



Susan Hall AM

Chairman of the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee

Lord Stephen Greenhalgh
Minister for Building Safety and Fire
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

(Sent by email)

15 December 2021

Dear Stephen,

London Assembly Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee: actions following meeting on 22 September 2021

I am writing to you on behalf of the London Assembly Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning (FREP) Committee following its meeting on 22 September 2021. At this meeting, the Committee discussed the issues of building and fire safety and their impacts on the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and the impact on Londoners living in high rise buildings with fire safety defects.

The Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, Tom Copley, attended the meeting to report on progress of remediation of London buildings under the Building Safety Programme (BSP), applications made to the Waking Watch Relief Fund and associated matters impacting London buildings and their residents. The Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development oversees the team administering BSP remediation of buildings in London.

The London Fire Brigade told us that, as at 15 September 2021, 1,003 buildings in London had simultaneous evacuation measures in place as 'stay put' had been suspended due to fire safety defects. These buildings require waking watches or a common fire alarm system, with some having a common fire alarm system but still needing simultaneous evacuation in the event of a fire;

approximately one third of the total applies to each category. It is a concern that so many buildings remain dependent on simultaneous evacuation pending remediation of fire safety defects.

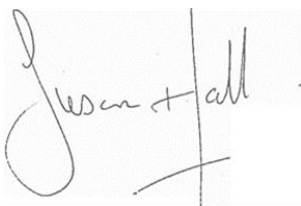
The Committee asked about applications to the Government's Waking Watch Relief Fund. The Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development told us that there have been 111 applications in London covering 159 buildings (some applications covered multiple buildings). But he also said that 675 buildings in London currently have waking watches. This gap highlights that the Waking Watch Relief Fund is currently only available for residential buildings over 18 metres in height, although there may also have been some buildings that did not apply to the fund in time. We understand that the fund has now reopened so the latter category have another opportunity to apply for funding.¹

However, the Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development told the Committee that less than half the fund has been allocated which indicates a significant underspend is likely. **The Committee welcomes the Government's decision to provide a further £5 million of support to the Waking Watch Relief Fund and calls on it to provide further funding if required. Furthermore, the Committee urges the Government to open the fund to residential buildings of less than 18 metres in height so their residents can also benefit from the fund and be relieved of the costs of waking watches.**

In our discussion with the Deputy Mayor for Housing and Residential Development, he spoke about London boroughs being asked by your Department to do an audit of residential buildings between 11 to 18 metres in height to identify those with dangerous cladding, both ACM and non-ACM. This is not a straightforward exercise and is incurring costs for boroughs when budgets are under pressure. It is also the case that there are a large number of these buildings. **The Committee would be grateful if the Department could provide extra funding to London boroughs to support the important audit work being undertaken.**

I would appreciate a response to the recommendations identified in this letter by 12 January 2022.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Hall', is written over a light blue rectangular stamp.

Susan Hall AM

Chairman of the Fire, Resilience and Emergency Planning Committee

¹ Gov.uk, [WWRF reopens for applications](#) from 16 September 2021