



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Working together for a safer Scotland

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Chair of the Board Pat Watters CBE

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If phoning or calling ask for Mr P Watters
Date 26 May 2017

Dear Minister

I write further to our meeting of 16 May 2017 at which we discussed our ambition to see the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) transform to meet the changing risks that the people of Scotland now face.

I believe this is a shared ambition. The Scottish Government has been visionary in its ambition for transformed public services that add greater value and better meet the needs of the very people they serve. The Scottish Government's Fire Framework clearly sets out its requirement for the SFRS to transform how it delivers its service and continues to play its role in ensuring Scotland's safety.

While change is a difficult challenge for SFRS, staff representative bodies and Government, I believe this is the right time to transform. I clearly set out to you that the consequences of inaction are that the current delivery model will fail, leading to the probable denigration of service and diminished outcomes - the very outcomes that both I and the Chief Officer were appointed to uphold.

The SFRS exists to save lives and ensure wellbeing. Without transformation our ability to do so is diminished. Our delivery model is designed for another era. It is not designed to deal with terrorist attacks, severe weather and Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest – some of the very real risks now facing our country.

By transforming, we can better meet these risks, we can add greater value and we can protect a public service held in the highest regard by communities across Scotland. It is the right thing to do.

Our transformational vision would see a re-design of the firefighter role and a re-balancing of personnel. In return for new T&Cs, a significantly wider role, new duty patterns and flexibility the resulting efficiencies would fund a fair recognition package for firefighters. Delivered in partnership with our staff representative bodies, this would see Scotland held up as the vanguard in harmonious industrial relations and high value public services.

As I set out, neither can we ignore the stark reality of the most challenging fiscal pressures we have seen in many years. Without transformation, we cannot maintain the delivery of current frontline services beyond the 2017/18 financial year.

We .../

We have been exhaustive in our financial and operational modelling and these have shown that transformation is the right option, but the window of opportunity is narrow. Our current firefighter retirement profile allows us to deliver a planned re-balancing of our workforce and modernise our delivery model. I stressed that if we do not exercise this opportunity, we would be faced with the need to enforce compulsory redundancies and undertake cuts to services.

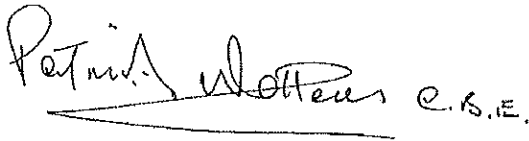
We will share our detailed financial and operational planning with you and will also set out the implications for our service delivery were we not to gain Scottish Government support to transform. We will also underline the financial and operational consequences for SFRS should the Scottish Government seek to propose a long-term incremental approach to change.

Reform of the fire and rescue service has been good for Scotland. It has provided us with the required foundations to confidently deliver transformation but time is not on our side.

Transformation will present many challenges both for SFRS and Scottish Government, but the benefits of transforming, and the risk of doing nothing, far outweigh these challenges. You have already recognised that SFRS is the public sector reform success story. We have proven our ability and we have proven our commitment to always put the people of Scotland first.

We ask the Scottish Government to work with us and to support the transformation that will deliver a Scottish Fire and Rescue Service fit for 21st Century Scotland and beyond.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Watters C.B.E." with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Pat Watters, CBE
Chair, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service