

Residents 'shocked' at loss of expert hired after tower evacuations Safety chief departs after less than year in £100k job

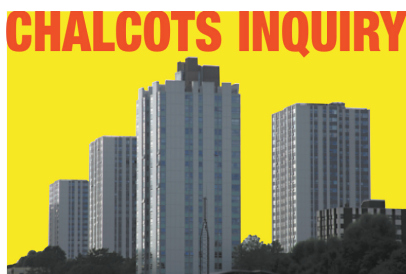
by WILLIAM McLENNAN

A LEADING safety expert appointed by the Town Hall in the wake of the Grenfell Tower tragedy and the Chalcots estate crisis has left his post after less than a year.

Keith Scott began his £100,000-a-year role in November last year in what was heralded as a "new era of resident safety" as Camden Council took a fresh approach to risk management after the evacuation of the tower blocks in Adelaide Road.

The director of resident safety post was billed as groundbreaking, but his departure has led to questions over the council's long-term commitment to change.

Mandy Ryan, who lives at the top of one of Chalcots' 23-storey towers, said: "It makes you wonder if they really are serious about it. We felt confident we had someone overseeing everything and now he's gone."



Camden New Journal



Keith Scott, above left, was appointed in the wake of the evacuation of tenants from Chalcots tower blocks, above

The *New Journal* understands that Mr Scott has left for a new role at private firm Serco.

He is an industry leader, having worked as head of safety at Royal Mail and the Ministry of

Justice. He served four years as chairman of the Institute of Risk and Safety Management.

On his appointment, Mr Scott, a former Labour councillor in Greenwich, said: "If you want to put it in plain speak: my job is to try and help people not have to suffer bad things."

His appointment had been welcomed by residents of the Chalcots estate, where 3,000 people were forced to leave their homes at a moment's

notice after a series of fire safety failures were identified in the days after 72 lives were lost at Grenfell Tower in west London.

Bob O'Toole, chair of Burnham tenants' and residents' association, said: "It's shame on Camden. They should have given him a longer contract. He's got things started, he got the ball rolling, he was always on top of things, but we don't know who's coming in now. I hope they're as good as he was."

Belsize Lib Dem councillor Luisa Porritt said: "Officers, including Keith himself, have sought to assure us that an appropriate structure will be left in place following his departure, though his degree of experience and authoritative presence will surely be missed."

Anthony Royle, chair of Bray Tenants' and Residents' Association, said there was an "information vacuum", with no clarity over whether Mr Scott would be replaced.

He said: "As far as I see Keith has fulfilled all the things we expected. It was a surprise, I was quite shocked to hear he was going as he only just got his feet under the table. It's a disappointment that he is not continuing."

Labour council leader Georgia Gould said Mr Scott had "played an important role in helping us deliver a new standard of resident safety in Camden".

She said that a "strong in-house team" had been recruited in the past year, adding: "We are absolutely committed to continuing our focus on the highest standard of resident safety and will begin the recruitment process for Keith's replacement immediately."



Hope will be seen with DJ Sara Cox in the appeal

Star role Hope's TV appeal

HOPE was diagnosed profoundly deaf at three weeks old and became one of the youngest babies to be given bilateral cochlear implant surgery when aged nine months.

The *New Journal* reported her story at the time, in July 2011. Now, seven years later, she is due to star with DJ Sara Cox in a BBC TV appeal in support of charity Auditory Verbal.

The charity helps deaf children with hearing aids or cochlear implants to listen and speak without the need to rely on sign language or lip reading.

Hope's mum, Becky Dennis, who lives in Primrose Hill, said: "As a family we are constantly in awe of the confident, communicative and wonderful little girl that Hope has become."

The film is due to be aired on BBC One at 3.35pm on Sunday, and on BBC Two at 1pm on Wednesday.

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Observatory looks ahead to reopening

HAMPSTEAD Observatory – a window to faraway planets like Saturn and Jupiter and one of Camden's hidden gems – is due to reopen after a two-year refurbishment, writes Tom Foot.

The vantage point, near Whitestone Pond, was shut down in 2016 because of Thames Water reservoir restrengthening work.

Hampstead Scientific Society, the charity which runs the observatory, hopes to open it to the public on November 2.

Simon Lang, president and joint astronomy secretary of HSS, said: "We have been open to the public, free of charge, since 1899 and from our current site on top of Hampstead Reservoir since 1910.

"We've only been closed during the world wars and during two

major refurbishments of the reservoir, once in the 1960s and for two years until now."

The observatory normally closes between April and September because of the longer daylight. In darker months, HSS members

take it in turns to show the public the moon, planets "and other celestial delights".

Special events are staged for unusual astronomical events, such as lunar and solar eclipses or comets. HSS also runs scientific

lectures at St John's Church, in Church Row.

Initially, Thames Water had said the site would be closed between July 2016 and March 2017, but the work has taken much longer than anticipated, the society said.

In March, many homes were left without water for days as a result of a "booster problem with Hampstead reservoir".

The society is looking for volunteer "demonstrators" to work six to eight two-hour stints over four months.

Sidings Community Centre "HERITAGE FAIR" Saturday 13TH Oct, 12 – 4PM

Stalls, Heritage craft workshops for adults & children, U5's Soft-Play room, Football Tournament, Doctor Bike, DigiWall (interactive climbing wall). Lunch & afternoon tea.

Contact: office@sidings.org.uk or Main Office: 0207 6256260.

Venue: Sidings Community Centre, 150 Brassey Road (Off Maygrove Road), NW6 2BA.

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