely in the community, creating opportunities for dialogue and ensuring an up-to-date understanding of community needs.

“We will take further steps to increase the number of local residents employed by the Council, building a better and more dynamic understanding of our communities.”

“We will ensure a more routine presence for senior officers in the community, especially in North Kensington, through regular surgeries, public meetings and other forums.”

- 21** In addition to strengthening officers’ connections to communities and ensuring that advice to members is informed by robust data about residents’ needs, we will work with elected members to deepen their understanding of the borough’s diverse communities and their specific needs. This could include more effective ways for elected members to work together and learn from one another.

“We will review the training provided to all Councillors to build a better understanding of the lived experiences of Residents in North Kensington and other deprived areas of the borough.”

4g. Managing partnerships and contracts

Our failings

- 1 The Grenfell Tower Inquiry found deficiencies in how contractors and consultants were managed by the Council and the TMO during the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower.
- 2 The Inquiry was particularly critical of procurement practices, finding “a casual approach to contractual relations” (67.8) that created serious risks. As the report states: “All those involved in whatever capacity in a complex project need to understand clearly what they have agreed to do and what they are responsible for. A culture of getting on with the job without waiting for terms to be formally agreed is unprofessional and likely to result in a failure by those carrying out the work on site to understand the scope of their responsibilities” (67.8).
- 3 The procurement process itself was found to be flawed. The Inquiry identified evidence of “inappropriate exercise of influence over the procurement process” (53.26) and “poor procurement practice, including discussions...which took place at a time when the procurement process had not been completed and were not contemplated by the legislation relating to procurement” (53.41).
- 4 There was also a failure to involve residents meaningfully in procurement decisions that were relevant to their homes. Despite claims of resident involvement, the Inquiry found this was “largely symbolic, having been hastily arranged and entirely undocumented” (53.38).
- 5 Most critically, the Inquiry identified “insufficient oversight of contractors and consultants involved, particularly in relation to important safety matters” (54.163). This extended to a “regrettable lack of interest in fire safety and a casual attitude to its responsibilities in that regard” (54.163).

Our progress

- 6 Since 2017, we have taken significant steps to transform how we manage contracts and partnerships, both in our housing management and across the Council.
- 7 A major change has been the establishment of a permanent Strategic Procurement Department with dedicated leadership, ensuring professional oversight of all major contracts. This was strengthened in 2021 with the creation of a Commercial Assurance Panel that reviews all Key Decisions related to procurement, bringing additional scrutiny to high-value and high-risk contracts. For housing services specifically, we have introduced a dedicated Procurement Board providing additional oversight of contracts related to resident safety and wellbeing, with the housing management team maintaining a detailed contracts register tracking all active contracts, their performance requirements, and key safety obligations.

- 8 We have worked to make resident involvement in procurement more meaningful and substantive. Contractors must now demonstrate their approach to resident engagement during procurement processes, and satisfaction surveys are conducted throughout projects rather than just at completion. Resident Liaison Managers play a crucial role in housing capital projects, holding construction companies accountable for their impact on residents during works. They use multiple engagement methods including regular resident meetings to ensure continuous feedback, and ensure contracts are strong on respecting residents.
- 9 Following the evidence heard by the Inquiry in Phase 2, we took the decisive step in 2021 to ban the use of certain companies - including Rydon, Arconic, Celotex, and Kingspan - from Council contracts. This ban extends to their use as subcontractors and prohibits the use of their products in any Council projects. The default position for procurement of capital works and revenue operational delivery is now a minimum 60/40 Quality/Price split, with the potential in some areas to go to 80/20, emphasising quality and safety over cost.
- 10 However, we recognise that challenges remain. While procurement decisions are more closely monitored, performance monitoring of contracts once awarded needs strengthening, including transparent reporting to the relevant scrutiny committees. We lack a centralised system for monitoring contractor performance across the organisation, and our approach to resident involvement in procurement needs to be more consistent outside of housing.

Our commitments

- 11 Our future approach to managing partnerships and contracts must be fundamentally different from the practices that contributed to the Grenfell Tower tragedy. We make four specific commitments that will build on the work we have already done to reshape how we work with contractors and deliver services to our residents.
- 12 First, we will put safety at the heart of how we manage contracts by requiring safety assessments for all major decisions, enhancing safety requirements in contracts, and creating clear procedures for raising and escalating safety concerns. This means implementing a new Safety Impact Assessment that must be completed and published with all key decision reports, including procurement strategy and contract award reports. We will review and strengthen safety requirements across all contracts, going beyond minimum standards where appropriate. We will establish clear mechanisms for contractors, staff and residents to raise safety concerns, with transparent escalation procedures and regular safety-focused contract monitoring meetings. This commitment means ensuring that safety considerations can never again be compromised by commercial pressures.

