

## **GRENFELL TOWER: EXPERT GROUP**

12.00, Saturday 17 June

Ministerial Conference Room, DCLG, 2 Marsham Street

### **Attendees**

Alok Sharma MP (Chair) - Minister of State, DCLG  
Dr Debbie Smith OBE - Managing Director Building Research Establishment  
Colin Todd - Independent Consultant  
Professor Luke Bisby - Edinburgh University  
Sir Ken Knight - Ex-Commissioner of London Fire Brigade  
Martin Shipp - President of the Institute of Fire Engineers  
Roy Wilsher - Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council  
Nick Coombe - London Fire Brigade  
DCLG officials

### **Summary of discussion**

- Attendees recognised the fire in the Grenfell Tower had been a terrible tragedy and understandably there would be concerns from tenants in similar buildings. It would be important over the coming days and weeks to ensure that local authorities and social housing providers received clear advice and guidance so they could better understand how to assess risks in their own properties, reassure their tenants, and take appropriate action where necessary.
- It was agreed that it was too early to speculate on the exact causes of the fire while live investigations were on-going and what that might mean for fire safety regulations. In the absence of any further evidence, the group agreed that the Local Government Association's Fire safety in purpose-built blocks of flats remains the most comprehensive guidance on ensuring fire safety in these types of buildings.
- From the available information, it was understood that a PE cored Aluminium Composite Material (ACM) cladding system had been used on Grenfell Tower. While the exact reasons for the speed of the spread of fire have yet to

be determined, it was agreed that additional tests should be undertaken with regard to this type of cladding.

- There were 3 types of ACM on the market. Of the three types, only one of them would comply with the Building Regulations guidance in Approved Document B for residential buildings over 18 metres. Given that the 3 different types of ACM were difficult to separate on the basis of a simple visual inspection- it was agreed that an immediate priority would be to contact landlords and require them to urgently check their high rise buildings for ACM cladding in order to reassure tenants that they are safe in their homes.
- It was agreed that Ministers should be advised to write to local authorities and other registered providers of social housing as a matter of urgency. Landlords would be asked to:
  - Identify all of the properties that are more than 18 metres and have external cladding
  - Identify those that have been clad with aluminium type panels
  - Inspect those identified to establish whether they are panels made of an Aluminium Composite Material (ACM)
- However, a positive identification of the type of ACM panel being used would require examples to be tested. It was agreed to advise Ministers that they should commission a testing process which would allow the type of ACM from a small sample sent by landlords to be identified.
- It was noted that there were few test facilities in the UK (at the Building Research Establishment, Edinburgh University and Exova Warrington). All would potentially need to be engaged. Members of the Group agreed to work urgently on developing a test protocol. It was noted that a process would need to be put in place to advise landlords on when and how to submit samples.
- Where a block was established to have ACM cladding fitted that potentially did not comply with the Building Regulations guidance, Government should consider providing provide advice to landlords about mitigating actions and interim safety measures. Landlords should also be encouraged to contact fire and rescue services in their area immediately to inform them if a building had non-compliant cladding. This would allow them to conduct fire safety inspections of all such tower blocks, provide advice on what remedial works might be required and consider mitigating measures in the interim. Members of the Group agreed to work on a first draft of the Guidance.