# STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE** | **Fire Safety Advisory Group** |
| **DATE** | **27 July 2017** |
| **BY** | **Carl Sergeant, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children** |

This Statement updates Members on the work of my Fire Safety Advisory Group. The Group is chaired by Des Tidbury, the Welsh Government’s Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, and comprises the following core members:

* Steve Thomas, Chief Executive, Welsh Local Government Association;
* Ruth Marks, Chief Executive, Welsh Council for Voluntary Action;
* Huw Jakeway, Chief Fire Officer, South Wales Fire and Rescue Service;
* David Wilton, Chief Executive, Tenant Participation Advisory Service Cymru;
* Stuart Ropke, Chief Executive, Community Housing Cymru; and
* Douglas Haig, Vice Chairman, Residential Landlords Association’s Wales.

The Group has now met on two occasions and, for the time being, will continue to meet on a weekly basis as events continue to develop and further test results become available. It will liaise closely with the UK Government Expert Panel and, in making recommendations to me, will have due regard to the Expert Panel’s conclusions.

I have noted the Fire Safety Advisory Group’s agreed terms of reference and writing to share these with you (see below).

Working alongside our UK Government counterparts, the Welsh Government’s efforts to ensure the safety and wellbeing of tenants in Wales remain a key priority and I expect the work of the Fire Safety Advisory Group to play a significant role in helping us meet those aims.

Agreed terms of reference:

**Purpose of the Group**

The initial focus of the Group will be the safety of high-rise buildings. The Group will also consider - on a risk basis - the safety of all[[1]](#footnote-1) high-rise buildings on a tenure neutral basis, concentrating on those with a ‘sleeping risk’, including other forms of housing, the NHS estate, schools and further education establishments, and the higher education estate.

The Group will identify and consider actions as a result of immediate investigations into the Grenfell Tower tragedy. It will provide advice to the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children to help ensure that people living in high-rise accommodation are suitably informed and feel reassured and safe. The Group will consider the longer-term implications as the public inquiry (and any subsequent investigations) into Grenfell report.

**Timescale**

The Welsh Fire Safety Advisory Group will be constituted for an initial period of three months from 6th July and be reviewed thereafter.

**Key Issues**

* Learn immediate lessons as they emerge from Grenfell Tower incident and their application in Wales and consider the immediate implications for residents and landlords of high-rise housing. This may include making recommendations on appropriate and timely information and advice to building tenants, owners and managers.
* Review the outcome of decisions by the UK Expert Group on materials testing and their implications for Wales.
* Consider the current Welsh regulatory and inspection arrangements and guidance for high-rise residential buildings and make recommendations to the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children for further review and/or action.
* On a risk basis, consider the implications of fire safety across wider residential properties and public buildings.”

Update on Building Research Establishment (BRE) large-scale tests

Members may now have seen media reports on the results of the first of six large-scale tests, conducted by the BRE on different ACM configurations. The test, undertaken on Sunday 23 July, exposed what was presumed to be the most combustible configuration of ACM and plastic foam insulation to severe fire conditions. As might be expected, the test failed. I would stress that the Welsh Government, alongside partners, has undertaken extensive work to identify high-rise residential buildings in Wales and, particularly, the presence of on those buildings of any ACM cladding.

The DCLG has issued practical advice to landlords so they can make their properties safe and will be contacting landlords identified with the type of cladding tested last weekend. We are not aware that any landlords in Wales are to be contacted by the DCLG as a consequence of this first round of large-scale test results.

I understand that further test results will be forthcoming in the next week. My Fire Safety Advisory Group will work in tandem with the Expert Panel as we apply learning to the Welsh context.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Assembly returns I would be happy to do so.

1. Including, but not limited to, student accommodation, privately-owned, social rent and owner- occupied buildings. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)