

# Green Party calls for Kensington and Chelsea council leader to be removed from post



29 June 2017

The Green Party has sent a letter to the prime minister urging her to remove the leader and deputy leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council from their posts [1].

Their intervention follows the news that it is unlikely the final death toll from the fire that engulfed Grenfell tower will be known until the end of the year [2] and that survivors and press will be banned from tonight's council meeting in which an update on the fire will be given. The update will be given orally without any written record [3].

Green Party politicians including Sian Berry and Caroline Russell, both members of the London Assembly, Amelia Womack, Deputy Leader, and Jennifer Nadel, the party's candidate for Kensington in the recent election, have been providing support to victims of the fire. As well as raising questions from survivors with the government and local council, the Green Party has already called for an amnesty for victims – allowing them to share personal information without fear of reprisal – and pressed the prime minister to clarify how much will be given in legal aid to help survivors [4].

In its letter to the prime minister, the party said it is “unconscionable” that the leader and deputy leader of Kensington and Chelsea council could continue in their post when it is roundly recognised that they failed to deliver an adequate response to the fire and to heed warnings from residents about safety in the tower before the incident. The party urges May to take “strong leadership” and reassure survivors that they are being listened to and that those who presided over this tragedy aren't allowed to carry on with business as usual. and the public that actions are being taken to ensure this “never happens again.”

The letter, signed by Jennifer Nadel, and Amelia Womack, says:

“It is insulting to the residents of this community to see Paget-Brown and Feilding-Mellen remain in post. Surviving residents and members of the public need to know that strong leadership is being taken to ensure this kind of disaster never happens again. That includes ensuring that those responsible for guaranteeing the safety of residents at Grenfell before and after the fire are held to account and do not remain in post. Paget-Brown and Fielding-Mellen could themselves be subject to criminal investigations. It is unconscionable given the scale of the tragedy and the multiple failings of the council before and after that its Leader and Deputy Leader should remain as Leader and Deputy Leader of the council.

"The families of those who died at Hillsborough have had to wait almost three decades for justice to be done. We cannot let the survivors of Grenfell wait that long. So I urge you: please take action, show that you are listening to the concerns of residents and survivors of Grenfell, and remove from post the council leader and deputy leader who have overseen this terrible episode in British history."

Joe Delaney, who was a resident of the tower, said:

"We are extremely disappointed that neither Paget-Brown or Fielding-Mellen have shown the courage and humility to resign in the wake of this unprecedented disaster that occurred on their watch and was a direct result of policies they are responsible for. Once again, they hide behind platitudes and false assertions that they are somehow victims because of the justifiable anger and resentment being directed towards them by victims in particular and the community as a whole. Neither is forced to stay in post, so even if their colleagues in the Conservative group have allegedly refused their resignations they should still do the right thing and leave these positions of responsibility immediately. Not only would that demonstrate their regret and satisfy local wishes, but also ensure that there can be no question of using their positions to influence the inquiry and police investigation."

Piers Thompson, member of the Save our Silchester campaigning aiming to protect the neighbouring Silchester Estate, said:

"It beggars belief that that Council leader Paget Brown and his Deputy, Feilding Mellen are clinging onto power behind locked doors at the Town Hall. This tragedy is a result of their incompetence and contempt for the ordinary people in their care. For decency's sake, go now."

## Notes

[1] Full letter follows below.

[2] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-40434741>

[3]

[http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/grenfell-tower-council-survivors-meeting\\_uk\\_595437c1e4b05c37bb7bdad6](http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/grenfell-tower-council-survivors-meeting_uk_595437c1e4b05c37bb7bdad6)

[4]

<https://www.greenparty.org.uk/news/2017/06/22/green-party-says-government-amnesty-for-grenfell-victims-does-not-go-far-enough/>

To Rt Hon Theresa May,

On behalf of the Green Party of England and Wales I am writing to you to request that you remove from post the leader and deputy leader of Kensington and Chelsea Council, Nicholas Paget-Brown and Rock Fielding-Mellen.

The response launched by Paget-Brown and Fielding-Mellen to the fire at Grenfell Towers was, as you have described it, “not good enough”. We now know that in the hours immediately after the fire, the council failed to communicate with survivors and their families; did not put enough staff on the ground to give advice; did not distribute any of the money being donated to help survivors; did not find accommodation for surviving residents; and did not answer calls from neighbouring councils who wanted to offer support.

But the response to the fire itself is clearly only one part of this story. Kensington and Chelsea Council had initiated 16 investigations of Grenfell before the fire but none of these prevented the installation of flammable cladding onto the outside of the tower. The council also refused to listen to the concerns raised so consistently by residents about the safety of the tower and its susceptibility to the kind of disaster that occurred there on 14 June.

Lives have been lost and damaged by this dereliction of duty.

It is insulting to the residents of this community to see Paget-Brown and Fielding-Mellen remain in post. Surviving residents and members of the public need to know that strong leadership is being taken to ensure this kind of disaster never happens again. That includes ensuring that those responsible for guaranteeing the safety of residents at Grenfell before and after the fire are held to account and do not remain in post. Paget-Brown and Fielding-Mellen could themselves be subject to criminal investigations. It is unconscionable given the scale of the tragedy and the multiple failings of the council before and after that its Leader and Deputy Leader should remain as Leader and Deputy Leader of the council.

The families of those who died at Hillsborough have had to wait almost three decades for justice to be done. We cannot let the survivors of Grenfell wait that long. So I urge you: please take action, show that you are listening to the concerns of residents and survivors of Grenfell, and remove from post the council leader and deputy leader who have overseen this terrible episode in British history.

Yours,

Jennifer Nadel, Green Party candidate for Kensington at the 2017 election

Amelia Womack, Deputy Leader of the Green Party

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