

JACK LOPRESTI MP

Member of Parliament for Filton & Bradley Stoke



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

20th January 2014

Subject: Firefighters Pension Scheme

Please find enclosed the letter I have recently received from Brandon Lewis MP, the Minister with responsibility of the Fire Service, sent to me in response to correspondence on your behalf. I hope this reply goes some way to explaining current Government policy on this matter.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of help with this or other matters in the future.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jack".

Jack Lopresti MP
Filton and Bradley Stoke



**Department for
Communities and
Local Government**

Brandon Lewis MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

**Department for Communities and Local
Government**

Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Tel: 0303 444 3430
Fax: 0303 444 3986
E-Mail: brandon.lewis@communities.gsi.gov.uk

www.gov.uk/dclg

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Jack Lopresti MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Jack

16 DEC 2013

Thank you for your email of 6th December on behalf of your constituent, Mr Chris Taylor, Avon Fire Brigades Union Secretary, about reforms to the Firefighters Pension Scheme.

As your constituent has raised a number of points, I would like to first reiterate the underlying rationale behind the changes being introduced by the Government, changes which are underpinned by the Public Services Pension Act 2013. People are living much longer and the average 60 year old is living ten years longer now than they did in the 1970s. This means that the cost of public service pensions have increased by around a third in real terms over the last ten years to £32 billion a year. Despite recent reforms, most of these increased costs are being met by taxpayers. As a result all public service pension schemes are being reformed. These reforms will ensure that the pension schemes continue to be sustainable and affordable whilst fair to both public sector workers and the taxpayer.

The Government announced increases to current employee contribution rates, equivalent to 3.2 percentage points of pay on average, to be phased in from April 2012. The contribution rate set out in the Proposed Final Agreement is the rate that can be delivered across all of the schemes for that workforce. The likely effect of this is that the average rate in the 2015 scheme could be 12.6% in 2015, rather than the 13.2% set out in the Proposed Final Agreement. I would also like to stress that comparing contribution rates across schemes should not be done in isolation. Pensions are just one aspect of wider remuneration packages, which varies between schemes and while the contribution rates for firefighters are higher than most other public sector workers (although comparable to the Police), this in part reflects the earlier retirement age that they enjoy.

The Fire Brigades Union's Trade Dispute letter was clear they were not striking over the Normal Pension Age of 60, which has been in place since the introduction of the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme 2006. One in three pension scheme members is already a member of the 2006 scheme, and less than a quarter of firefighters will see a change to their Normal Pension Age in 2015. To address concerns raised by the FBU in relation to fitness, my recently issued consultation on a set of draft fitness principles will ensure that no conscientious firefighter will leave the service without access to a job or a pension after they are age 55.

BRANDON LEWIS MP