



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

10<sup>th</sup> January, 2014

Thank you for contacting me about the pension age of firefighters.

Firefighters provide the British public with a vitally important service and consistently put themselves in danger in order to protect us. I fully appreciate that the physical stresses of doing this require a careful evaluation of what constitutes a fair and reasonable pension age.

I was disappointed by the FBU's decision to take strike action over Christmas. This action was completely unnecessary and only damages the good reputation of the fire and rescue service.

After two years of discussions and improved terms, firefighters will still get one of the most generous public service pensions available – £26,000 a year after a full career, including the £7,000 state pension. Someone in the private sector would have to contribute twice as much to get the same pension. Furthermore, for every pound a fire fighter invests taxpayers are paying in an extra £5 into the pension pot. Last year that cost taxpayers over half a billion pounds. Firefighters' pensions must be fair to both firefighters and the taxpayer.

No one will be forced to work longer and firefighters will still be able to retire from age 55 with a fair pension. A greater proportion of firefighters are protected than any other large public service workforce and it is important to remember that one in three firefighters already has a retirement age of 60 due to the pension scheme changes implemented in 2006. In addition, Dr Williams' independent review found that, based on current practices, 100 per cent of firefighters who remain physically active will still be operational at age 60.

A retirement age of 60 does not mean the introduction of a national fitness test and dismissal if you fail a fitness test. That is not on the cards. If a fire fighter falls below the expected level of fitness, they are provided with a personal fitness training programme and re-tested until they pass. The Normal Pension Age report found that the vast majority of fire fighters were able to regain their fitness levels following a period of extra training.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Robert Syms

Member of Parliament for Poole