

T: 0131-244 2342 F: 0131-244 2564
E: steven.torrie@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Chief Officers

Our ref: F3556075

7 February 2011

Dear Chief Officers

DEAR CHIEF OFFICER LETTER (SCOTLAND) 2/2011

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE REFORM – INTERIM ARRANGEMENTS

On 24 November 2010, Fergus Ewing, Minister for Community Safety, wrote to Convenors proposing an agreement between fire authorities and the Scottish Government where new large-scale capital projects; senior officer appointments and promotions, changes to frontline and control room provision and personnel conditions, their purpose and possible alternative arrangements, would be discussed collectively with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Advisory Unit (SFRAU). Subsequently, the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) of 14 December 2010 accepted a paper tabled by SFRAU which set out the rationale for the approach and a more detailed definition of what would be considered relevant matters.

This letter now formally advises Chief Fire Officers of the implementation of the interim arrangements, as set out below, and thanks Chief Fire Officers for their engagement with SFRAU to date.

In light of the current review and potential reform of the Scottish fire and rescue services, there was a consensus among MAG members that there are benefits for individual FRS authorities, and for the fire family collectively, if key decisions taken by fire and rescue authorities over the next period are discussed at a Scottish level to ensure that decisions made, or proposals being developed, are conducive to long term ambitions. There was also a consensus among MAG members that SFRAU should facilitate those discussions.

The MAG interim arrangements ask that fire and rescue authorities commence a programme of regular and routine updates on items of significant business relating to capital programmes and workforce planning.

Thus the Minister would be grateful if Chief Fire Officers could now share fire authority capital programmes and workforce planning matters which would then subsequently form the basis of discussions with SFRAU.

It is recognised and appreciated by Ministers that Chief Fire Officers routinely communicate significant issues with the Advisory Unit. The interim arrangements set out here are simply intended to secure a more formal arrangement of that existing communication. It is also recognised that fire authorities are committed to a rolling three to five year capital investment programme.

It will also be the case that any significant changes to the Scottish Government centrally provided and supported services such as the Scottish Fire Service College (SFSC), or Firelink, will be submitted to SFRAU for a similar discussion before decisions are taken.

The Scottish Government fully recognises that there will be legitimate reasons for authorities to progress issues, which on face value may not automatically align with the longer term direction of travel. For that reason, SFRAU's professional view should be sought at the earliest opportunity and certainly before implementation. However, taking these arrangements into account, ultimately still the responsibility for spend lies with the fire authority.

Ministers hope that this joint coordination and consultation arrangement can be developed to ensure the business processes of fire authorities, and the Scottish Government are closely linked and focussed on long term, positive outcomes and reinforce the strong partnership arrangements currently in place.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Advisory Unit is happy to provide clarification on any matter relating to this Dear Chief Officer Letter.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steven Torrie', written in a cursive style.

STEVEN TORRIE
Head of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Advisory Unit