

21 September, 2005

Mrs Edwina Hart MBE AM
Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration
Welsh Assembly Government
Cathays Park
CARDIFF
CF10 3NQ

FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION (WALES) SCHEME

At its meeting on 19 September 2005, the North Wales Fire Authority resolved that a letter should be sent to you to express concern about the delay in introducing changes to the pension scheme on the lines of those being made for England by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

It has been confirmed that in April 2006 new arrangements will come into force in England which, among other things, will involve new funding arrangements for pensions, the creation of pension funds to back the scheme for the future and the introduction of pensions for personnel on the retained duty system.

The Authority was informed that you are considering introducing similar arrangements in Wales in April 2007. The Authority is concerned that the delay in consulting on arrangements in Wales has meant that the potential benefits of the changes – for fire authorities in financial terms and for personnel on the retained duty system in terms of access to pensions – have also been delayed.

The Authority has asked for your assurance that consultation on these matters will be progressed in good time so that there is no further delay beyond April 2007.

over/...

The Authority has also asked for confirmation of your plans to consult on amendments to the scheme to take account of the Civil Partnership Act 2004, which comes into force on 5 December. The ODPM has issued draft regulations for comment in its Firefighters' Pension Scheme Circular 3/2005 of 13 September. It would be disappointing if the Assembly were to have to deal with civil partnerships by means of retrospective amendments, given its commitment and that of the Fire and Rescue Service in Wales to encouraging diversity.

Yours sincerely



Trevor Roberts
Cadeirydd/Chairman