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| To: | Council |
| Date: | 22 August 2017 |
| Title of Report: | Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written responses from Board Members – republished with the minutes after the meeting. |

**Introduction**

Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Board members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.

Council procedure rules 11.4 and 11.11(d) state that special meetings will only deal with the business they have been called for. They may receive addresses, but these will only be taken if they are about a topic the special meeting is discussing.

This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

**Addresses and questions to be taken in relation to Agenda Item 5.**

[Addresses](#_Toc490666576)

[1. Address by Artwell – tower blocks](#_Toc490666577)

[2. Address by Mr Lawson – tower blocks](#_Toc490666578)

[3. Address by Mr Stefan Piechnik – tower blocks](#_Toc490666579)

# Addresses

# Address by Artwell – tower blocks

Artwell delivered a speech differing significantly from that submitted.

He spoke about the dangers posed by flammable plastic cladding systems and the likely contribution of toxic gases from these to the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, including quotes from a number of newspaper articles. He asked the Council to reconsider its approach to the tower block refurbishment and to its aspirations to be a ‘world class city’ as he considered this was not helpful.

*Note: his speech included quotes which may have been sourced from newspaper articles published in the aftermath of the fire, not directly from the articles by or from interviews with those named. As such the accuracy of the quotes cannot be guaranteed.*

**Written Response from Councillor Rowley, Board Member for Housing**

It is correct that the Council is investing approximately £20m in a major refurbishment of our five tower blocks in order to improve the living conditions for our tenants. The works will improve the energy efficiency by virtue of additional insulation and new windows and roofs, replacement heating and ventilation systems, improved fire safety arrangements with the inclusion of a sprinkler system to flats, and improvements to lifts communal areas and external environmental works.

Following the tragedy at Grenfell we have taken urgent steps to review the fire safety of our tower blocks with our Fire and Rescue Service colleagues. The FRS have confirmed that our blocks are safe, however whilst we do have sprinklers following the Building Research Establishment testing of the rain screen element of our cladding system to some elevations to two of our towers the Council has decided to replace that rain screen as soon as we possibly can. The safety of our residents remains of paramount importance which is why the Council is being asked tonight to make additional budget provision to fund the works whilst we also make representation to government to honour their initial commitment to provide the additional funding.

# Address by Dr Stefan Piechnik – tower blocks

I would like to ask the Council to refuse underwriting another gigantic amount of money without a very scrupulous review of the Tower Refurbishment project.

Up to date, I believe the Council have been misled about the facts regarding this. To mention few:

1) You were told that the case in the First Tier Tribunal against your own tax-paying tenants started well before the actual application was submitted.

2) You were told that residents have been consulted fully about windows and doors. There has been no evidence of this provided, and my complaint is not being followed.

3) You were assured the timber is above the windows \*only\*. In fact the timber is above, beneath, on the left and right of the aluminium frames, and there is even more timber and plywood in the enclosed balcony.

Please let me also remind you that after the Grenfell fire, the Council officials bolstered public assurances that the Tower Blocks are completely safe. As leaseholder I had material evidence allowing me to intervene with the PM Theresa May, which I believe forced tests and corrections to their false prior assurances and this is why you are here.

Regarding the situation now, I understand that only cladding was system tested. No-one has performed system testing on the newly added structures that would include wall membranes, timber, expandable foam, plastic, silicon filler and rubber - All a range of clearly flammable materials.

And we are not talking just normal house fires. I have notified the housing team about arson danger. This is critical, as the former head of MI5, Jonathan Evans, has stated that the terror threat will persist for another 30 years. For my own safety, I will not give any detail here publicly. Please ask the head of housing directly how he can ensure there will be any survivors at all, under the scenario of a terrorist attack.

I urge the council to consider that the cladding and insulation may need to be removed not only for safety reasons but because I believe the extensive changes to the external appearance of the buildings are clearly inconsistent with limitations imposed by the lease terms.

For this reason I ask that the Council does not waive any normal checks and balances at this stage, and not to underwrite more millions of pounds for the clearly problematic issue.

I urge the Council to request Central Government funding instead drawing again on the overstretched housing budget. I note here that costs of this project spiralled from some £5M in 2008 to £20M today.

This may be because the housing team does not mind spending £3 thousand per new window, even though it costs only £500 done by the local business, and many issues could have been addressed with a £20 DIY. I believe that this should not continue unchecked.

I will end with a question: Would the Councillors be as inconsiderately spendthrift if this was your personal savings account, not the taxpayer's and tenants’, money?

**Written Response from Councillor Rowley, Board Member for Housing**

I refer also to my response to address number one so will not repeat myself. However, I would also add the following points.

* The Council believes it has fully complied with its statutory requirement in relation to consultation with leaseholders. The question as to the reasonableness of the charges for leaseholders as their contributions to the costs of the works and whether or not due process has been followed will be determined by the independent First Tier Tribunal shortly.
* The scope of the works were the subject of a thorough consultation with residents
* The suggestion that your complaint has not been dealt with is incorrect as it has been through the Council’s entire complaints process
* The Building Research Establishment testing did in fact include the entire cladding system, It didn’t however carry out a test including a sprinkler system.
* The Fire and Rescue service carried out an inspection of our blocks and taking into account the entire fire safety system which includes sprinklers automated alarms, fire doors stair case venting system and other features concluded that the blocks are safe
* There is a recommendation to the report that the Council intends seeking recompense from the Government for the costs of these works so the burden does not fall on City Council tenants. The Council is not seeking contributions from leaseholders towards the additional costs of recladding.
* The costs of the project changed as the scope of the works changed. The nature of the works are intended to raise the standard of living conditions and extend the life of the blocks for a further 40+ years .As a good landlord we certainly do not agree with your suggested DIY approach. The works were the subject of a rigorous competitive procurement process to ensure good value for money

**Verbal Response from Councillor Rowley, Board Member for Housing**

Councillor Rowley made a short statement to Council in response to the address.