“We will put safety at the heart of how we manage contracts by requiring safety assessments for all major decisions, enhancing safety requirements in contracts, and creating clear procedures for raising and escalating safety concerns.”

- 13** Second, we will be more rigorous in how we monitor contractor performance by implementing a new contract management framework, tracking performance data systematically, and regularly reporting on how well contractors are delivering services. This will involve rolling out a comprehensive new contract management framework and training programme aligned with the requirements of the new Procurement Act 2023. We will implement a new e-procurement solution that enables systematic tracking of contractor performance, with regular reporting to leadership team and scrutiny committees. We will develop a comprehensive contractor performance dashboard that brings together key metrics on service delivery, safety compliance, and resident satisfaction. This systematic approach will ensure we identify and address performance issues before they become serious problems.

“We will be more rigorous in how we monitor contractor performance by implementing a new contract management framework, tracking performance data systematically, and regularly reporting on how well contractors are delivering services.”

- 14** Third, we will build on the work done in housing management to give residents a genuine voice in how we select and manage all contractors by creating a corporate resident procurement panel, providing training to help residents participate meaningfully, and ensuring Council-wide procurement practices are informed by the perspective and experiences of residents. We will provide training to enable residents to participate effectively, ensuring they can meaningfully shape decisions rather than just observe them. Resident experience will directly influence contractor performance assessments, and we will establish regular forums for residents to provide feedback on contractor performance.

“We will give residents a genuine voice in how we select and manage contractors by creating a corporate resident procurement panel, providing training to help residents participate meaningfully, and ensuring Council-wide procurement practices are informed by the perspective and experiences of residents.”

- 15** Fourth, we will strengthen oversight and scrutiny of contracts by having committees regularly examine safety-critical and high-risk contracts, conducting more frequent audits, and making contractor performance information publicly available. This will include supporting the Council’s scrutiny committees to review safety-critical contracts in their areas of responsibility. We will introduce more regular audits of our contract management processes and publish regular updates on contractor performance, ensuring transparency about how well contractors are delivering services.

“We will strengthen oversight and scrutiny of contracts by having committees regularly examine safety-critical and high-risk contracts, conducting more frequent audits, and making contractor performance information publicly available.”

4h. A skilled and professional workforce

Our failings

- 1 The Inquiry found evidence of inadequate training, poor supervision, unclear lines of accountability, and insufficient attention to professional qualifications and competencies. These failings were particularly acute in areas directly affecting resident safety, such as building control and emergency planning.
- 2 In building control, the report identified “a failure to ensure that officers within the department received the training they needed to do their work properly” (62.57) and “a failure to monitor the knowledge and skills of individual officers and to ensure that they received the training needed for them to carry out their function effectively” (62.60). This extended to basic professional competencies, with the report finding staff showed “very limited understanding of the risks associated with the use of ACM panels” (62.49).
- 3 The TMO’s management of health and safety was similarly compromised by inadequate professional standards. The Inquiry found that “according to the policy, the TMO was required to make sure that staff with key roles in the management of health and safety were competent and adequately trained. However, Barbara Matthews told us that there was no document that described standards of competence or the training required for those members of staff” (36.3).
- 4 In emergency planning, the failures were longstanding. The Inquiry found that “RBKC had failed to train its staff adequately. They did not have a sufficient understanding of the importance of resilience or sufficient commitment to it” (2.106). The report noted an “overarching feature of the absence of training records” (101.55) and found that “senior management in general to be somewhat resistant to attending training” (101.59).

Improvements since 2017

- 5 Since 2017, we have made substantial changes to how we develop and maintain professional standards across the Council, while recognising that work remains to be done.
- 6 We have set out elsewhere the changes we have made in services such as building control, emergency planning and housing management to raise standards. In other areas we have enhanced our professional development through the introduction of a new Performance Development Review process and significant investment in learning infrastructure. The launch of the We Are Learning Hub, alongside expanded hybrid and online training options, has made professional development more accessible to staff. We have also introduced coaching support for managers to help them better develop their teams.

- 7 We have fundamentally reshaped our approach to recruitment and selection, placing residents at the heart of the process. This includes their direct participation in interview panels for senior positions and the mandatory inclusion of resident-designed questions in all interviews. Since December 2021, we have strengthened our verification processes for professional qualifications, with human resources now required to check and verify all credentials as part of pre-employment screening.
- 8 However, we acknowledge that challenges do persist. Our current systems do not provide adequate central oversight of training records and professional development, making it difficult to track and ensure compliance with our high standards.

Our commitments

- 9 We restate our commitment to build a workforce that consistently demonstrates both technical excellence and deep understanding of our public service mission.
- 10 We will examine every aspect of the employee lifecycle, from initial recruitment through to ongoing performance management. We will assess how we test both technical competence and public service values during recruitment, review our induction processes to ensure safety awareness is embedded from day one, and strengthen our approach to managing underperformance. This will include developing clear competency frameworks for all roles, establishing robust processes for validating technical skills, and creating new mechanisms for assessing how staff embody our values of public service in their daily work.

