



This matter is being dealt with by: John Shuttleworth  
 Ext: 5555  
 Date: 5 October 2023  
 Our Ref:  
 Your Ref:

Clerk,  
 County Durham and Darlington  
 Fire and Rescue Authority  
 County Hall, Durham, DH1 5UL

Lee Rowley MP  
 Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Local Government and Building Safety)

The Rt Hon John Glen MP  
 Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Dear Chief Secretary to the Treasury and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State,

### **Fire Funding for 2024/25**

We are writing to you today to make the case for a fair funding settlement for the Fire and Rescue Service and to ask for your help to avoid the Combined Fire Authority having to make cuts to frontline services that will increase the risk to the communities in County Durham and Darlington.

Nationally Fire and Rescue Services across England are facing further inflationary pressures of c£139m in the coming year because of significant increases in utility costs, diesel and 'Green Book' salary costs as a result of increases in the national living wage. These unavoidable pressures mean that Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) will have to make unacceptable decisions if these cost increases are not matched by increases in the funding available.

For County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service specifically we have lost in the region of £10M in government funding over the last thirteen years, when inflation is taken into account. We are also disproportionately impacted by the council tax referendum limit due to the high number of properties in council tax band A and B across our area. This means that together with high levels of deprivation many residents are either exempt or qualify for discounts to their council tax bills.

The Service is recognised by His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services as being high performing, efficient and extremely productive but unless the funding position improves, we will see a significant reduction in performance and an increased risk to the public.

If inflationary pressures are not covered by funding increases in the Local Government Settlement, the result will be a reduction in frontline wholetime and on-call firefighters with the removal of fire engines and a resultant degradation in service. This will increase response times and risk and reduce the level of vitally important prevention and building safety inspection work.

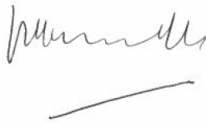
We are seeking a settlement that delivers an increase in the Settlement Funding Assessment that matches the rate of inflation to ensure our highly valued emergency service is still able to respond to incidents while maintaining our focus on prevention and protection post Grenfell. Over the last few years, the Service has also played a key role in supporting national resilience for either fire specific issues or multi-agency response, without sufficient funding this would no longer be possible going forward.

We are therefore seeking a continuation of the £5 band D precept flexibility for all standalone FRAs.

Services are facing very similar inflationary pressures again for the coming year which require an increase in precept above the standard 3%. A £5 precept would raise £28.6m over and above the standard 3% increase, this is a relatively low sum in comparison with the overall level of council tax.

We are copying this letter to The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, as well as to Members of Parliament for County Durham and Darlington.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr John Shuttleworth

**Chair of County Durham and  
Darlington Fire and Rescue  
Authority**



Steve Helps

**Chief Fire Officer  
County Durham and Darlington  
Fire and Rescue Service**

Cc The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP - Secretary of State for Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.  
Members of Parliament for County Durham and Darlington