

## Note of last Fire Commission meeting

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<b>Title:</b>	Fire Commission
<b>Date:</b>	Friday 24 January 2020
<b>Venue:</b>	Westminster Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	<p><b>Welcome to the meeting</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed the 4 speakers to the meeting – Commissioner Andy Roe London Fire Brigade, Assistant Commissioner Andy Bell London Fire Brigade, Fiona Twycross AM Deputy Mayor for Fire &amp; Resilience London Assembly and Roy Wilsher Chair NFCC.</p>	
2	<p><b>Grenfell Inquiry Phase 1 Report</b></p> <p><b>Grenfell Tower Major Incident – Andy Bell</b></p> <p>Andy Bell described his role heading up the Grenfell Tower Investigation and Review Team. He said that the LFB was fully committed to the Duty of Candour by supporting the Inquiry and the criminal investigation by providing documents, information and witnesses. He talked about the scale of the commitment from LFB in providing this support, including providing over 70,000 documents to the GTI, 710 voluntary witness statements to the Police and a statement and interview under caution.</p> <p>Andy went on to explain the impact that the Grenfell fire had had on LFB staff. He said that in total, 1074 staff attended the incident over a period of 13 days with 139 needing counselling support for anxiety/depression and PTSD.</p> <p>Andy then spoke about the GTI's 46 recommendations and how LFB was responding to them. He said that most of them apply to all FRS's, not just LFB and that effective implementation would therefore require a national approach which someone would need to coordinate. He said that the LFB accepted all the recommendations. He said that LFB were disappointed that the installation of sprinklers was not included in the recommendations and also, that some of the recommendations did not align with the Hackitt review recommendations.</p> <p>Andy explained that LFB had been developing a joint action plan to address the recommendations of both the GTI report and the HMICFRS inspection report. He said that many actions were already in progress because of the LFBs own internal report into the Grenfell fire, which had</p>	

come to similar conclusions. He said that the LFB was now obliged to report on progress against the GTI recommendations to the Home Secretary and London Mayor on a monthly basis. He said that LFB welcomed this additional scrutiny.

Andy concluded by saying that the GTI and HMICFRS recommendations were only part of the story. He said that the LFB recognised that, in order to effectively deliver reform there was a need to address wider systemic failures in the culture of the service and that a new strategy and corporate plan had been developed to help achieve this.

### **LFB Transformation Plan – Andy Roe**

Andy Roe explained that he had been one of the incident commanders on the night of the Grenfell Fire and described some of the shocking scenes that he and his colleagues had witnessed. He said that this devastating chain of events should never be allowed to happen again and that, although LFB weren't responsible for the fire starting, he recognised the failings that had been flagged up by the GTI and HMICFRS, many of which had been known before this fire. He went through the Strategic Framework that had been drawn up in order to transform the culture and working practices within LFB post-Grenfell. He explained that behind each of the 4 strategic pillars ("the best people and the best place to work"; "Seizing the future"; "Delivering excellence"; and "Outward facing") there was a detailed action plan which he was happy to share. Andy said that the key to transformation was good leadership and he acknowledged that lack of leadership training had been a significant failing for LFB. He said that HMICFRS had pointed out that LFB could see what needed to change but were unable to deliver this. He urged FRA Chairs and CFOs in the room to examine the situation in their areas with rigour as this disaster could easily have happened elsewhere in the country. He said that everything the LFB does in the future must be about serving London's communities and trying to regain lost trust. He finished by saying that his success would be judged by whether or not each individual firefighter and member of staff in LFB could explain what each of the 4 pillars in the framework meant to them.

### **How do we respond to Grenfell as politicians with responsibility for fire? Fiona Twycross AM**

Fiona explained that she was the Chair of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority at the time of the Grenfell fire and was now the Deputy Mayor for Fire & Resilience under the Mayor's new governance arrangements.

She said that the GTI, HMICFRS and LFB internal reports all came to similar conclusions about the failings of the LFB on the night and so the crucial question now for politicians on FRAs was how to respond. She circulated a report from the Mayor of London's office, providing an update on the implementation of the GTI recommendations by the LFB.

Fiona wanted to place on record her recognition of the huge bravery of individual firefighters on the night and also the subsequent work by the previous Commissioner, Dany Cotton, particularly around mental wellbeing of her employees. She also said that the Fire Brigades Union

deserved credit for their response to the fire. They recognised that it was their members that had been exposed on the night by institutional failings and so they were fully bought in to the efforts to deliver reform.

