



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Mr Tam McFarlane
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Fire Brigades Union South West
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10th December 2012

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Oliver Colvile'.

Thank you for your letter about the recent flooding in the south west.

Let me first say that I wholeheartedly applaud the Fire and Rescue Service for the fantastic and at some points dangerous work they undertook. In our communities these brave men and women are vitally important both locally and nationally.

You will be aware that every part of the public sector needs to play its part in cutting the deficit the Government has inherited from the Labour Government as the current structure is simply not sustainable. 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 More flexible staffing arrangements, joint working and tackling outdated working practices are just some of the ways in which individual authorities can protect frontline services and protect the quality and breadth of the service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.

The Government has protected frontline uniformed services as much as possible. I understand that 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.

I am pleased that fire-related deaths and arson have been falling and continue to fall. In England, fire fatalities and non-fatal casualties fell by 34 per cent and 54 per cent respectively between 2001-02 and 2011-12, and the average area of fire damage fell by 20 per cent in dwellings and around 10 per cent in other buildings during the same period. In 2011, total fires fell by 6 per cent to 227,000.

I do fully recognise the professionalism and commitment that members of the Fire and Rescue Service possess in keeping members of the public safe. If I can be of further assistance please do get in touch and I look forward to seeing you soon.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and curves, followed by a small 'h' above the main signature.

Oliver Colvile

Member of Parliament for Plymouth, Sutton & Devonport