



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

020 7219 4198

3 December, 2012

Dear Mr McFarlane

Thank you for your letter of 27 November about flooding in the South West and the magnificent efforts of our local Fire & Rescue Service who have worked so hard in the most demanding circumstances.

Everyone of us recognises the breadth and depth of the work undertaken by our Fire and Rescue Service and the bravery, dedication and professionalism of the men and women who work within it. Those people that work within the Service provide a trusted local service to their communities, whilst also responding to national emergencies when required.

As you will be aware, every part of the public sector needs to play its part in cutting the deficit the Government has inherited from the Labour Government. I am convinced the Service can make well planned efficiency savings without impacting on frontline services. More flexible staffing arrangements, joint working and tackling outdated working practices are just some of the ways in which individual authorities can protect frontline services and protect the quality and breadth of the service that the public receive, whilst also helping reduce the inherited deficit.

Contrary to claims by the Fire Brigades Union, the Government has protected frontline uniformed services as much as possible. Fire and rescue authorities only need to make savings of 2.2 per cent of their spending in 2011-12 and just 0.5 per cent in 2012-13. There is significant scope to deliver these. The new Fire and Rescue National Framework for England recognises the proficiency and experience of fire and rescue authorities and gives them the freedom and flexibility to deliver services to their communities without prescription from Whitehall. It will move accountability away from central government and place power in the hands of local communities.

Mr T McFarlane



I am sure Ministers will take into account the points you put forward in your letter about statutory duty, costs and the fact that large scale floods are becoming a regular feature of the work of your members. Thank you again for sending me such a comprehensive briefing letter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink is located below the text 'Yours sincerely'. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'L. Smith'.

Mr T McFarlane
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Horfield
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