



Home Office

Lord Greenhalgh
Minister of State for Building Safety,
Fire and Communities at
Ministry of Housing, Communities &
Local Government and Home Office

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14th May 2020

To:

Roy Wilsher, Chair, National Fire Chiefs Council
Ian Stevens, Chair, Fire Services Management Committee
Susannah Hancock, CEO, Association of Police and Crime Commissioners
Matt Wrack, General Secretary, Fire Brigades Union
Ade Robinson CEO, Fire Officers Association
Tristan Ashby, CEO, Fire and Rescue Service Association
Mick Crennell, Chair, Fire Leaders Association

Copied:

All Chief Fire Officers
All Chairs of Authorities/PFCCs/Mayors

Dear colleagues,

I am writing to you as regarding the recommendations made in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire & Rescue Services' State of Fire and Rescue report. Having completed the first round of service inspections in a decade, the report provides a crucial opportunity for us to take stock on fire reform. As the new Minister responsible for the Fire and Rescue Service, I want to understand the views of the key national bodies on the report's recommendations, as I develop my forward strategy.

There is much to commend in the report. Sir Thomas found that *"Almost universally, the focus of the fire staff we met is on protecting the communities they serve. Their determination and dedication to protect life and property are second to none. Services provide a highly skilled response to a range of emergencies and have designed life-saving initiatives. Firefighting is dangerous, but the sector continues to improve its working practices to make responding to incidents as safe as it can be."* Of this you all deserve to be proud.

However, the report also made for stark reading in other areas, with clear challenges in terms of the balance of services' work, their efficiency and the treatment of their people.

The report also made several recommendations for the a range of bodies including the Government to consider, some of which may require fundamental or legislative change. I know that you will have have been considering these recommendations individually and collectively and I write to you today to seek your views more formally.

Sir Tom recommended that the Home Office, in consultation with others, should review and determine the roles of: (a) fire and rescue services; and (b) those who work in them. This is a key recommendation, which could shape the future direction of fire and rescue services and I would like to hear your views.

The report also recommends that the Home Office, the Local Government Association, the National Fire Chiefs Council and trade unions should consider whether the current pay negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform. Whilst this recommendation is addressed to specific stakeholders, I would also like to understand the full range of views on the key question of whether the current pay negotiation machinery requires fundamental reform.

The report also makes recommendations in relation to the need for clearer operational independence and suggests the development of a code of ethics. Given the importance of professionalism and good governance in fire and rescue, I would also welcome any initial views in these areas.

This is an opportunity for you to contribute to the consideration of the recommendations. As the Minister with responsibility for the fire and rescue service, I want to understand your views as the key national leaders in this area. Although I imagine you will make collective responses on behalf of your constituent bodies, I am also open to any direct response from individual services. I am conscious that Sir Tom's deadlines are currently under review as a result of the pandemic response but I would be grateful for written submissions on these matters by the end of June. Your submissions should be sent to stateoffirerecs@homeoffice.gov.uk.



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