



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

26<sup>th</sup> September 2013

Thank you for your two letters of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> September which I read with interest about the pension age of firefighters. I was particularly interested to read about the three cases you mentioned in your second letter and I certainly sympathise with the particular situations of those firefighters.

It may be helpful to set out the Government's thinking on this matter, as I understand it:

I know that the Government fully appreciates that the physical stresses of doing this require a careful evaluation of what constitutes a fair and reasonable pension age, but it is felt that strike action is unnecessary in the context of two years of discussions and improved terms, after which 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.

In May 2012 the Government published a Proposed Final Agreement on reforms to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes in England. After further detailed discussions this offer was revised in June. This new offer included lower employee pension contributions from 2015, a better pension for firefighters retiring from age 55, and a Joint Working Group to look at the FBU's concerns on fitness management.

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, an independent review found that, based on current practices, 100 per cent of firefighters who remain physically active will still be operational at age 60.

I hope this is helpful in setting out the Government's position on the matter. I am of course happy to meet at one of my surgeries to discuss this further if you wish to attend one, and further details can be found on my website.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' with a horizontal line extending from the top right, and a small 'C' at the end of the bottom right stroke.