She said that on the night, the LFB had been completely overwhelmed by the nature of the fire – the control room employees in particular, were not equipped to deal with this level of crisis.

Fiona referenced the GTI finding that the ‘Stay Put’ policy had become an article of faith to the LFB and she said that this highlighted a wider malaise in the sector namely its inability to challenge traditional ways of working. She said that more diversity and diversity of thinking was required in the sector and that the problems were deeper than just a lack of funding.

Fiona made reference to the “Tall Buildings Facades” presentation prepared by LFB some time before the Grenfell Fire and questioned why the significance of this had not been appreciated fully within the organisation. She said that this was partly due to a ‘it couldn’t happen here’ culture which politicians on FRAs must challenge whenever they come across it.

Fiona said that there was a widespread problem with building safety in the UK and that the problems with ACM cladding on high rise buildings were just the tip of the iceberg. The whole system needed fundamental reform.

Fiona said that the whole sector had failed to learn lessons from the Lakanal House fire 10 years ago and that this in part contributed to the Grenfell Tower fire. She warned that we were in danger of sleepwalking into yet another disaster unless these deep seated institutional issues were addressed.

### **The NFCC perspective - Roy Wilsher**

Roy began by paying tribute to the LFB for the energy and commitment they had shown in responding to the Grenfell and HMICFRS reports and for their willingness to accept the criticisms levelled at them. He described the ‘ecosystem’ of new bodies, reports, guidance and legislation that has emerged since the fire and said that it was vital that this was all co-ordinated effectively. He said that he had written to all the CFOs urging them to hold off making any local reforms in their services until the sector had taken stock nationally and decided upon a way forward.

He said that the sector was still grappling with just how these dangerous materials came to be on so many buildings and cited the recent Cube fire in Manchester as another example of the failings of the building control system.

Roy said that the Government’s recent announcement that it intends to lower the height threshold for sprinkler requirements in new buildings from 30 meters to 11 metres was a really positive move and a testament to the effective lobbying by the sector.

He concluded by saying that leadership nationally will be key and that this must include working closely with partners such as the LGA, the Home

Office and MHCLG.

The Chair thanked all the speakers for their contributions and took the opportunity to encourage colleagues to attend the LGA's Leadership Essentials course. He said that strong and effective leadership was going to be vital to drive forward the change needed in the sector.

He then opened up the session to discussion and members raised the following points and questions:

- Nick Chard - It was considered important to empower individual firefighters and other members of staff – to move away from the traditional hierarchical command and control structure in services. More money was needed in the Comprehensive Spending Review to get more training for the fire sector. The panel was asked whether they felt that the Inquiry had got the balance between length of time taken and thoroughness, right? AB said that in order for the Inquiry to be robust and rigorous and with the amount of documentation involved, it was bound to take a long time. This was terribly frustrating for the survivors who wanted to see justice done as quickly as possible. However, he considered the length of time necessary as long as it delivered real and lasting change. He added that Public Inquiries in the past, with the exception of Piper Alpha, have not delivered change and this must not be allowed to happen with Grenfell. AR added that the GTI was the largest Public Inquiry ever set up and also the fastest to get started. FT said that Grenfell must be the fire sector's Piper Alpha moment and that time was needed to get it right.
- Mark Healey – shared LFBs disappointment about the lack of mention of sprinklers, or wider fire suppressant systems in the GTI so far but said that they are not appropriate for every situation. AB – Sir Martin could have drawn on the existing evidence out there on suppressant systems and made recommendations about their use. AR – strongly agreed with Roy and welcomed the recent Government announcement on sprinklers in buildings of 11 metres or more.
- Roger Hirst – do firefighters and other staff in the LFB recognise that they need to change? AR – yes, broadly they do. Grenfell affected so many staff and they have recognised that things weren't right. However, it won't be straightforward. There would be resistance and difficult decisions would need to be made.
- Denise Turner-Stewart – The undue influence of the FBU needed to be addressed – they were considered to be a roadblock to making the necessary reforms in the service. Why weren't they at the meeting today? FT – they weren't invited. She said that the FBU want to engage in the change process for their members. They recognise that reform is necessary and in London, relations are now much more positive than they were a few years ago. She hoped that this would be reflected at a national level. RW echoed this.
- Stuart Tranter – Struck by the number of issues in the GTI report

that don't relate to cladding or high rise. Need to look at risk management in a wider context, not just in the Fire Service. AB – the fire service could definitely learn from other sectors such as the military. He said that the fire service was very good at dealing with 'run of the mill' incidents but needed to be better equipped to deal with the unexpected. Individuals needed to be stretched and put under pressure to see how they reacted. MN – the new building safety regulator will be overseeing a lot of this work. Building owners would have to be much more involved in risk management, gaining a better understanding of the construction of their buildings and the risks involved, including the vulnerabilities of specific individuals in that building. He considered that this was very much the start of a long journey.

