



Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority

Lord Greenhalgh
Minister of State
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government

Date
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Contact name
Eric Carter

Dear Lord Greenhalgh

Congratulations on your new role as Fire Minister and thank you for your letter dated 14 May 2020.

It was a pleasure to hear your speech to the Fire Commission on 15 May.

Like yourself I was also born in Lancashire, Warrington to be precise, although it now is in Cheshire. I also played semi-professional Rugby League, before moving to Shropshire followed by many years in Rugby Union retiring at the age of 50.

Like others, I thought I would extend an invitation to you to visit Shropshire Fire and Rescue, where I am sure you will receive a warm welcome, and tell you a little bit about ourselves.

We are a small but highly effective organisation that prides itself on its culture of staff engagement. Shropshire & Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority are immensely proud of our achievements over recent years and were pleased to have been recognised as “good” across all 3 pillars in last year’s round of HMICFRS inspections.

We are currently involved, together with Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority, in a Strategic Alliance where we are collaborating to make significant progress to increase the capacity and resilience of both Services.

We also collaborate with our colleagues, West Mercia Police, as shown by the fact that we already share our Fire Station premises in three locations in Shropshire, allowing them to close three police stations, and we are including the Police in plans for a major redevelopment of our training facility at Telford.



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Despite this, and many other operational collaborations, we have been fighting to avoid a takeover by the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) since 2017. The PCC plan has not been supported by any of our Unitary Authorities, Town & Parish Councils or even the Police and Crime Panel itself. Both CIPFA and the courts have seen the PCC Business Plan put forward as badly flawed yet there appears to be no resolution. It is my sincerest hope that you would be willing to meet with me, outside of your visit, so that I can explain the position fully so that when a decision is finally made you will be able to see it in the fullest context.

In addition to my role as Chair of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority, I am a member of the Fire Services Management Committee of the Local Government Association and sit on the National Joint Council. I am also co-chair, alongside Mathew Ellis, PCC for Staffordshire, of the Emergency Services Working Group, Task-and-Finish Group A. This group brings together employers, government and officers to support the Duty to Collaborate and the inspection regime.

So, as you can see, I am committed to effective collaboration, but I do not agree with governance changes being made where they are so obviously unnecessary and do not provide any significant advantage. As your predecessor stated in front of the Chairs and Chief Fire Officers at an HMICFRS event last year "if it 'ain't broke, don't fix it!"

Finally, may I say that I have been immensely proud to represent my Fire Authority as Chair since 2017 and look forward to working with you now and in the future.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Eric Carter
Chair of Shropshire and Wrekin Fire and Rescue Authority

