Andrew Marr: So many Labour figures see this disaster as a politically created catastrophe. Jeremy Corbyn has connected it to Tory austerity and one of his lieutenants tweeted 'burn neo-liberalism, not people. Sir Keir Starmer, Labour’s Brexit spokesman is with me. Do you believe this ghastly event was caused by cuts to local authority budgets and austerity?

Keir Starmer: Well can I just first of course send my condolences to the families, to the victims and their friends of this human tragedy. I think all of us have been touched simply looking at the images and hearing the stories. We have to tread very carefully. It’s clear there are some very, very serious questions that need to be answered about the cladding, about the costing. There’s been questions about housing in London for a very, very long time. Lots of issues raised which haven’t been answered, so serious questions which require serious answers and accountability.

Andrew Marr: Has your party been treading carefully however because they were very, very quick, the Labour leadership to say this is caused by austerity, the Tories have blood on their hands and all of that kind of stuff. Boris Johnson has accused the Labour Party of playing politics with this.

Keir Starmer: Well I think there is understandable anger and frustration, you’ve seen that from those living in the tower block and people living in other similar situations. In Camden, in my constituency, there’s great anxiety about people living in similar tower blocks. And I think it’s the responsibility for all of us, not only, as it were to look back and ask questions –
Andrew Marr: Maybe not to feed the flames of anger.

Keir Starmer: We do have to look forward because people want reassurance, so I spent Friday with Camden Council looking at the blocks in Camden. I think all politicians have got a duty to look forward now and to say to their own constituents what is going to happen by way of enhanced fire checks in the coming days and weeks.

Andrew Marr: You heard one of the activists from the community there saying that nearby properties which are vacant should possibly be requisitioned to ensure that people who have been homeless by this fire can stay living close to where they were in the community. Do you agree with that?

Keir Starmer: I think that’s one option to look at and clearly the level of support needs to be in from the start - it’s clothing, it’s food but it’s also housing. I know that a number of local authorities in London are looking at what properties they’ve got and how they can help. That needs to come together very, very quickly this week.

Andrew Marr: Now there’s been a lot of focus on the Tory responsibility for this, but the Labour Party too bears some responsibility. There was a ghastly fire before in south London and one before that in Southampton and in 2000, going back a long way, there was a report of the House of Commons which said the cladding issue needed to be looked at again adding: ‘we do not believe that it should take a serious fire in which many people are killed before all reasonable steps are taken towards minimising the risks.’ That was in 2000. We had another ten years of Labour government after that.

Keir Starmer: I think everybody needs to look at why these recommendations over the years have not been implemented. I
was Director of Public Prosecutions and I had to look at the 2009 file in relation to whether there should be prosecutions. It’s clear there’s recommendations there that should already have been acted upon and I think we all need to ask serious questions. It’s no good having recommendations –

Andrew Marr: So it’s all parties are to blame for this?

Keir Starmer: All parties need to ask serious questions about why recommendations in the past have not been implemented.

Andrew Marr: Can I ask you, you mentioned you were DPP of course. There’s a bit of a controversy at the moment, the Prime Minister has announced a public inquiry and promised it will be quick and all the rest of it, but it reports – she chooses the Chair of that, the judge who Chairs that and it reports to her. Other people say no, no inquests are much more important because the families get the chance to speak out, get their own lawyers there as well and we can of course then have criminal proceedings if necessary against those responsible.

Keir Starmer: Yeah. I mean at the moment there’s a criminal investigation. I spoke to the DPP yesterday and there are prosecutors already in advising the police. So the criminal investigation really has to come first. Normally an inquest will only take place at the end of the criminal investigation, so the idea of an inquiry is important because that can, in some circumstances, happen much more quickly and I think speed is of the essence here.

Andrew Marr: And to be clear we’ve been talking about manslaughter charges?

Keir Starmer: Yes. When we were looking at this when I was DPP in relation to other fires we were looking at manslaughter charges.
There are wider regulatory offences but I think manslaughter is the most serious and that’s the one that needs to be looked at first. So a public inquiry allows things to happen more quickly and allows a broader range of questions and inquests come usually at the end of the exercise.

Andrew Marr: So you need both, okay.
Let’s turn, if we may, to Brexit. How do you think the General Election result has changed the negotiating position Britain should take for Brexit?

Keir Starmer: Well I think the Prime Minister’s got us into a complete mess. She’s got no mandate here and she’s got no authority abroad and the negotiations start tomorrow. And things have to change. Her approach so far has alienated our allies in Europe, it’s weakened our position with the EU and it’s actually got us into the worst possible starting position.

Andrew Marr: But you see what people say to me is that actually when you look at it, Labour’s position on Brexit is identical to Theresa May’s position. So let me test that, if I may, with some yes or no questions, if I can. First of all do you accept that we are leaving the EU come what may?

Keir Starmer: Yes, we’ve been clear about that from the absolutely start.