- Les Byrom – he said that there were regularly occasions when they didn't have enough firefighters on shift and had to call on neighbouring services for back up. He said that this is simply down to lack of resources – the risks are still present but capacity to address them has been reduced. AB – agreed that many brigades are probably too lean. However, in London this was not an issue at Grenfell in terms of the number of available appliances and firefighters. If it had happened elsewhere, the outcome might have been even worse.
- Ruth Skelton – considered that the building control system was broken and that there were further tragedies, not just in high rise buildings with cladding, waiting to happen. FT – suggested that the LGA could offer advice to local authority planning committees on how to address the issues arising from Grenfell. A lot of them didn't have the knowledge or expertise required. CL – stated that work was already going on between the NFCC and Local Authority Building Control (LABC) to try and tackle this.
- Darren Rowbotham – considered it imperative that the fire service prepared for other major incidents with the Police and Emergency Action Teams. He considered that the guidance was there with JESIP but it was not implemented adequately at Grenfell.
- Cleo Lake – was new virtual and augmented reality technology being used for training firefighters? AB – said that it was used patchily around the country and probably not as effectively as it could be. He suggested having conversations with other sectors about how they made use of it. RW – the NFCC has a workstream dedicated to making better use of technology.
- Roger Price – there were significantly less fires now than 20 years ago and so firefighters generally had less experience of tackling them. He considered that the Government should make fire services one of the statutory consultees on planning applications. AB – LFB made comments on planning applications but in only 5 per cent of cases was this advice taken notice of.

The Chair thanked everyone for their contributions.

### 3 Building Safety Update

Fire Commission members noted the Building Safety Update.

#### Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Ian Stephens	Isle of Wight Council
Vice-Chairman		
Deputy-chairman		
Members	Cllr Frank Biederman	Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Cleo Lake	Avon Fire & Rescue Authority
	Cllr Jason Zadrozny	Ashfield District Council
	Cllr Duncan Crow	West Sussex County Council
	Cllr Steven Lambert	Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority
	Cllr Carolyn Lambert	East Sussex Fire Authority
	Cllr John Chatterley	Central Bedfordshire Council
	Cllr Greg Brackenridge	West Midlands Fire Authority
	Cllr Robert Taylor	Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Tony Taylor	Sunderland City Council
	Cllr Darren O'Donovan	Kirklees Metropolitan Council
	Mr Roger Hirst	Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
	Stephen Mold	Northamptonshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner
	Cllr Roger Price	Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Terry Hone	Hertfordshire County Council
	Cllr Les Byrom CBE	Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr David Norman MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Nick Chard	Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Stuart Tranter	Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Frank De Molfetta	Lancashire Combined Fire Authority
	Cllr Eric Carter	Shropshire & Wrekin Fire & Rescue Authority
	Ms Fiona Twycross AM	Greater London Authority
	Cllr Denise Turner-Stewart	Surrey County Council
	Cllr Keith Aspden	North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
	Cllr Colin Spence	Suffolk County Council
	Cllr Mark Healey	Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr Rebecca Knox	Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service
	Cllr Shaun O'Neill	Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Ruth Skelton	Derby City Council
Apologies	Cllr Peter Lewis MBE	Conwy County Borough Council
	Cllr Lesley Clarke OBE	Buckinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Christopher Carter	Hampshire Fire and Rescue Authority
	Cllr John Briggs	Humberside Fire Authority
	Cllr Peter Hogarth MBE	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Judith Heathcoat	Oxfordshire County Council

Cllr Richard Rout  
Cllr Carol Theobald  
Cllr Kevin Reynolds

Cllr Sara Randall Johnson

Cllr Steve Marshall-Clarke  
Cllr Fran Oborski MBE

Cllr Rachel Bailey  
Cllr Linda Taylor

St Edmundsbury Borough Council  
East Sussex Fire Authority  
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Fire  
Authority  
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue  
Authority  
Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Authority  
Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue  
Authority  
Cheshire East Council  
Cornwall Council