



HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ

The Rt Hon George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

20 NOV 2015

Dear George,

Thank you for your letter of 26 October to George Osborne on behalf of a number of your constituents ahead of the Spending Review. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area and I am sorry for the delay.

Fire and rescue services play a vital role in protecting our communities and the Government is committed to ensuring public safety, at all times, through provision of effective and capable services across the country.

The majority of central government funding for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England is supplied via the Local Government Finance Settlement. Allocations beyond 2015-16 will be set out in the annual Local Government Finance Report in the usual way. As your constituents note, the precise cost of fire and rescue services varies across the country in line with numerous local factors. However, I can assure you that the absolute necessity of maintaining public safety will be at the heart of the Government's approach to providing funding for fire and rescue services.

As your constituents note, the nature of fire and rescue work has been changing in recent years. It is right, therefore, that the Government considers what reforms are necessary for the fire and rescue services to respond to these changes. For example, the Government has recently consulted on measures to support greater collaboration between the emergency services, which has the potential to deliver both significant service improvements and efficiencies.

Reform to make public services more effective and efficient is an important aspect of the Spending Review process.

Please pass on my thanks to your constituents for making us aware of these concerns.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'GREG HANDS', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

GREG HANDS