Construction

GMB slams failure of Grenfell report to tell full story

The roots of this disaster lay not with the events of that night but on the years of savage cuts leading up to it, union says

GMB, the union for emergency service staff, reacted with fury today after publication of a report into the Grenfell Tower disaster that left 72 people dead.

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The report, completed after an investigation led by Sir Martin Moore-Bick, claims that the London Fire Brigade's readiness for the fire was 'gravely inadequate' and has criticised the Brigade for a number of failures in relation to its handling of the disaster.

The second phase of the inquiry, which is due to begin next year, is to focus on the refurbishment project that many believe was the real cause of the disaster, a point underlined by Moore-Bick's comments that there is compelling evidence that the external walls of the building failed to comply with the requirements of building regulations governing fire safety.

GMB represents 999 call handlers and emergency responders in London Fire Brigade's Control Room who were on duty on the night of the fire.

Andy Prendergast, GMB Senior Organiser said:

"No one would deny the need to examine every action taken on that fateful night. But the reality is that by starting with the individual actions of staff within a Fire Brigade hampered by years of savage cuts lets the originators of this disaster off the hook.

“It wasn’t staff members who decided to prioritise company profits over residents’ safety. It wasn’t staff members who cut the funding to the service, closing stations and cutting jobs. It wasn’t the staff members who decided to pay council tax rebates instead of protecting those living within its borders.

“This report tells only a fraction of the story, that of dedicated hard working staff in a Control Room and on fire stations, dealing with a situation beyond our worst nightmares, putting their lives in danger, making split second decisions as they struggled desperately to save lives. It is a story of heroism, one where those hard working members of staff did everything they could with the resources they had to save as many lives as they could.

“We question the wisdom of starting the investigation by looking at the actions of the responders to what happened on 14th June 2017. The roots of this disaster lay not with the events of that night but on the years leading up to it.

“We need to know why concerns from residents and fire staff were ignored, why councillors were deaf to protests, and why materials that were clearly not fit for purpose were used. We need to understand how the impact of massive cuts on the fire service impacted on their ability to respond.

“The story of Grenfell Tower is not one of individual failings made on the night but one of collective failings made over years. GMB fully supports every one of our members caught up in the events of that night and we will not rest until the full story has been told, one that names and shames those most responsible instead of this selective document that deals only with the result of the disaster and not the cause.

“Both the staff, who worked so hard, and the residents, who endured such unimaginable suffering, deserve better.”

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