



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

Clive Betts MP  
Chair HCLG Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
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**The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP**  
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10 August 2020

Dear Clive,

**FOLLOW UP TO 22 JULY SELECT COMMITTEE HEARING**

Thank you for inviting me to give evidence at the HCLG Select Committee hearing on Wednesday 22 July. During the session I committed to come back to the Committee on several further points set out below.

**Pre-legislative Scrutiny of the Draft Building Safety Bill**

As my colleague Lord Greenhalgh set out in his letter of 29 July, we look forward to working with the Committee on this crucial piece of legislation. I am keen to maintain progress on this legislation given its importance to public safety, and it would be ideal if pre-legislative scrutiny could be completed by the end of this year. Lord Greenhalgh and I look forward to discussing a suitable date for publication of your report when we return from recess.

**Planning Decisions**

The Committee asked about the frequency with which Ministers disagree with advice from their officials in these cases and as I made clear this is not uncommon. The case in question was not the first time I have made a decision contrary to the advice of my officials – I have done so twice before and my immediate predecessor did so four times.

**Funding of Local Government Expenditure on Covid-19**

You asked me for an update on the funding we have provided to local authorities to help them continue their essential work through the coronavirus pandemic. On 2 July, I announced a further £500 million in un-ringfenced grant funding for councils to meet pressures they are facing in response to the pandemic. This takes the total amount of funding for councils to £4.3 billion – including £3.7 billion in un-ringfenced funding and the £600 million Infection Control Fund.

This additional un-ringfenced Covid-19 funding will support the pressures councils have reported and recognises the crucial role they play in helping the country tackle this crisis. These priorities include adult social care; children's services; public health services; fire and rescue services; household waste services; shielding those people who are clinically extremely vulnerable; homelessness and rough sleeping; domestic abuse; and managing excess deaths.

As well as this, the funding will also meet the cost to councils of supporting re-opening of the country from lockdown, including working with local businesses and shops to enforce social distancing. The initial £3.2 billion, alongside the £500 million announced on 2 July, remains un-ringfenced on the basis that councils are best placed to determine the specific needs of their local communities.

I have also set out details of a co-payment scheme to cover irrecoverable sales, fees and charges income in 2020-21. Councils will absorb the first 5% of all relevant irrecoverable losses compared to budgets, with the government compensating councils for 75p in every pound of loss thereafter. Furthermore, we will extend the period over which councils must manage shortfalls in local tax income relating to 2020-21, from 1 to 3 years to help them with immediate pressures when budget setting for 2021-22. Further guidance on this will follow shortly.

This direct financial support that my department has provided is part of a wider package which includes cashflow measures, support for the homeless, and bus and tram services – not to mention grants and business rates reliefs for businesses. In total, across government we have committed almost £28 billion to local areas to support councils and their communities.

### **Practice Direction 55C**

Your colleague Ian Byrne MP asked about Practice Direction 55C, following the laying in Parliament of the Civil Procedure (Amendment No. 4) (Coronavirus) Rules 2020 on 17 July, which sets out how possession claims are to proceed once the current stay on possession proceedings ends on 23 August. In accordance with the usual process, the Practice Direction was published by the Ministry of Justice as part of the online Civil Procedure Rules on 17 July, as well as on [judiciary.uk](http://judiciary.uk) and is, accordingly, available to view [online](#). The Practice Direction will come into force as soon as the stay on possession proceedings ends on 23 August.

### **Renters' Reform Bill**

As I made clear at the recent hearing, we have put in place unprecedented support to help tenants to continue to meet their living costs and pay their rent. We have supported workers by paying up to 80% of their wages and strengthened the welfare safety-net with an over £6.5 billion boost to the welfare system.

I will update on Renters' Reform legislation as soon as I am in a position to do so.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Jenrick." The signature is written in a cursive style and is followed by a horizontal line underneath.

**RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP**