

Independent Grenfell Recovery Taskforce Initial Report

RB Kensington and Chelsea response to Secretary of State

1 November 2017

The Council welcomes the Taskforce report. It contains much useful advice for the Council as we work with the North Kensington community to recover from the Grenfell Tower fire tragedy. The report recognises the unprecedented scale of the disaster and the appalling impact this has had on so many victims, survivors and local residents. The report acknowledges that no local authority could have coped adequately with such a large scale tragedy unaided. The report also recognises the progress made in the eight weeks since the major elements of the response to the fire were handed over from the Grenfell Fire Response Team (chaired by London Local Authority Gold) to RBKC.

We entirely accept all their recommendations. We will write to you separately about some of the details which we believe ought to be more accurately stated and which would help advance a swifter recovery.

Rehousing

We have secured 300 potential permanent new homes for households from the Tower and Grenfell Walk, allowing all households to be in their new homes by June 2018 at the latest. This is part of a £235 million capital investment in housing for those affected by the disaster. We are pleased that 113 of the 203 households have been matched with new homes, 70 have accepted permanent new homes, 45 have signed new tenancies and 26 households have moved in. 140 permanent homes have been available to view so far, and as home purchases complete, more property will be available for viewing over the next few months. We are encouraging households to take up an offer of high quality private rented accommodation while they wait for more property to become available. 45 households are in self-contained temporary accommodation. 60% of households from the Tower and Walk have accepted an offer of either temporary or permanent housing.

We recognise too many households are still in emergency accommodation and we are committed to offering new homes to all those who want to leave this by the end of December. Because we recognise the need for increased pace in rehousing residents, we are constantly reviewing and revising our housing programme to remove factors which may delay residents of the Tower, Walk and the neighbouring Walkways in moving into temporary and permanent accommodation. Significant new changes in support for Tower and Walk residents moving into permanent and temporary accommodation will be announced next week, and we will also be working intensively with Walkways residents currently in emergency accommodation to understand how we can support their move back to their homes or into temporary accommodation.

Culture change

We welcome the positive commentary by the Taskforce in relation to the Council's new senior leadership. Our new Chief Executive has set out a compelling vision for a new organisational culture underpinned by a new senior leadership team. The capabilities that the Taskforce encourages are resonant with those that he seeks to foster and nurture in the Council. He is in the final stages of selecting a consultancy partner to deliver an organisational culture change programme.

In this he has the full support of the new Leader of the Council and her Leadership Team. The Leader has publicly recognised the need for the Council to change the way it works and serves its residents, in order to rebuild trust with the community. We are in the process of recruiting 285 staff with the relevant skills and behaviours. All staff in the Grenfell Team and the wider Council will be supported by a change management and behavioural competency based development programme. We are spending an additional £30 million revenue funding on staff and services to ensure effective delivery of support and assistance to those impacted by the tragedy.

We do not recognise the Taskforce's characterisation of our staff as lacking in empathy and emotional intelligence. Many worked very hard on the night of the fire and in the days that followed it, and have continued to do so since. We have commissioned Central and North West London NHS Foundation Trust to deliver

training to relevant Council staff in providing services to traumatised people: this training started in October.

We note the learning points of Bishop James Jones' review of the Hillsborough families experience and will be considering their application to the Grenfell context in the coming days.

Support services for residents, including keyworkers

Support services for residents in the aftermath of the fire were designed at great speed by the Grenfell Fire Response Team: in the weeks and months since the fire they have not consistently met resident expectations and needs. Since the Council took responsibility for these services in early September we have been refocusing these services to improve residents' experience and outcomes. We recognise the importance of a single point of contact to be take responsibility and be empowered to meet residents' needs. The Care for Grenfell service is designed to achieve this: we recognise we still have further to go.

Our new Director leading these services, Sheila Durr, is examining how to ensure all relevant resources from within the Council and its partners are made available to support residents, as well as continuing to recruit additional staff with appropriate skills where needed. We aim to improve residents' experience of services over the next month through increased training support, scrutiny and monitoring of service delivery. A senior practitioner has been brought in by the new director to focus on capacity building and workforce development. Over the next two months, the director will ensure mechanisms are in place to swiftly resolve problems experienced by residents.

Detailed response to Recommendations

Governance and Delivery

1.Council Members: The brief for the review of governance commissioned from the Centre for Public Scrutiny should be extended beyond a review of structures and

processes to include what good looks like in relation to the behaviours and performance in role of Members. This should be done with a view to incorporating this into the induction for new Members, post local election in May 2018.

ACCEPTED.

