



Committee of Public Accounts

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Jeremy Pocklington CB
Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
2 Marsham Street
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4 November 2020

Dear Jeremy,

PROGRESS IN REMEDIATING DANGEROUS CLADDING

Thank you for your evidence and that of your colleagues to my Committee on 22 October in relation to the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government's (the Department's) *Starter Homes* programme. We will publish our report on this in the next month or so in the normal way.

During the session, we raised urgent concerns in relation to the Department's work on the remediation of dangerous cladding. These concerns pick up points raised in our *Progress in Remediating Dangerous Cladding* report on 7 September 2020. We acknowledge that you will respond to our recommendations shortly. However, given the urgency for the need to remove dangerous cladding, and the associated mortgage valuation impacts to residents of other buildings, we would appreciate a more detailed follow up to the evidence you gave:

Building Safety Fund timeline

You told the Committee that you are making progress on allocating the £1 billion Building Safety Fund. However, you were not able to provide an exact timescale for when decisions will be made. We raised concerns in our recent report on the 'first come, first served' basis for allocating these funds and the ambitions of your department in distributing funding quickly, despite the significant delays in allocating the predecessor remediation funds and a shortage of specialist skills. For these reasons, we would like more detail on the timescale and allocation of funds. Please set out for the Committee:

- whether you still expect to commit all £1 billion of the Building Safety Fund by the end of March 2021?
- latest figures on the number of applications for this Fund you have a) received; b) assessed as being eligible for funding; c) approved? In addition, the latest estimate of the number of applications you expect to turn down due to oversubscription;
- how much of the £1 billion you have so far allocated? and

- when you expect the cladding replacement paid for by this Fund to a) begin on site, and b) all be completed?

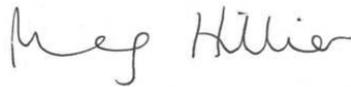
External Wall Fire Review

You told the committee that your department is actively speaking with the sector and looking to see what more can be done with the application of EWS1 forms. It is clear there is an unnecessary and widespread application of EWS1 forms to buildings outside the scope of the intended process, which is impacting on residents' ability to buy and sell their properties. In our recent report on cladding, we asked you to ensure that cross-sector work to resolve these issues are progressed at pace. Whilst we have asked your department to respond to this issue as part of our recommendations, we are concerned that this isn't progressing quick enough and therefore request an update on your current position. Please set out for the Committee what work your Department has undertaken on this issue, including what options have been explored, and when you anticipate this will be resolved.

I would be grateful if you could provide your written response to the points above before the PAC session with you at the end of November.

I am copying this letter to the Comptroller & Auditor General and to the Treasury Officer of Accounts. A copy will be published on our website.

Yours sincerely,



MEG HILLIER MP
CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS