

**Richard Drax MP**

South Dorset



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

**LONDON SW1A 0AA**

6 December 2012

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for contacting me about firefighters' pensions.

I fully recognise the breadth and depth of the work undertaken by our Fire and Rescue Service and the bravery, dedication and professionalism of those such as yourself who work within it. Those people who work within the Service provide a trusted local service to their communities, whilst also responding to national emergencies when required.

The cost of public service pensions paid out has risen by over a third over the last ten years to £32 billion a year and the number of pensions will increase dramatically over the coming years. The Government wants public service pensions to remain among the very best available. With an ageing population, public sector pension reform is inevitable but Ministers have listened to concerns, and come up with a deal that is fair and affordable. The reforms should achieve the objectives of sustainability, fairness and responsibility within the public finances.

The new pension scheme design will be based on career average revalued earnings, with no cap on how much pension can be accrued. New schemes are not expected to be introduced until 2015, and so anyone leaving the scheme before then will not be affected. Both Lord Hutton and the Government have recognised the unique position of the uniformed services. Lord Hutton recommended a normal retirement age of 60 for firefighters, in line with the current retirement age in the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme. I am pleased that firefighters will continue to have a lower pension age than other non-uniformed public servants.

I believe that these reforms are sustainable, fair and effective, providing firefighters with a generous pension while protecting the taxpayer.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Drax', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.