



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

To all firefighters in England

Dear Firefighter

As you will probably know, I met with the Fire Brigades Union today to discuss issues concerning the pension reform programme. It was a useful meeting. Although the situation is a complex one, my goal is clear: to get the best deal possible for firefighters and resolve this dispute. I am considering a number of issues and have told the FBU that this work is likely to conclude week commencing 8th September, after which I have offered a further meeting. We are also due to have an interim meeting following the Executive Council meeting on 26th August for the FBU to feed back their views to me.

I have stressed to the FBU that the work I am undertaking will be made near impossible if further industrial action is called for.

Turning to fitness, I know how important an issue this is from my own personal experience as a Royal Navy reservist in her mere 40's. I intend that we will have the first scoping meeting of the fitness group in September. In the meantime, I have met with DCFO Justin Johnston, the Chairman of the FireFit Steering Group, who explained the findings in the interim report that was commissioned from the University of Bath. Clearly a lot of time has gone into this work, and I will expect to see its conclusions considered by the group. I am delighted that Justin has offered to lend his support and expertise to the working group. I also have dates in my diary on hold to meet the FBU's national women's committee in September and hope to have that confirmed soon. I would be delighted to hear from other women about their experience of working in the fire and rescue service and what more can be done to encourage and support female firefighters.

It is clear to me that the work on fitness standards needs to evolve alongside a greater number of career pathways for those who chose to remain operational. The work on fitness is as much about good workforce management as it is about developing tests and assessments. A lot has already been done in other sectors where roles are physically demanding and there is much we can learn from this. It is through this working group I hope we can produce the reassurances that firefighters both want and deserve.

Much has been made of the 'no job, no pension' issue. Please be assured, firefighters aged 55 and over will be able to take their 2015 scheme pension on a fairly actuarially reduced basis on enhanced terms which we have previously proposed, while the benefits they had previously earned in their 1992 scheme will be fully protected and can be taken on retirement without any actuarial reduction. The Normal Pension Age of 60 has been in existence since 2006, and no one in the 1992 scheme will be required to work beyond 55 for another eight years. We have plenty of time to put in place measures to support older workers.

Thank you for your patience on these matters and I hope to be able to update you on further progress very soon.

Penny Mordaunt MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

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22/08/2014

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