

LONDON ASSEMBLY



Hina Bokhari OBE AM
Chair of the Fire Committee

Alex Norris MP

Minister for Local Growth and Building Safety
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

(Sent by email)

11 March 2025

Dear Minister,

We sought participation from your officials in the London Assembly's Fire Committee (the Committee) meeting on 14 January 2025, but they were unable to attend. I am therefore writing to you to share some of the concerns and questions for Government arising from that meeting that we had hoped to discuss with them. The meeting examined the impact of the new building safety regime on the London Fire Brigade, and progress of remediation of London's multi-storey residential buildings.

Since we held our meeting, the Government has responded to the Grenfell Tower Inquiry (GTI) Phase 2 recommendations. The Committee welcomes this response and its agreement to take forward all the recommendations. But this response is only the start; it is crucial we don't miss this opportunity to do everything we can to ensure a lasting legacy of safety from the Grenfell tragedy.

I am setting out below the key areas where clarification/resolution is required and would ask for your response.

Building safety regime - allowance under regulations to take account of local variations, i.e., London Plan

The Committee was concerned to hear from the London Fire Commissioner (LFC), Andy Roe KFSM, of a "disconnect" between the new building safety regime and the fire safety priorities set out by the Mayor in the London Plan.

The LFC identified a need for “an alignment between regional plans and the national legislation.”¹ The Committee is concerned that this disconnect could be used by developers to potentially undermine fire safety in London’s higher risk buildings (HRBs). We also heard from Tim Galloway of the Building Safety Regulator (BSR) that the BSR keeps its processes under review. Also, that the BSR is regularly speaking with Government about these kinds of issues.²

1. Will the government consider providing for local variation of the building safety regime, particularly the London Plan?

Remediation - enforcement

The Committee is very aware of the high number of unremediated high rise buildings across the capital, and supports action to speed up remediation, a matter of longstanding interest. We were therefore keen to hear about blockages to remediation and action that could be taken to enforce this.

The Committee heard how pursuing court action can be protracted and expensive for LFB and other parties. Deputy Commissioner Charlie Pugsley told the Committee about recent court cases which resulted in “record-breaking fines” of £1 million for a care home and £0.5 million pounds for a local authority. But he pointed out that these cases took two to three years to complete.³

We note that Government has recognised some of the additional costs arising from enforcement action by providing for a remediation enforcement support fund. But, we heard from LFB that this would not cover their costs.⁴

The Committee supports the view of the LFC that using penalty charge notices would “save the burden of bureaucracy, cost, and legal fees that go with it, and place the pressure back into the built environment ...to meet the need of the new regime.”⁵

The Committee also supports the potential for buildings to be seized in cases of non-engagement or refusal to action remediation. As the LFC told us, “It is removing the asset that carries the greatest threat in the end for the people who are the most recalcitrant.”⁶ We note that the LFC has already raised these options with your officials and told us he had “very positive engagement”.⁷ The Committee strongly supports the adoption of such measures to speed up action to remediate buildings and reduce costs for LFB.

- 2. Is the government considering making provision for fixed penalty notices and/or seizure of buildings where there is non-compliance or non-engagement? If yes, when would you expect to action this?**
- 3. What discussions have taken place on seizure of assets where issues of building safety liability are not being acted on by building owners?**

¹ [London Assembly Fire Committee Transcript 14 January 2025](#), p4

² [London Assembly Fire Committee Transcript 14 January 2025](#), p5

³ [London Assembly Fire Committee Transcript 14 January 2025](#), p19

⁴ [London Assembly Fire Committee Transcript 14 January 2025](#), p19

⁵ [London Assembly Fire Committee Transcript 14 January 2025](#), p6

⁶ [London Assembly Fire Committee Transcript 14 January 2025](#), p18

⁷ [London Assembly Fire Committee Transcript 14 January 2025](#), p6

4. Has the government considered how an enforcement regime could be made self-financing via hypothecation of the fines?

National strategy to develop a skilled workforce

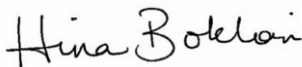
Throughout our meeting we heard about the shortage of qualified people across the sector, particularly fire safety engineers. This is adding to delays in both remediation and new developments, with all parts of the sector requiring input from a limited pool of qualified people. The Government's response to the GTI Phase 2 recommendations include commitments to regulate fire engineers and to support and promote Masters degree courses to help increase numbers. This is particularly welcome. However, the Committee would like to see a national strategy to build the pool of skilled people across the sector, as called for by London Fire Brigade.

5. Beyond the commitment to implement the GTI Phase 2 recommendations, how is the government addressing the need for a skilled workforce to take forward the various building safety remediation issues?

6. Has the Government considered developing a national skills strategy to support quicker remediation and a more efficient building approval process?

I would be grateful if you could please respond to the Committee by 8 April 2025. Your response should be copied to Philippa Goffe, the Committee's Senior Policy Adviser (philippa.goffe@london.gov.uk).

Yours,



Hina Bokhari OBE AM
Chair of the Fire Committee