

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 13 March 2018 08:10:44
To: Public Engagement Unit
Cc: Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs
Subject: FW: SFRS Transformation Consultation

Hi,

Please add the attached correspondence to the MACCS system and allocate to the appropriate officials.

Thanks

[REDACTED]
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Date: 12 March 2018 at 22:43:20 GMT

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Subject: SFRS Transformation Consultation
Dear Nicola and All,

Having spent 32 years as a Fire Officer in the former HIFRS, the last few years were as Head of Fire Safety, I would like to inform you that the SFRS is failing the public in Scotland. The Single Police and Fire Service have rapidly followed the Scottish Ambulance Service example in a downward spiral of failure and providing a very poor service. The Single Police and Fire Service, which was opposed by all senior managers and professionals in the industry and only recommended by a consultants report which made hugely exaggerated claims of savings and potential efficiencies. The only savings made have been the loss of over 1000 front line Police officers and nearly 1000 front line operational fire fighters since April 2013. There is little evidence of any efficiency or budgetary savings when considering the true costs of the centralisation against the loss of 1000's of front line officers, indeed the actual savings have been minimal if any! The result is a second rate service in Scotland which is failing the public every day. The SFRS statistical information should be proof alone to the Scottish Government that the Single Fire Service project is a failure and should be

halted before there is a critical loss of life, involving firefighter and public fatalities. The statistics are your statistics not mine they are made up following incidents and they all show that the good work done over many years by the previous eight Fire And Rescue Services in reducing incidents, injuries and fatalities has stalled with the creation of the SFRS in 2013. All the SFRS statistical graphs show a hard caught but steady decline in incidents and injuries over many years which levels off or increases since 2013/2014, this failure proves the SFRS is not as efficient or effective as the previous eight services, therefore the public is less safe!

The CFO has produced a futures document and has gone on record last August to admit the New Single SFRS is UNSUSTAINABLE beyond April 2018! This is the most senior Fire Officer in Scotland publicly admitting the Single Fire Service is a complete failed project and it only took 5 years to fail. It is a fact that all the principle and senior fire officers, when consulted regarding the proposal to create a Single Fire Service, said it would not work and it was certainly not in the interest of Public Safety in Scotland. They have all been vindicated, which is no reason to celebrate as it is a tragedy and travesty that this has been allowed to happen in 2018. The Fire Service in the North and North East of Scotland in particular has been dragged backwards 20 years or so by a management and governance system that does not understand or comprehend the particular issues in relation to do with Rural Fire Fighting and the provision of Rural Community Emergency Services. I was invited to very unpleasant meeting in the Cumbaslang HQ last year where a Principle Fire Service Manager tried to bully me into going away and stop this "Sustained and Unprecedented Attack on the SFRS". This, bullying attempt, was the SFRS's only argument against the failures relating to the Centralisation of the Fire Service and the Centralised Control System failings. I left the meeting feeling not reassured but embarrassed that such a management style was still in existence in a modern service and was apparently thriving in the SFRS. Further very public and personnel insults were issued via the press which only reaffirmed the SFRS is a failed project.

There is a petition still live with the Petitions Committee which remains open as the SFRS is unable to prove that it can and is delivering on its promised outcomes from its inception. The Committee has asked the SFRS to answer two FOI requests where MSP's have asked for information and were both refused, this request by the Committee has been asked twice now and to date the SFRS has failed to respond. These two FOI enquiries were firstly regarding the Maintenance of life safety Appliances and equipment in Shetland, Orkney and The Western Isles, which we know has not been undertaken for well over a year. That's 18 Tonne Fire Appliances not getting the mandatory 13 week vehicle safety inspections as required for all goods vehicles most of which are undertaken over 6 weeks in general haulage. That's Ladders, pumps and Cutting Gear not being maintained for over a year, these two basic failures are a measure of the SFRS's inability to manage basic life safety tasks and the Fire Boards Inability to govern effectively and manage the SFRS in the public interest, indeed to the detriment of the public's safety. The second FOI request was to try to find out the Call Handling times and appliance response times, time of call to leaving the station, measured between the old Grampian and HIRFS Fire Control's and the New Fire Control in Dundee. The SFRS have only a week to respond to this second request from the committee and look like the cannot respond without admitting guilt.