“We will conduct a comprehensive review of how we recruit, induct, train and manage staff performance in light of the Inquiry’s findings, with particular focus on technical competence, safety awareness, public service and humanity. We will enforce high standards throughout the workforce, and take action where they are not met.”

- 11 With the implementation of our new Oracle-based learning management system in April 2025, we will create a single, comprehensive view of all staff qualifications, training, and professional registrations. This system will automatically track completion of mandatory training, send alerts when refresher training or re-certification is due, and maintain clear records of professional qualifications. It will provide managers with real-time visibility of their teams’ compliance with training requirements and enable corporate oversight of professional standards across the organisation.

“We will use new systems to track all staff qualifications and training, with clear oversight of mandatory requirements and professional registrations to ensure we maintain the highest standards of competence.”

- 12** Building on our existing resident involvement in recruitment in housing, we will expand this to other services and develop a comprehensive framework for resident participation in workforce development. This will include expanding our pool of trained resident assessors, involving residents in the design of competency frameworks and service standards, and creating new channels for residents to provide feedback on staff performance. We will ensure this feedback directly influences both individual performance management and wider workforce development strategies.

“We will give residents a meaningful role in shaping our workforce by involving them in staff recruitment, service standards development and providing feedback on how staff perform.”

- 13** We will establish a new quarterly workforce development review process at Executive Management Team level, examining training completion rates, skills gaps, and succession planning for critical roles. This will be integrated with our service planning cycle to ensure workforce development directly supports service delivery objectives. Regular skills audits will help identify emerging gaps in technical competence, particularly in specialist areas, enabling us to take proactive steps to maintain essential capabilities across the organisation.

“We will ensure senior management oversight of workforce development through quarterly reviews of training completion, regular skills audits and succession planning for specialist roles, linking this directly to our service planning.”

4i. Governance and oversight

Our failings

- 1 The Grenfell Tower Inquiry identified failures in the Council's governance, oversight and management arrangements that allowed poor performance to develop and persist across multiple areas.
- 2 In building control "shortcomings in the management of the department... played a significant part in [the building control officer's] failure to carry out his role properly" (62.63). Similarly in emergency planning, "over a number of years, the capability of its staff to respond to a major emergency had been allowed to decline. There were clear warnings to senior management that it did not have enough trained staff and that contingency plans were not practiced enough" (101.65).
- 3 Senior managers themselves were also found to have fallen short. The chief executive failed to lead the response to the fire effectively, and did not seek help soon enough (2.108); while the director of housing "failed to give sufficient weight to the advice of the LFB [London Fire Brigade]" (41.69).
- 4 The housing and property scrutiny committee "failed in its task of ensuring that the relationship between the TMO and its residents was rigorously investigated" (33.63). The Inquiry found that information provided to oversight bodies could not necessarily be relied upon. Senior management at the TMO showed what the Inquiry termed an "entrenched reluctance" to inform the board and scrutiny committees of matters affecting fire safety (31.54). The Council's managerial arrangements did not provide effective scrutiny at officer level to detect this (2.59).
- 5 Data management and information flows were also deficient. The Inquiry found in emergency planning that there was "no system in place to inform senior management that it was not meeting the standards expected" (101.74). During the response itself, this manifested in a critical inability to "obtain, maintain and record in full information about the situation" which "delayed support being directed to those who were in need" (104.22).

Our progress

- 6 Since 2017 the Council has sought to strengthen governance and oversight. A new Executive Management Team structure that has increased corporate management capability and strengthened oversight over, and collaboration between, individual services.

- 7 A full independent review of the Council's governance was conducted in 2018 by the then Centre for Public Scrutiny (now the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny). In the light of this, the Council established an overview and scrutiny committee to provide strategic oversight across all scrutiny activities. This committee now works to an annual work programme, driven by strategic priorities and subject to consultation with residents, rather than simply responding to Key Decisions.
- 8 We have also strengthened our approach to risk management and performance monitoring. The Executive Management Team now holds dedicated Risk and Control Board meetings to consider the Council's Strategic Risk Register. We have also developed a new corporate performance framework that includes specific safety metrics. The leadership team receives quarterly reporting on key risk areas, enabling proper oversight of critical issues.
- 9 Our corporate strategy department, developed in 2020, has played a vital role in improving oversight through the creation of our first Council Plan. This provides a clear framework for monitoring departmental performance and ensuring accountability. The Corporate Assurance on Building Safety Group, chaired by the executive director of housing and social investment, provides specific oversight of fire safety work, while the Contingency Planning Assurance Group, chaired by the chief executive, provides corporate sign-off on emergency plans and procedures.
- 10 Leadership development has been another area of focus. Through the implementation of our People Plan, we have prioritised skills development and inclusive leadership. We have introduced systemic practice training for senior staff, emphasising relationship-building and collaborative approaches, alongside a new performance development framework that incorporates our values and behaviours.
- 11 We recognise that more can be done. Our approach to corporate monitoring and oversight needs further development, with greater collective buy-in to performance reporting and common strategic priorities needed across the organisation. Some departments remain reluctant to share information openly with scrutiny, and understanding of its importance can be patchy among senior managers. These areas will be a key focus of our continuing work to strengthen governance arrangements across the Council.

