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Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

17 February 2025

Machinery of Government change

Last week, the Prime Minister made a Written Ministerial Statement to the House of Commons on the Machinery of Government change in relation to responsibility for fire, which will move from the Home Office to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

The Phase 2 Grenfell Tower Inquiry report was published on 4 September. It brought forward 58 recommendations to improve fire safety that the Government is urgently considering, with a pledge to update the public within six months of the report's publication. However, we can update that we are taking immediate action to address issues highlighted by Sir Martin Moore-Bick on governance of fire policy within government.

This change will bring responsibility for building safety and fire under a single Secretary of State, providing for a more coherent approach to keeping people safe from fire in their homes. The Home Office will retain management of the Airwave Service Contract on behalf of MHCLG and will remain responsible for the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. This change will be effective from 1st April 2025.

The MoG changes will drive improvements and provide a better service to the public. In making the recommendation on the governance of fire policy, Sir Martin said that having a single Secretary of State answerable to Parliament for all aspects of fire safety should improve the quality of government by enabling information to be shared more quickly and more effectively between teams. He said it should also ensure that greater emphasis is placed on ensuring the safety of the built environment and that policy is developed in a holistic and coherent way.

This move will bring fire into the same department as our work to strengthen multi-agency cooperation through local resilience forums (LRFs) – where Chief and Deputy Chief Fire Officers play key roles. It will mean work to prevent and prepare for major fires sits alongside our responsibilities to help LRFs work together to prevent and prepare for all local emergencies.

Ministerial responsibility will transfer to Alex Norris MP. As Ministers covering fire and building safety, we have already been working closely together.

We appreciate that this comes at a critical time in terms of the Spending Review. For fire, Spending Reviews have long been a joint process between MHCLG and Home Office, and officials from both departments worked closely on phase 1 of the Spending Review. The two departments will continue this close work as we move towards phase 2. Ensuring an effective Spending Review for fire remains a priority of both departments and all potential impacts will be considered as part of the move.

We have teams in place in the Home Office and MHCLG to manage the transition and ensure there is a smooth continuation of service and progress on reform.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D' and 'J'.

Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson MP

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Norris". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and 'N'.

Alex Norris MP