The centralisation of the fire control has been an absolute failure and the failures are occurring daily, just last weekend all emergency services were sent to a RTC incident with several casualties in Quarff, Shetland when this casualties were in fact 10 miles in the opposite direction at Veensgarth, this estimated 30 minute delay and confusion was not in the best interest of the Casualties and is another indication of how the SFRS, SAS and Police Scotland are not serving the public well. A few weeks ago Tounge Fire Crew in Sutherland were called out to Tong in the Western Isles, these continuing mistakes and delays are not the fault of the Control Staff in Dundee they

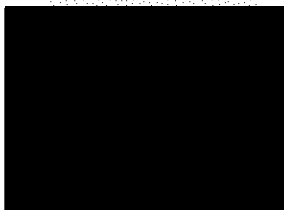
are caused totally as a result of the Centralisation of the Controls where technology has been used to replace Local Knowledge, this was stressed to Justice secretary at the time and ignored. The result of ignoring the professionals who knew that Local Knowledge can never be replaced by technology, is a failed service a failed Control System which is no where near interoperable as the 3 Control Rooms in Scotland all use different systems, which means they do not work together and indeed the systems are so different the staff can not be used to support each other, according to a recent HMI report. The now famous call outs where Lairg was turned out to Skye 200 mile trip, John O Groats being asked to attend Stronsay an Orkney Island, Bressay called out to attend an Incident in Yell and Thurso Fire Station Called to a Car on fire in a Commercial Garage in Dundee, the fire was 100metres away in Thurso, are all well documented and denied by the SFRS as causing delays!

I have enclosed below my response to the 90 day Consultation on the SFRS Transformation for your information. It is very blunt and to the fact not good reading for the SFRS however, to be fare to the SFRS and its Officers it is not their fault the Single Service has failed. The blame lies completely with the Scottish Government who ignored the advice of very experienced professional Fire Officers and accepted a very flawed consultants report, which was full of inaccuracies and exaggerated possible benefits and efficiencies. The irony of the Consultation it is based on a report which largely says that the whole of Scotland should adopt the policies and procedures that the previous HIFRS and Grampian Services had been undertaking and developing for the last 20 to 30 years. The SFRS has tried to push former Strathclyde-like bad practice and one size fits all policy's and procedures on to all our communities and make it work! Well it looks like the penny has dropped and the only way to run a rural service is the way it was being run by very experienced officers for many years. One thing the 5 year failed SFRS experiment has shown is that centralisation is not good, advisable, or beneficial in any service. The SAS, Transport Scotland, Scottish Water and now the Single Police and Fire Service all have one thing in common they waste and do not save money, they are ineffective and inefficient at providing basic public services and should all be considered to be devolved back to local control.

The SAS, Police and Fire Services are emergency services and should and would benefit from being all taken under one Public Emergency Service Umbrella, however these new joint services should be locally controlled, funded and governed as 4 or 5 local devolved emergency services. There is a window of opportunity to do a grass roots review of the way forward involving all the Services, this review should be undertaken by former professional officers of each service and not consultants of serving officers involved in the failed services today.

I would urge you First Minister to undertake an immediate and unprecedented review as soon as possible and stop this failed project, which will never succeed, without a complete reversal of the failed centralisation. Ask the staff? you will be very hard pushed to find any serving Police or Fire Service personnel who think the Centralisation has worked. Listen to the people and the staff, please.

Regards



Consultation response:

"With regard to the consultation requested in the SFRS Transformation document "Your Service Your Voice", I would like to make the following observations regarding the document itself and the transformation in general.

Your Service Your Voice;

The opening statement that the SFRS has been good for Scotland is very subjective and is based on what evidence? This is not born out on the local evidence we have been informed about, indeed the public's opinion of the SFRS in the North and North East of Scotland would be at odds with this initial statement. The Safety and wellbeing of communities has not been enhanced by the SFRS, this is factually represented in the Services own statistical information, where clearly in all areas of incidents, fire deaths and injuries the graphs has levelled or increased since 2013-14 when the SFRS was formed. All these statistical graphs show a steady decline in all areas over many years under the previous eight Fire and Rescue Services and the steady decline has not continued after the creation of the SFRS.

The graph you have used to demonstrate the long term trend reduction in Fire Fatalities in Scotland on page three is unfortunate, as it actually clearly identifies that the creation of the SFRS in 2013-14, demonstrates the failure of the Single Service, as the fatalities rate starts to rise. This is at odds with the view that the SFRS is performing well where it can be seen that the good work the previous eight services was better and more effective.

The 55% reduction in fires since 1994 statistic you use also confirms the massive amount of good work that the previous eight services did in reducing fires, largely due to a massive effort in Community Fire Safety from the mid 90's. It also bears testament to the effectiveness of the prescript Legislative Fire Safety at the time under the Fire Precautions Act 1971. This dramatic 55% reduction was therefore achieved by the crewing and establishment levels that you mention were introduced through the The Fire Services Act 1947, this is true testament to the capability and suitability of the legislation at the time. This effective Legislation which was repealed by the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, has meant that no longer the public are entitled to receive a certain minimum level of fire cover in a prescribed time all over the UK. It also meant the less prescript legislation has seen a reverse in the safety in public buildings seen in the SFRS statistics and which may have indeed had an influence on the tragedy's at Grenfell Tower and the Loch Lomond Hotel.

