



Department for
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Dear Matt,

It was very good to meet with you and Sean last Thursday – my first full day as Minister for the fire and rescue service. I was grateful for your kind congratulations, and like you, very much hope to maintain the close working relationship.

You gave a very clear exposition of the issues you see as important in the current dispute over pensions. As I said to you, I operate within the same financial and policy envelope that Brandon operated, and this relates particularly to the shape of the proposed scheme. However I believe that the revision to the existing proposals that Brandon made on the 9 July does meet many of the points you raised in discussion – and I think that the implications of this new position should now be fully explored by you and your Executive Council. I also consider that there are significant other areas where we can make more progress, and I was pleased with your willingness to engage fully with the work on fitness and capability which Peter Holland, the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, will be getting underway. In the meantime we are still exploring all of the details raised in the recent consultation and a Government response will be published shortly.

I also requested a meeting with members of the national women's committee of the Fire Brigades Union to discuss the experiences of women in the fire and rescue service generally, including the fitness and capability issue. As discussed with you that whole area is where I think I can best make a contribution to the concerns of your membership

Since we met, the Chancellor has announced that the Government will increase the minimum age at which people can access their pension under the new tax rules from 55 to 57 in 2028 and which will thereafter remain 10 years below the state pension age. However, I am pleased to confirm that the increases will not apply to the Firefighters' Pension Schemes, recognising the unique nature of the occupation.

I am very conscious that firefighters do not want to be on strike. As well as the moral issue which every firefighter I have spoken to is acutely aware, I am conscious that during this dispute they will have lost a considerable amount of pay. Strikes do nothing to enhance either my options or my focus on addressing the concerns of your membership. In contrast, they stifle talks and close down options. I sincerely hope that the Executive Council will concur and not call for future industrial action.

I look forward to hearing how the Executive Council meeting went and to working with you over the forthcoming coming months.

Penny Mordaunt
PENNY MORDAUNT MP