Our commitments

- 12 To build on the progress made and address remaining challenges, we make three key commitments.
- 13 First, we will work with residents and elected members to check progress against the recommendations of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny's 2018 review, ensuring they continue to guide our approach to governance. This means conducting a thorough assessment of how we have implemented these recommendations, identifying any gaps, and developing specific action plans to address them. We will involve residents

and elected members directly in this review process, ensuring their experiences and perspectives shape our understanding of where governance arrangements are working well and where they need strengthening. This work will include examining how scrutiny committees function, how decisions are made and communicated, and how we ensure proper oversight of critical services and functions.

“We will work with residents and elected members to check progress against the recommendations of the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny’s 2018 review, ensuring they continue to guide our approach to governance.”

- 14** Second, we will transform our leadership culture through expanded systemic practice training, mentoring programmes and performance objectives that prioritise building better relationships with residents. This commitment recognises that effective governance isn’t just about structures and processes, it is about how our leaders think about and approach their roles. We will expand our systemic practice training across all leadership levels, incorporating relationship-based approaches and collaborative decision-making into everyday work. This will be supported by new mentoring programmes for developing leaders, and performance objectives that explicitly measure their success in building and maintaining strong community relationships.

“We will transform our leadership culture through expanded systemic practice training, mentoring programmes and performance objectives that prioritise building better relationships with residents.”

- 15** Third, we will develop a Council data strategy that ensures we collect, analyse and use accurate information about our services and our communities to drive decision-making and measure progress. The Inquiry revealed serious weaknesses in how we gathered, managed and used information. Our new data strategy will establish clear standards for data collection and management across all services, implement robust systems for verifying and analysing information, and create mechanisms for sharing data effectively across the organisation. Crucially, this strategy will focus not just on gathering data, but on using it meaningfully to inform decisions, measure outcomes, and demonstrate progress to our communities.

“We will develop a comprehensive data strategy that ensures we collect, analyse and use accurate information about our services and our communities to drive decision-making and measure progress.”

4j. Listening to residents, individually and collectively

Our failings

- 1 The Inquiry finds a consistent failure by the Council and the TMO to listen to residents, both individually and collectively, and to take their concerns seriously.
- 2 It notes that the Council and the TMO failed to acknowledge and investigate concerns raised by residents and their elected representatives, tending to treat them as a “nuisance” rather than a source of information and learning (see, for example, 33.18 and 33.45).
- 3 There are several specific examples in the report of the TMO and the Council failing to respond to residents’ questions and concerns, even when they had a direct bearing on questions of safety. For example:
 - “[Mr Ahmed] said he had never received a proper response from the TMO despite repeating his concerns for several years after the [2010] fire [at Grenfell Tower]” (33.18).
 - “It is striking that senior officers of the TMO and RBKC appear to have been more interested in silencing Councillor Blakeman than in resolving residents’ grievances” (33.53).
 - “At a meeting of the TMO’s Lancaster West Estate Management Board on 15 May 2012, Edward Daffarn asked if Studio E had experience of Tower blocks and, if not, why it had been retained for the refurbishment. He never received an answer to that question” (33.45).
 - “Edward Daffarn told us that the residents had asked RBKC’s Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee to consider the problems surrounding the power surges, but he felt that the matter had been covered over, with the result that the residents lost trust in the TMO’s ability to take appropriate action in respect of fire safety” (33.26).
 - “In December 2015, at Councillor Blakeman’s suggestion, some 60 residents of Grenfell Tower signed a petition to the Housing and Property Scrutiny Committee of RBKC asserting that residents’ views had been ignored or minimised, that their day-to-day concerns had been belittled and brushed aside and that they had been forced to endure intolerable living conditions while the work on the tower was going on” (33.52).
- 4 In addition to failures by officers and lead members to listen to residents and follow up their concerns, the report finds that the Housing and Property Scrutiny committee “fail[ed] in its task of ensuring that the relationship between the TMO and the residents of Grenfell Tower was rigorously investigated” (33.63), despite evidence presented to it by residents themselves about the deterioration of that relationship.
- 5 The failure to listen to residents extended to the TMO’s approach to collective consultation and engagement with residents, particularly in relation to the refurbishment of Grenfell Tower. The Inquiry finds that by the time steps were taken to set up a meeting in July 2015, residents “had never before been given any collective say in relation to it, as required by the agreement between the TMO and RBKC” (33.33).