The Statutory Legislation that the SFRS operates under has changed in 2005 and 2012, this is true, however the work the Fire and Rescue Service does has not really changed dramatically since the mid 90's. The eight previous services all undertook Legislative Fire Safety (Inspections and Audits), Community Fire Safety (Home Safety Inspections, Community Safety Inspections, Youth Cadet and Vulnerable Person Schemes, Education Risk Awareness Training, Drug and Alcohol Partnerships, Accident Prevention Partnerships, Road Safety Partnerships, Social Work and Health Care partnerships etc) and attended Fires, Road Traffic Collisions, Flooding, Structural Collapse, Hight Rescue, Water Rescue, Terrorist Incidents, Off-Shore Firefighting Teams, Emergency Planning and First Responder partnerships. The Statistical evidence the SFRS has published on its web site clearly indicates the eight previous FRS's all performed better than the SFRS has since it came into being in 2013-14. The Document talks about the changing role of the firefighter, however it

seems the new role is already being undertaken in many areas by the SFRS and was already in place with the previous eight services and could be undertaken in any area across Scotland were it was felt necessary by the Community it serves. The Inflexibility of the SFRS to address local needs is the only stumbling block to this happening where it is deemed necessary on a Community by Community basis.

The Document tries to suggest the inflexibility and historic nature of the repealed legislation system, which is 70 years old and is preventing the flexibility necessary to address the crewing needs of the service in today's communities. It talks about flexible crewing and varying appliance sizes and capabilities, as if this was new to the Fire and Rescue Service in Scotland, this of course may be correct when considering the inflexible one size fits all SFRS. It is our experience, correct us if we are wrong, but the former Highlands and Islands and Grampian Fire and Rescue Service's had flexible crewing and various sizes of fire appliance with varying equipment, which was inherited by the SFRS. It is very alarming and quite ironic that the SFRS are now proposing that their Futures Transition preference is to emulate the service's they have spent the last 5 years trying to eradicate systems, decry former policies and dissolve processes. These systems and processes were created many years ago to accommodate the diverse needs of many rural and very different community needs. The North, North East and Islands Communities were better served by the previous services who knew and understood fully the needs and requirements of the Communities they served. The previous services had flexible crewing where a minimum of two personnel were given permission on occasion to attend incidents at the discretion of the Local District Officer who knew and understood the crews capability, equipment, the incident and the location etc. These previous services also had flexibility in appliances with a verity from Full Water Tender (18tonnes) Midi Fire Appliance (7.5 tonnes), Light Fire Appliance (3.5 tonnes), Ultra Light Fire Appliance (2 tonnes) Fire Trailer, Static Unit, 4x4 Appliance, Combination Airport/Local Authority Appliance etc etc. The former services had flexibility of equipment and role, where units were equipped for specific task such as RTC, Wild Fire, First Responder and Community Response Units, these units were and still are known as CRU's in the former HIFRS area. The Highland and Islands and Grampian FRS's also had Off Shore Firefighting Teams which were funded by the Local Authorities concerned with the risk to there communities whilst at sea, this funding was then transferred to the MCA which subsequently withdrew the funding and the units were disbanded. The Personnel and Equipment we believe are still in place but no longer utilised.

The document makes a valued attempt to discuss the benefits of joint working particularly with Social Work and Health Care Professionals when undertaking Home Fire Safety Visits, this is an area we totally support. This again however is an area that is largely already being undertaken during HFSV's, crews are trained and instructed to observe living conditions, social depravation, Slips trips and falls issues as well as Alcohol and Drug Dependency whilst looking at the Fire Safety Issues. These Community Safety Personnel have existing referral and assistance routes to progress issues through, they are on a daily basis assisting other services with general Community Safety. This is an area where a slight tightening up of services partnership working could give improved procedures and Improve Community Wellbeing.

The document also talks about the benefits of First Responders and indeed this is an area where more stations should be formally involved. It is however a statutory duty of the Scottish Ambulance Service, they should be the drivers and coordinators of increased First Responder Activity. It the past this has been an issue as some First Responder Units we are aware off have not had adequate support or continued training from the SAS.