Andrew Marr: That’s a yes. Okay, second, are you against a second referendum?

KS: A second referendum cannot take place –
Andrew Marr: Yes.
KS: -until after we’ve left the EU and therefore it’s not viable.
Andrew Marr: So that’s not viable. Okay, third question. Are there any circumstances in which you think Britain should stay inside the single market?

Keir Starmer: Well, so far as the single market is concerned our Manifesto’s clear. We want to retain the benefits of the single market and the customs union. Formal membership, full membership is only available to EU member states and that’s why there’s all the discussion about what sort of model that gets us to close to membership.

Andrew Marr: So that sounds to me like a no, we cannot stay inside the single market.

Keir Starmer: Not in an unreformed, unchanged way because you have to be a full EU member and that’s not consistent.

Andrew Marr: You see you’re not quite giving me a clear answer on that. You think the single market could be changed or reformed in a way that allows us to stay inside, is that right?

Keir Starmer: D’you know I think the mistake we’re all making here is to put the model before the outcome. What we want is tariff free access to the single market, no customs duties that make it more difficult for people to trade in the future. That’s what really matters and the flip side of that from the EU point of view is how do we make sure there’s a level playing field, how do we make sure that regulations apply across the board? That’s what we’re talking about. It’s the outcome and getting in the weeds of the model actually I think loses the focus on the outcome.

Andrew Marr: I understand that. I’m going to have one last go because the Labour position, if I put it gently is clear as mud on the single market. Can you let me just say, John McDonnell and
Jeremy Corbyn have both said we’re out of the single market, that’s it, we can’t stay inside the single market –

Keir Starmer: But Andrew you can only be a full member of the single market if you’re an EU member, and therefore it is obvious that we’re looking at something else. The question is do we leave options on the table? And I have said repeatedly yes, leave options on the table, but there are a number of different –

Andrew Marr: So what are those options?

Keir Starmer: - models.

Andrew Marr: So what are those options?

Keir Starmer: Focus on the outcomes, which I’ve just enumerated.

Andrew Marr: Yes, but I’m asking specifically.

Keir Starmer: You can then – how you get to it, you can either take single market membership and say what needs to change to get us to the position we need to be in, or you can start with a sort of bare agreement and work up. What matters is the outcomes because what we need is a deal that actually works for our country.

Andrew Marr: Would you sacrifice control over freedom of movement in order to stay inside the single - or have very good access to the single market?

Keir Starmer: It’s clear that freedom of movement will end when we leave the EU and therefore the discussion we’re having is what model fits with changes to freedom of movement, plus the trade that we need.

Andrew Marr: So you could have some freedom of movement remaining?

Keir Starmer: Well I don’t understand this notion of some freedom of movement. In the end immigration comes down –
Andrew Marr: You sound like in a very gentle way you’re saying exactly what Theresa May would say if she were sitting there.

Keir Starmer: No. Theresa May’s taken the wrong approach. The tone and approach is completely wrong. I say we can’t say have membership because that was decided last year, we can have partnership if we change the tone and approach. We need to be much clearer about that -

Andrew Marr: That’s tone and words. But on the actual clear - well me try one other thing. Customs union. In or out?

Keir Starmer: Well I think that should be left on the table as an option.

Andrew Marr: So we could stay inside the customs union?

Keir Starmer: Yes.

Andrew Marr: Well that is the single biggest difference between you and the Conservative Party.

Keir Starmer: Well there’s also this notion of no deal being a viable deal, which Theresa May and the government have repeatedly said. No deal is what happens if you get to the end of the two years and you haven’t been able to reach agreement. You’re pushed over the cliff. To say I’ll jump over the cliff isn’t a negotiating stance that makes much sense.

Andrew Marr: It seems a lifetime ago but last week I heard Jeremy Corbyn, sitting where you are and I asked him about the Great Repeal Bill and he said, ‘oh that’s history.’ Are you actually going to vote against the Great Repeal Bill?

Keir Starmer: Well, the problem with the Great Repeal Bill is how do we entrench the rights and freedoms that we currently enjoy –

Andrew Marr: But that’s what it does.
Keir Starmer: Yeah, but without qualification, without limitation, without some cyclical - so that’s where the battle will be.

Andrew Marr: It takes all those workers’ rights that the EU have legislated for and puts them into British law, so I can’t see why the Labour Party would be against it.

Keir Starmer: In principal we’re not against that. The question is how do we prevent qualification on limitation of that, that’s the first thing. The second is how do we make sure as time goes by our standards don’t slip below those of Europe.

Andrew Marr: Okay, so one last yes or no. Are you going to oppose the Great Repeal Bill in the House of Commons, yes or no?

Keir Starmer: We haven’t seen it yet. The principle of entrenching EU rights and freedoms is one that we would support.

Andrew Marr: Keir Starmer for now, thank you very much indeed.