- 6 The Inquiry notes that “despite residents’ request for involvement [in developing the plans for the refurbishment], no proposals for consultation were developed” (33.46) and that “there is also no evidence that the residents, who in May 2012 had indicated that they wanted to be involved in the development proposals for the tower, were ever invited to join a focus group” (33.47). During the refurbishment, residents were given “six methods [of ‘consultation’] to choose from but they did not include consultation through a residents’ group. They were all directed at giving information to residents, not hearing from them” (33.50). The Inquiry finds that resident involvement was often “largely symbolic” (53.38).
- 7 Moreover, the TMO refused to recognise groups which came together to raise issues on behalf of other residents of the Tower, including the Grenfell Action Group and the Grenfell Compact, despite advice from expert bodies such as the Tenancy Participation Advisory Service (see, for example, 33.21).
- 8 The Inquiry sees in this failure to listen to residents, both collectively and individually, evidence of the broader failure by the TMO (and, by extension, the Council).

Our progress

- 9 Since 2017, we have made significant changes to the way individual complaints and concerns are identified and addressed. Specifically, we have introduced:
 - A new two-stage complaints process with a corporate complaints team providing support and challenge to teams, including some quality assurance and identification of lessons learned.
 - Routine complaints training for teams across the Council and more proactive communication with residents about how to make a complaint.
 - Regular reporting on complaints to the Executive Management Team and close oversight of complaints responses and outcomes in particular teams and departments.
 - Opportunities for residents to raise individual and collective concerns at full Council, scrutiny committees and leadership team meetings.
- 10 However, we know we must do more to ensure that all expressions of dissatisfaction are being recorded and investigated as complaints and that investigations are equally thorough and robust across all Council departments. We have heard clearly from residents that many do not have confidence that complaints are investigated with impartiality (with a complaint sometimes investigated by the same team being complained about) and that complaints too often become attritional, rather than focused on acknowledging mistakes and agreeing a way forward. Some residents have also told us that they (and others) fear being penalised for making a complaint.
- 11 We know that casework and other concerns raised by individuals or (on their behalf) by elected members are not always handled and responded to consistently. We need to do more to ensure consistent quality assurance of complaints, with some responses demonstrating defensiveness, lack of curiosity and little appetite for learning.

- 12** Further work is also needed to ensure responses to complaints reflect more routinely on resident experience (especially in areas like housing where service failure has a significant impact on people's lives) and to identify more creative lessons learnt from complaints, ensuring that learning is routinely embedded in ways of working within individual services.
- 13** To address this, we need to work more closely, and ensure more routine communication and engagement with, ward councillors, who are the eyes and ears of their communities. This will help us to better understand the issues residents face, identify key trends and lessons learnt, and make sure residents know how to complain and that the concerns they raise are used to identify, investigate and address service failure.
- 14** Since 2017, we have also made significant changes to our approach to consultation and engagement with residents. These include:
- The establishment of a new communities department and a new approach to standards in consultation and engagement through the [Charter for Public Participation](#).
 - Routine involvement of residents in shaping and designing services through the [tenants consultative committee](#), a [resident reference group](#) for those with experience of housing needs services and other steering groups and panels across the Council
 - In 2023/24, we had over 12,000 responses to Council consultations across a wide range of areas and 82 per cent of exercises had a 'You Said, We Did' statement'.
 - The establishment of a [Citizens' Panel](#), broadly representative of the residents of the borough, to collect feedback about new plans and initiatives and identify resident priorities.
 - The establishment of a staff network to share learning and best practice on consultation across the Council, including a 'Celebrating Coproduction' programme.
 - The establishment of a Consultation Gateway, including representation from a wide range of services, to ensure proposals for consultation are routinely tested against the commitments in the Charter for Public Participation.
 - Experimentation with some new innovative approaches to consultation and participation, as in the recent 'TA Encounters' project which used 'legislative theatre' to explore resident and staff perspectives on experiences in temporary accommodation.
- 15** However, we recognise that there is more work to do to further strengthen our approach to involving residents in decision-making. We have heard persistent scepticism from some residents about the intentions behind consultation and a lack of confidence in their ability to influence outcomes through participation. Residents have also challenged the Council to move beyond traditional forms of consultation to embrace genuine sharing of power, encouraging us to work with them to diagnose problems and identify solutions.