The document mentions the existing SFRS is already unsustainable in its present form, this is a very poor admission from a service that is just 5 years old and a damning statement against the Scottish Government that created the SFRS against the recommendations and wishes of all Principle Fire Service Management prior to its creation. The document and your covering letter informs us that the Scottish Government is having to provide an additional ?5.5 million and is allowing the SFRS to borrow an additional ?15.5 million in 2018/2019 to help sort the mess they have created.

The Documents conclusion is ill founded and seems to be a desperate attempt to justify a failing service by propping it up with additional funding and reducing staff numbers. The SFRS has almost 1000 less operational front line personnel since its creation and the proposal to reduce this by a further 300, seems to be purely designed to justify and achieve a budget cut which is unreasonable and unsustainable. The conclusion also identifies a self inflicted wound by admitting the funding will help harmonise the pay and conditions of the previous eight services personnel, this is scandalous and a demonstrates a huge failure of the SFRS in not addressing this issue in the first year not five years latter.

SFRS General Transition

The SFRS as we have previously mentioned is under performing by its own statistics, unsustainable by its own admission, inflexible and therefore unable to provide the necessary flexibility required to provide an adequate service to the diversely different communities across Scotland. This Document is evidence that the so called Transition is not really a Transition it is an attempt to access further funding, reduce further staff numbers and essentially undertake the same role as it has been tasked with doing since the mid 90's. The public as we do will see this as an attempt to balance the books of a drastically failing service which is and has always been unsustainable, under performing and inflexible as National Single Service.

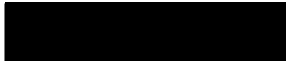
There is some merit in expanding the joined up multi service partnership working mentioned in the document however, it must be stated that altering a failing service to balance the books is not a suitable time or reason to undertake any transition. This leads us to request that the fundamental failings of the SFRS are addressed before any consideration or talk of structural reform is undertaken. The fundamental failings largely can be resolved by the complete reversal from a Single Fire Service to a regionally based service provision similar but not the same as the previous eight services which should have been amended to 4 or 5 regional services. This model of regionally controlled, locally funded and managed service, served Scotland for many years and has statistically been shown by the SFRS Information to out perform the Single Service in every area, making Community Safety and Wellbeing better looked after by regionally controlled services. The proposed 4 or 5 Services would be better placed to understand and adapt to the geographic and diverse requirements of Scotland's communities. The Single Service has failed to materialise the grossly optimistic predicted savings and has in fact not saved money other than operating with nearly 1000 less front line operational staff and closing some stations and offices. The Single Service Management and Governance has demonstrated an inability to manage effectively with management failure a daily occurrence and staff confidence and moral at an all time low. It is extremely difficult to find an operational member of staff anywhere in Scotland that would agree the single service is a good thing and indeed almost all would agree to a return to some local controlled and accountable service.

The handling of the Control Room Closures has had a devastating effect on Staff in the 3 New Control Centres which do not operate on the same systems and are not interoperable as promised. The SFRS need many millions of pounds to create, purchase and train all its control staff in a new system that they have not purchased yet, before the 3 control centres are interoperable. The reliance in technology to replace local knowledge has been disastrous and mistakes are being made on a daily basis. Mistakes such as a few weeks ago Tongue In Sutherland was called out to Tong in the Western Isles, this inherent delay in mobilising could have potentially fatal consequences. It is known the Dundee Control Centre is operating at 32% qualified staff and can only achieve full staff by regular enforced overtime, according the HMI report on the failings of the control centre.

The maintenance of appliances and equipment is also a known failure where the appliances on Scotland's Islands never received 13 week checks or equipment statutory maintenance for more than a year. This demonstrates a complete failure in management and indicates a structure and governance incapable of effectively ensuring even a basic task such as maintenance is adhered to. This is indeed a basic task to ensure maintenance is undertaken in a timeous manner, however the consequences of such a Health and Safety Failure could be life threatening and is illegal.

The way forward, it is clear that the SFRS in its present format is unsustainable by their own admission, this Transition is ill advised and I'll times and should not be undertaken on a failing service. A complete independent review is needed undertaken preferably by ex Emergency Service Management Professionals, not consultants as was done in creating the SFRS. This review needs to be wide ranging and have a radical and futuristic remit to ensure the public have an emergency service fit for future requirements. There is a window of opportunity here now as we have a Failed Single Fire Service a Failed Single Police Service and an underperforming Scottish Ambulance Service. A new review could consider creating 4 or 5 Regional Joint Police , Fire and Ambulance Services. Such a radical and necessary review would in all probability find that Regional Joint Emergency Services is the best model to maintain communities safe in the future. "

Regards



<http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/transformation/mobile/index.html#p=12>

Sent from my iPad

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