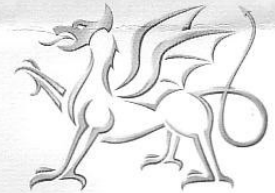


Edwina Hart AM MBE
Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration
Weinidog dros Gyflawnder Cymdeithasol ac Adfywio



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Our ref: EH/00820/05
Your ref:

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3 October 2005

Dear Trevor

Thank you for your letter of 21 September regarding the changes proposed to the Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

I understand your Authority's concerns, though I had thought from our regular Liaison Group meetings that we were all in agreement and clear on the policy direction and timing.

As you know, irrespective of the detail of the pension scheme, I have concluded that the new arrangements for pensions, including financing, should be implemented from 1 April 2007 in Wales. This will allow more time to ensure that the financial position and accounting mechanisms are properly addressed and enable us to ensure that FRAs in Wales are in the best possible position to benefit from the new financial arrangements. Assembly Officials are preparing a programme to take forward the modelling of pensions projections, including contributory income and outgo, and are putting in hand arrangements for an actuarial valuation so that we have a more accurate assessment of the financial position in Wales. We have also discussed the need to open early discussions with the Treasury and with financial representatives of the fire and rescue service. This will be done through the auspices of the Fire Expenditure Group comprising FRA and Assembly Government officials. We also need to consider how transitional arrangements may operate.



BUDDSODDWR MEWN POBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

In relation to your comments on the Civil Partnerships Act. I am aware that ODPM have now commenced consultation on their proposed order and that these need to be reflected in Wales. We are discussing the implications with our legal and Assembly business advisers.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to be 'J. M.', is located below the text block.