- 16** We need to move beyond reliance on multiple, one-off consultations on specific issues towards more regular, participatory forms of engagement. This includes moving away from more traditional consultation methods, which have bred ‘consultation fatigue’ in some quarters, to embrace more creative, innovative approaches. In particular, we should embed the wider recommendations from the External Scrutiny Team’s work with bereaved and survivors and the immediate community around Grenfell Tower, which promote restorative and trauma-informed approaches. In doing so, we should build on the more creative forms of codesign and participation we have already piloted, such as the ‘legislative theatre’ approach recently used in housing needs.
- 17** We need to find new ways to listen to collective representations from residents, both within formal consultations and outside them, and to find ways to share power and decision-making with residents more effectively, while ensuring ‘quiet voices’ are heard. In doing so, we need to recognise that genuine participation is of particular importance in the context of low levels of public trust and can help build confidence that decisions aren’t made behind closed doors without reference to residents’ views.

Our commitments

- 18** We know that many residents feel strongly that Grenfell happened at least partly because the TMO (and the Council) ignored the perspectives and concerns of the residents of Grenfell Tower. We commit to ensuring that we listen to our residents, both individually and collectively, recognising that residents are experts in their own homes and their own lives and that only by working with them can we identify and solve problems and improve services.
- 19** We will redouble our efforts to empower residents to raise concerns through the complaints process. We want residents to have confidence that their complaints will be properly investigated and addressed, without fear of any repercussions for them as a result of complaining to the Council. We will also make sure complaints have more of a focus on resident experience, acknowledging the profound impact of service failure on residents in key areas such as housing:

“We will conduct a full, end-to-end review of the Council’s complaints process, focusing on resident experience, enforcement of service standards and forms of compensation and redress. It should include exploration of options for independent oversight of complaints and concerns about residents being penalised for complaining.”

- 20** In addition to reviewing our complaints process, we will work more closely to support ward councillors with casework, improving practice and identifying common themes and issues by learning from elected members' understanding of their residents' concerns and priorities.

"We will ensure additional senior officer engagement with ward councillors (especially in areas of social deprivation), helping to identify key trends and issues in casework and emerging local issues."

- 21** Alongside more effective ways of listening, and responding, to individual complaints and concerns, we will also reconsider our approach to collective consultation and engagement, moving beyond formal consultations to embrace more participatory approaches that share power with residents and encourage involvement from the beginning. In particular:

"We will work with residents to conduct a full review of the Charter for Public Participation and the Citizens' Panel, reflecting on sharing power in decision-making, seeking to move towards more participatory approaches and considering mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and oversight."

"We will experiment with more codesign and other participatory approaches to engagement (such as the 'legislative theatre' approach recently used with residents in temporary accommodation)."

5. The culture of the Council and the relationship with residents

The challenge from residents

- 1** We have discussed these 10 themes with bereaved, survivors and residents since the report was published and shared evidence of the specific failings identified by the Inquiry, a summary of the changes we have made and some of the early ideas for improvement in each area.
- 2** As outlined in Chapter 3, while some residents have seen and felt the changes the Council has made since 2017, but many have not or have told us that they have not addressed what matters most to them.
- 3** Residents have expressed concerns about persistently poor experiences of housing and other services, the attitudes and behaviours of elected members and officers, racial and social discrimination and a reluctance to share power and decision-making with residents and their elected representatives. Some have told us that they don't feel the Council cares enough about them and that they feel discriminated against.
- 4** These experiences reflect fundamental problems identified by the Inquiry. Before Grenfell, residents' views were ignored or minimised, their day-to-day concerns were ignored or brushed aside, and they were not treated with the courtesy and respect due to them. Despite the changes we have made, some residents are telling us that these basic problems persist and have asked us to reflect on the treatment of people in social housing, and questions of race, disability and social discrimination.
- 5** Public meetings highlighted the gulf between the Council and some of our communities, especially in North Kensington, and the loss of trust in the Council. It is not the first time bereaved, survivors, residents and elected members have raised these issues, but conversations since the Inquiry report was published have brought them into sharper focus.

- 6 In their reflections on the draft outline of the response, residents have encouraged us to go further and specifically to address the broader concerns they have identified about the culture of the Council and the state of our relationship with the communities we serve. They have asked us to reflect on the issue of trust and to embrace forms of independent challenge and oversight.
- 7 This challenge has shaped the approach we have taken in this response and, in particular, the commitments set out in this section.

An independent review of culture

- 8 Following the feedback from residents, we propose to commission an independent external review of the culture within the Council, primarily to examine the relationships with our residents (with a particular focus on those in Council housing and temporary accommodation and others who need the Council's support). The scope of this review will be discussed and agreed with elected members and residents, but based on community feedback received to date, it will explicitly consider questions of racial and social discrimination.
- 9 We expect it would be led by an independent person with expertise and experience in relevant areas, such as organisational change, customer service, community relations, social housing and equalities, diversity and inclusion. We will ensure the highest standards of openness and transparency in identifying and selecting an independent person or organisation to lead this review and to report regularly to our communities about this work.
- 10 We will ensure the independent review has adequate internal and external support for its work, supporting the person leading it to review relevant information, speak directly to residents, staff and elected members and make clear recommendations for ways the Council can improve our culture and strengthen our relationship with residents.
- 11 In designing the review, we will seek to learn from other organisations and other similar exercises to ensure it is as effective as possible.

