



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations

Jeremy Pocklington CB
Permanent Secretary

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities**

4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Tel: 0303 444 2785

Email: PSPerm.Sec@communities.gov.uk

10 January 2022

Dear Secretary of State,

£27m FUND FOR FIRE ALARMS IN BUILDINGS WITH A WAKING WATCH

In December 2020, £30m of funding was announced under the Waking Watch Relief Fund (WWRF) to install fire alarms in buildings over 18m with unsafe cladding, replacing costly Waking Watches. This fund was subsequently extended in September 2021 by a further £5m to meet demand.

Despite this action, we both remain very concerned about the continued plight of leaseholders who still face the high costs of measures such as Waking Watch and know that more must be done to support them.

You have concluded, based on the department's analysis and advice, that a further £27m of funding should be provided for the installation of a common alarm system in all buildings with a Waking Watch. This is an increase to the scope of the existing fund and will require a new ministerial direction.

I understand the rationale for further intervention. However, as Accounting Officer, I have a duty to ensure compliance with the public accounting rules as set out in *Managing Public Money*.

As I and your predecessor have found to be the case for previous funding for building safety programmes, including the existing WWRF, the rules of *Managing Public Money* do not support this kind of exceptional intervention. In the normal course of events, these costs would be borne by the private sector, and Waking Watch costs are currently being met by leaseholders. This approach, therefore, does not meet the *Managing Public Money* test for value for money.

I will therefore require your written direction to proceed. I will then ensure that all necessary steps are taken to carry this out without delay.

As is required, I will alert the Comptroller and Auditor General, and I will also inform the Chairs of the Public Accounts Committee and the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee. Our exchange of letters will also be published on the GOV.UK website in the usual way.

Yours sincerely,

JEREMY POCKLINGTON



**Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities**

Jeremy Pocklington CB
Permanent Secretary

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities**

4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP

*Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities
Minister for Intergovernmental Relations*

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities**

4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Email: michael.gove@communities.gov.uk

10 January 2022

Dear Jeremy,

£27m FUND FOR FIRE ALARMS IN BUILDINGS WITH A WAKING WATCH

Thank you for your letter of today and the ongoing work of our officials as we work to bring about generational reform of building safety in this country.

Waking Watch costs are a national scandal and there is an urgent need to tackle this problem given the detrimental impact it is having on leaseholders. Whilst some building owners have already installed fire alarms, some with the help of the Waking Watch Relief Fund announced last December, I am persuaded that this £27m fund is the quickest and most effective way to correct this scandal which persists.

I have carefully considered the issues you have raised about the proposal to provide £27m funding for the installation of a common alarm system in all buildings with a Waking Watch to reduce the costs borne by leaseholders. In particular, I have considered the implications for the Department in demonstrating compliance with the principles set out in Managing Public Money. It is my judgement that this course of action is clearly in the best interests of the people living in buildings with a Waking Watch.

You should therefore take this note as a formal direction to proceed.

With every good wish,

Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations