



Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE
Chair of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes FRA
Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service
Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP20 1BD
lmclarke@buckscc.gov.uk

18th December 2019

Dear Councillor,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the Protection Board assurance exercise dated 10th December 2019 which I received via the Local Government Association.

I am sorry to hear that you believe there has been insufficient communication from the Board and its partners in Government in the run up to the launch of the current assurance exercise. I have been assured by the Home Office that a letter was emailed to you and copied to Chief Fire Officer Jason Thelwell from the Director of Fire and Resilience, Luke Edwards, on 5th November 2019. This letter concerned the upcoming requests for assurance being made by the Board on Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) and has been attached alongside this correspondence for your information.

In the interest of improving communication between yourself and the Board, could you please confirm that the email address above is correct and is the best way of contacting you, and please send any further correspondence to me directly at roy.wilsher@nationalfirechiefs.org.uk.

For your information I have attached the invitation for me to chair the Board from the previous Minister for Policing and the Fire Service and the Protection Board's Terms of Reference. Hopefully this will give you additional background on the Board and its purpose, but, in short, the Board's work is to provide an overview on the continued assurance of buildings with ACM 3 cladding systems. We are aware that the best way to assure these buildings is remediation but in the meantime we all need to ensure the risk for residents and firefighters is as low as reasonably practicable. The board is also designed to deliver the previous Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government's commitment to increase the pace of inspection and assurance activity across high-rise residential buildings and assure the safety of these buildings no later than 2021. The current assurance exercise is one of the first steps in achieving this aim.

The current assurance questions and the format of the assurance framework are the result of pilots with four fire and rescue services including London and Greater Manchester who have the greatest number of ACM3 clad buildings. In addition, there were extensive discussions with representatives and lawyers from the Board's constituent governance bodies: the Home Office; the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; the Local Government Association; and National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) about the two assurance questions. NFCC's Operations

Committee were also consulted, and the Board agreed on the binary nature of the assurance questions based on the fact that FRSs would either be satisfied with the arrangements in the building or not when they conduct a visit. If FRSs are not satisfied, I am sure some action would have been taken by now.

I note your reference to the Board requiring action of FRSs and Fire and Rescue Authorities, however, neither the attached letter from Luke Edwards, nor my own correspondence, nor the assurance framework itself require a response as the Board cannot compel FRSs to complete the current exercise. Nevertheless, given the types of buildings in the scope of the assurance exercise, I am sure that Buckinghamshire FRS will wish to continue to provide these assurances as they have done since the Grenfell Tower fire.

The Board is requesting assurance from Chief Fire Officers and the Board recommends that this assurance should also be provided to associated Fire and Rescue Authorities. However, the Board does not require Fire and Rescue Authorities to sign off on this assurance before it is sent to the Board via the online assurance form by FRSs.

On related matters, I am not entirely sure why the National Framework would need to be amended to accommodate the Board's request for assurance. As per my letter to Chief Fire Officer Jason Thelwell on 21st November 2019, there is opportunity for providing FRSs with additional time to complete the assurance exercise. If you believe that Buckinghamshire FRS will need an extension of the deadline to assure the building in scope within your area, please have officers contact NFCC's Building Safety Programme Team at BuildingSafetyTeam@nationalfirechiefs.org.uk.

I trust that this correspondence and the attached documents will address your concerns, but I would be happy to correspond further regarding any other issues.

Yours sincerely,



Roy Wilsher
Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council
Chair of the Protection Board