The objectives of the review

- 12 The independent review is designed to provide a clear assessment of where we are now in our organisational culture and relationship with residents and to identify what further work is needed to address the concerns identified by residents. It is therefore crucial that the review is guided by a vision for what we are trying to achieve.
- 13 We recognise the need to build a shared vision for the future with our communities, but residents have asked us to set out what kind of culture we want at the Council and our ambition should serve as a starting point for the independent review.

- 14 We want to build an organisational culture based on fairness, respect and humanity. We want everyone who relies on the Council – no matter their background – to feel listened to, cared for and understood. We want strong relationships with residents, especially people living in our social housing or in temporary accommodation.
- 15 This is what we want the lasting legacy from Grenfell at the Council to be and the review will be asked to evaluate our progress and make recommendations for further actions that need to be taken.

Ensuring maximum impact

- 16 It is important that this is not just ‘another’ review with another set of recommendations. Instead, we will design the review so that it commands community confidence and ensures strong collective ownership of the process and the recommendations.
- 17 We see the review therefore not just as an independent audit, but as an opportunity to use external expertise to foster new conversations and new ways of working between the Council and the communities we serve.
- 18 In doing so, we hope the review will begin to build trust with our communities and support stronger relationships with residents, including honest conversations and more open ways of working.
- 19 We will progress this work as quickly as we can, recognising that residents are impatient to see further changes in these areas.

6. Monitoring and accountability

- 1 The Grenfell Tower Inquiry found that the Council failed to identify and act on serious problems even when they were brought to its attention. The changes outlined in this response therefore demand the highest standards of ongoing openness and accountability to residents. Our approach to monitoring progress must be informed by our three core principles: resident power and participation, independent challenge and oversight, and high standards and technical expertise.
- 2 To translate these principles and our commitments into practice, we will publish a detailed action plan in early 2025. This plan will set out clear timelines, name responsible officers, identify resource implications and dependencies, establish specific measures of success, and explain how and when residents can be involved. Each commitment made in this response will be mapped to concrete actions with clear milestones, ensuring there is no ambiguity about what needs to change and how we will know when we have succeeded.
- 3 We are also proposing robust mechanisms for monitoring and accountability, with strong connections to senior management and scrutiny, to ensure these commitments lead to lasting change. These combine robust internal oversight with independent external challenge, creating multiple ways for residents to scrutinise and shape our progress.
- 4 First, we propose a new **Independent Advisory Panel**. This panel will bring together bereaved family members, survivors and residents with independent experts in areas such as social housing, safety, customer service, restorative practice and organisational change. By combining lived experience with technical expertise, the panel will be positioned to assess whether our changes are making a real difference to residents' lives.
- 5 The panel will have direct access to and regular dialogue with the chief executive and Executive Management Team. Its role will be to provide robust independent oversight of the actions set out in this response, ensuring the Council remains open to external challenge, advice and scrutiny. Importantly, we intend this panel will also oversee our proposed independent review of organisational culture, helping to ensure this vital work maintains strong resident involvement and external challenge.

- 6 The precise composition, remit and working methods of the panel will be co-designed with residents and elected members. This approach to establishing the panel's terms of reference will ensure it has both the authority and independence needed to be effective. We recognise that getting these governance arrangements right will be crucial to the panel's success and legitimacy.
- 7 We will also maintain a parallel programme of regular community engagement, creating multiple ways for residents to review and shape our progress. This might include community workshops, online forums, estate-based discussions and regular public reporting sessions.
- 8 Building on recent improvements to our scrutiny arrangements, we will further **strengthen the role of elected members** in overseeing both the implementation of specific actions and the broader cultural changes needed within the organisation.
- 9 The overview and scrutiny committee will receive quarterly progress reports on the implementation of commitments made in this response. These reports will combine quantitative data on key performance measures with qualitative information about how changes are being experienced by residents and staff. The committee will also receive regular updates from the Independent Advisory Panel and will play an important role in scrutinising the progress and findings of our independent review of organisational culture.
- 10 To support this role, we will ensure committees have access to appropriate policy support and independent expertise where needed. We will also support committees to strengthen the ways residents can participate in scrutiny, building on existing public speaking arrangements to create more opportunities for community voices to inform and shape scrutiny work.
- 11 Through these arrangements, elected members will be able to exercise their democratic mandate to hold the organisation to account for delivering the changes promised in this response. Their role will complement the work of the Independent Advisory Panel, creating multiple layers of oversight and challenge to help ensure we remain focused on implementing meaningful change.
- 12 Effective accountability must also extend beyond our internal arrangements to embrace robust **external oversight and challenge**. We will therefore take a proactive approach to working with regulatory bodies and the wider local government sector, actively seeking out scrutiny and learning opportunities rather than waiting for inspection or intervention.
- 13 A key focus will be our engagement with the new regulatory regime established in response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy. We will continue to work closely with both the Building Safety Regulator and the Social Housing Regulator to ensure we not only meet but exceed the new regulatory standards. This will include regular self-assessment against these standards, transparent reporting of our performance, and open engagement with regulators about areas where we need to improve.

