

Mayor calls on government to fund fire safety work in Lewisham

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The Mayor of Lewisham, Steve Bullock, has urged the government to fund the removal of external cladding from three Lewisham tower blocks.

In a letter to Sajid Javid MP, Secretary of State for Department for Communities and Local Government, Steve Bullock said

The government should fund the removal of external cladding from three Lewisham tower blocks. Can you confirm the Prime Minister's commitment to support local authorities with funding in London and across the country, still stands, and when any money would be available for this vital work? Leaseholders in Lewisham should not be charged for this vital work, as they would be for general building improvements to their properties.

The full letter from Mayor of Lewisham to Sajid Javid is copied below

Rt
Hon Sajid Javid MP
Department for Communities and Local Government,
2
Marsham Street,
London,
SW1P 4DF

06/07/2017

Dear
Sajid,

Re: Fire safety funding

Following the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower, council staff and those of our ALMO, Lewisham Homes and other housing providers have worked around the clock to ensure any buildings in Lewisham with external aluminium cladding are checked and tested so our residents are safe.

Last week the removal of cladding from three buildings in New Cross managed by the ALMO was ordered, following the results of Government fire safety tests. We have also put 24-hour fire safety patrols into each of the buildings to keep residents safe. Lewisham Council has also written to every individual or organisation who owns a tower block to remind them of their duty to have an up-to-date fire risk assessment.

As you know we have also deployed over 30 council employees to Kensington and Chelsea to run rest centres and support people who have been made homeless as well as releasing my Chief Executive to take over on an interim basis.

I welcomed the Prime Minister's commitment on 25 June that the government would be "supporting local authorities", and, "making sure that the resources are there to make sure what is needed to keep people safe is being done."

But I was concerned that on 27 June it was reported your departmental spokesperson had said there was, "no guarantee" of government funding and that it would be "up to local authorities and housing associations to pay" and that financial support would be considered on a "case by case" basis.

At this early stage we don't know how much the detailed work to remove cladding and make the subsequent repairs to the three buildings will cost, but it is likely to be considerable. I am also clear that leaseholders should not be charged for this vital work, as they would be for general building improvements to their properties.

It was therefore disappointing that your speech to the LGA Conference did not clarify the willingness of the government to underwrite the costs which my authority and many others will incur.

I would therefore be grateful if you would now confirm if the Prime Minister's commitment to support local authorities with funding, in London and across the country, still stands, and when any money would be available for this vital work.

Sir
Steve Bullock
Mayor of Lewisham

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