



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Clive Betts MP, Chair
Housing, Communities & Local Government
Committee
House of Commons
London
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Kit Malthouse MP
Minister of State for Housing

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Dear Clive,

Thank you for chairing the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee hearing on 4 July 2018 to hear evidence from the Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP. The previous minister was grateful for the opportunity to give evidence on the department's work before the committee. During the hearing, he committed to write back on a number of areas. I am writing as the new Minister of State for Housing and I am very happy to follow-up on behalf of my predecessor.

Social housing budget

You asked about the funding for social sector remediation and its impact on the social housing budget. The money is coming from the Affordable Homes Programme. However, the same amount of money will be replaced in the programme in 2021-22. So our Affordable Homes Programme remains over £9 billion, with an additional £400 million of that now available in 2021-22. This responds to calls from social landlords for longer term certainty of grant funding for new homes. The programme will still deliver the same number of homes. The aim of providing funding for the social sector is to prevent displacement from other activity by social landlords such as maintenance and new supply in the short term.

Department becoming aware of concerns about combustible material

You also asked when the Department became aware of combustible cladding as an issue. The issues of combustible cladding have been known to successive Governments. Your predecessor committee drew attention to it in a report in 2000, recommendations from which led to the development of the BS 8414 test, which was introduced into the Building Regulations guidance in 2006. The guidance was revised in 2006 to make clear that the filler core of a cladding panel should be of limited combustibility. The extent to which combustible cladding was being used on buildings, however, has only become clear following Grenfell.

Enforcement of building control standards

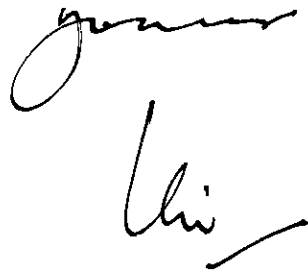
You went on to ask about the enforcement of building control standards. Dame Judith has been clear that there needs to be greater regulatory oversight and recommends the bringing together of local authority building standards, fire and rescue authorities and the Health and Safety Executive. We agree that the system should be overseen by regulators with teeth, including stronger powers to tackle irresponsible behaviour. We have announced our intention to bring forward legislation to deliver this. We will work with partners to consider this before consulting on our proposals and how we will implement them in the autumn.

ACM cladding standards

Bob Blackman MP asked a number of questions about cladding and remediation. The expert panel has advised that the clearest way of ensuring an external wall system adequately resists external fire spread are either for all of the relevant elements of the wall to be of limited combustibility, or to use an external wall system which can be shown to have passed a large-scale test conducted to the BS8414 classified to the BR135 standard set out in current building regulations guidance.

We are working with housing providers, schools, hospitals and industry to develop solutions to remediation and a co-ordinated approach to deliver those solutions. An information note was published on 11 December 2017 to support building owners through this process. With endorsement from the expert panel and the National Fire Chiefs' Council, on 29 September 2017 the government published updated advice on interim measures to protect the safety of residents in buildings which have cladding systems which do not meet the requirements of current building regulations guidance while they await the completion of remediation works.

I am depositing this letter in the library of both Houses.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kit Malthouse', written in a cursive style.

KIT MALTHOUSE MP