- 14 We will also continue to engage actively with sector-led improvement initiatives. Our emergency planning arrangements will be regularly tested and assured through London Resilience, ensuring our preparedness for future incidents meets the highest standards. We will also maintain our commitment to the Local Government Association's peer challenge programme, inviting senior colleagues from other authorities to provide independent assessment of our progress.
- 15 Through this combination of regulatory oversight and sector-led improvement, we aim to ensure our changes are informed by best practice and subject to robust external challenge. This external perspective will be vital in preventing organisational complacency and maintaining momentum for change.
- 16 Finally, we must work actively to maintain a lasting organisational memory of the **lessons learned from the Grenfell Tower tragedy**. Working closely with bereaved families, survivors, residents, staff and elected members, we will develop a comprehensive programme to embed this learning across the Council and share it with others.
- 17 This program will create structured opportunities for staff, residents and Councillors to learn from each other's experiences and perspectives. It will include training and development activities, but also spaces for dialogue and reflection about how we work together as a community. We will also work with other local authorities and public bodies to share our learning, contributing to improved practice across the sector.
- 18 We will also, with the permission of bereaved families, explore an appropriate way to create a memorial to the tragedy at Kensington Town Hall, ensuring future generations of staff and Councillors understand the importance of maintaining the highest standards of public service.
- 19 The success of all these monitoring and accountability arrangements will ultimately be judged by our communities. They must help create not just technical improvements in our services, but a fundamental shift in how we work with and relate to our residents. We remain committed to adapting and strengthening these arrangements based on feedback and experience, ensuring they support the deep and lasting change our communities rightly demand.

7. Conclusion

- 1** The publication of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry's Phase 2 report represents a defining moment not just for this Council, but for local government and social housing providers across the country. The findings should make every local authority and social landlord examine their own practices, culture and assumptions with renewed scrutiny and heightened moral purpose. The basic failures identified by the Inquiry - in safety, in resident engagement, in professional standards and in emergency preparedness - could exist in any organisation that has not consciously worked to prevent them. We therefore urge our colleagues across local government to go beyond minimum compliance, treating the Inquiry's recommendations not as a ceiling but as a floor for the changes needed in how we manage safety, empower residents, and uphold professional standards.
- 2** For this Council, the imperative for continued change is even more profound. The Inquiry has laid bare catastrophic failures that occurred in our borough leading to the deaths of 72 people in circumstances that were entirely preventable. We failed in our most basic duty - to keep people safe in their homes. We failed to listen to residents who raised concerns. We failed to respond with adequate urgency and humanity when disaster struck. These failures reflected deep-rooted problems in our culture and practices that we must continue to challenge and address.
- 3** This report sets out the actions we have taken since 2017 and makes clear commitments for the future. We know that for bereaved families and survivors, no words or promises can ever be adequate. The trauma and grief caused by the fire continue to this day. Many in our community still feel the absence of justice and accountability. Trust in the Council remains fragile. We understand that our promises of change will be measured not by what we say, but by what we do.
- 4** We therefore commit to implementing not just the letter but the spirit of the Inquiry's recommendations. We commit to maintaining the highest standards of safety across all our properties. We commit to embedding resident voice and power throughout our organisation. We commit to building a workforce that combines technical excellence with deep humanity. Most fundamentally, we commit to continuing the work of rebuilding trust with our communities through sustained action and genuine partnership.

- 5 The real test of these commitments will come through their implementation. We value the continued scrutiny and challenge of our communities as we take this work forward. We invite residents to hold us to account, to tell us when we fall short, and to work with us in building lasting change. We know that rebuilding trust takes time, consistency and genuine openness to challenge.
- 6 The memory of those who lost their lives at Grenfell Tower must forever remain at the heart of our work. Their deaths were preventable - they resulted from specific failures of companies and institutions to uphold their most basic responsibilities. Our commitment to change therefore carries a weight that must inform every decision we make. We owe it to the 72 people who died, to their families, and to our community to ensure that such a tragedy can never happen again.