2. Focus on delivery: the scale of the challenge is significant. To date the pace of delivery of many services has been poor - pace needs to be added as a matter of urgency. We recommend the Chief Executive further bolsters the capacity and capability at the most senior level to add pace to operational delivery. If this requires additional resource, then that should be allocated.

ACCEPTED. Three new Directors for Housing Needs and Supply, Housing Management and Community and Place have been recruited and are now working in the Grenfell team. He has also begun consultation with staff about a restructuring at senior level and will continue to keep staffing levels under review.

3. Oversight and accountability: central government oversight was and remains necessary. However, the frequency and intensity is having an impact on the ability of RBKC to deliver on the ground. We suggest the weekly Ministerial Recovery Groups (MRG), chaired by the Communities Secretary, should be reduced in frequency.

ACCEPTED. We value the support and challenge provided by DCLG within and outside the MRG; however, preparing for the MRGs requires a considerable amount of management time and we agree that the meeting frequency could be reduced.

Housing

4. Rehousing: the pace of permanent rehousing (for Category A&B) residents must be accelerated with clear realistic targets for delivery.

ACCEPTED. Rehousing large numbers of households in a timely manner requires a balance between achieving pace and meeting individual need. We have a clear rehousing strategy and the targets, mentioned above, of moving all who want to leave emergency accommodation into temporary accommodation by Christmas, and offering all households from the Tower and Walk permanent accommodation by next

June. The pace of households moving into permanent and temporary accommodation is accelerating.

5. Housing Management: the future management and ownership of the Council's housing stock should not be pre-determined. There are many ways that management of the housing stock can be delivered and all of them should be considered. A detailed consultation with residents will also be required.

ACCEPTED. This echoes our current plan to undertake consultation on the long term options. In the meantime, it has been necessary to take urgent steps around the management of the Lancaster West Estate and the capital programme. The prospect of a vote of a "no confidence" signed by 250 members of the KCTMO meant that the KCTMO and the Council needed to take steps to amend the governance arrangements to enable the board to carry on functioning so that decisions could be made to sustain services. We are now meeting with the KCTMO to agree a governance mechanism which sustains the body as a corporate entity whilst making alternative plans for the shorter term management of the housing stock.

6. Lancaster West Estate: A plan to be adopted in consultation with local residents for the comprehensive improvement of the estate. This is to include future plans for the site of the Tower.

ACCEPTED; noting that the Tower site is still controlled by London Gold and the police and so timescales for consultation cannot yet be set. Future plans for the estate will be developed with residents. Future plans for the site of the Tower will be developed with bereaved families, survivors and residents, at a pace that feels appropriate to them.

7. Care for Grenfell: ensuring there are sufficient people focussing on improving the support to survivors and the wider community must be addressed immediately. Consideration should be given to innovative ways that will increase capacity quickly for example looking at re-prioritising work across RBKC that could free up resource to bolster the immediate support.

ACCEPTED; this work is underway as mentioned above.

8. Prioritisation: many actions have been suggested and agreed that could make an immediate difference on the ground. However, in too many cases these have not been delivered. Ensuring these are delivered will begin to engender trust in RBKCs ability to deliver. Actions for immediate focus that have been promised must be logged and delivery ensured.

ACCEPTED; we endeavour to do this but will review our processes to ensure they are as effective as possible.

9. Community Engagement: All Policy development and service delivery across the Council should have community engagement considerations and impact embedded at their heart, just like the approach to Equality Impact Analysis. The Council needs to do a detailed mapping of its community so that it can better understand it.

ACCEPTED; we have begun to embed this approach to policy and service development. We will consider how to undertake an effective mapping of the community.

Cross-cutting

10. Working holistically: The Council needs to bring together all information on victims and survivor needs into a central knowledge and data management system, ensuring that there is rapid transfer and sharing with all front-line staff and service delivery partners, with real-time management of accuracy.

ACCEPTED; work is in hand to achieve this within the Council by the end of November: we will discuss with relevant partners how this can be shared with them within the context of our Information Sharing Protocol.

11. Personalised Key Workers: need to be designated as the 'single point of contact' for victims and survivors, who can then represent them, take responsibility and are empowered to follow up action from across the Council and support agencies. Systems need to be examined to make sure there are no "pinch-points" that hold up delivery.

ACCEPTED: This is our model; we recognise we need to do more to ensure resident experience and outcomes match our ambitions for this service.

12. Improving support and empathy: training for all staff directly involved in providing support to survivors in how to engage with those who have suffered major trauma. Sensitivity to culture and faith should be key aspects of this training. This will take some time but we would advise that this starts as quickly as possible.

ACCEPTED: This is underway.

13: Not relevant to RBKC