



23<sup>rd</sup> December 2019

Dear Chief,

I am writing to you following my earlier correspondence on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2019 regarding the Protection Board's assurance framework.

On 19<sup>th</sup> December 2019, Chief Fire Officers from all FRSs with buildings in scope of the current assurance exercise were invited to take part in a teleconference alongside myself and other colleagues from NFCC to discuss feedback and coordination between FRSs. This gave myself and other Board members from NFCC, London Fire Brigade and Greater Manchester FRS the opportunity to provide further information on the formation of the Board, its purpose and how the Board have developed the current exercise.

I am glad to say that this meeting was well attended, with over 20 CFOs or their designated representatives dialling in to take part in the discussion, and I would like to thank all those who participated for taking time out of their busy schedules at such short notice.

After briefing the group, discussion mainly centred around approaches to completing returns to the assurance exercise before moving onto concerns about the word 'assurance' and how this may extend liability to FRSs and FRAs, thereby increasing the risk of them being subject to legal action. Also discussed were proposed changes to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 to include front doors and external wall systems, joint working with Local Authorities, and how to limit FRS exposure to freedom of information requests.

As a result of the dialogue, I have written to the Home Office and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government informing them that, as Chair of the Protection Board, I have taken the decision to extend the deadline for returns to the current assurance exercise to **31<sup>st</sup> January 2020**. This does not mean that the work of checking these buildings should cease or slow down, but this will give the Board time to discuss feedback from FRSs, to review the wording of the questions and guidance, and allow FRSs to make any changes to their approaches following discussion during the teleconference.

In addition, as set out at the teleconference, attached is a draft letter from the Protection and Business Safety Committee and Protection Board that FRS may choose to use for their ACM-clad high-rise residential buildings being addressed through the Protection Board. The letter has

been adjusted following the teleconference but does still include some reference to inspection/assurance. It is for FRS to decide if they want to adjust the wording still further or wait until further legal advice has been provided on associated wording.

The purpose of the letter is to ensure the responsible persons for buildings are aware of the questions being asked of FRSs by the Fire Minister, and their responsibilities within that environment. FRSs will of course decide if they use the letter, or not, or if they choose to amend for their own circumstances.

I trust this is helpful in the on-going work to reduce risk as far as reasonably practicable, and I continue to appreciate your engagement and support.

Yours sincerely,



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