



Home Office

Lord Greenhalgh
Minister of State for Home Affairs and
Minister of State for Housing,
Communities & Local Government

Councillor Lesley Clarke OBE
Chairman, Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority
Brigade Headquarters
Stocklake, Aylesbury
Buckinghamshire
HP20 1BD

HOCS Reference: MIN/0008866/20
Your Reference: LCAM 0010.20

13th July 2020

Dear Cllr Clarke,

Thank you for your letter of 21 May regarding funding for Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority.

I am pleased to hear that the additional Covid-19 funding you have received has allowed you to meet the immediate costs of responding to the pandemic and provide support to partner agencies. I would like to thank all firefighters and fire service personnel for the work they are doing to respond to the coronavirus pandemic, particularly their support to the emergency services and the most vulnerable in our communities.

You will also be aware that the Home Office has launched a £6 million Contingency Fund to support Fire and Rescue Authorities who incur significant costs as a result of taking on additional duties during the pandemic. I have written separately to all Chairs of Fire Authorities and Chief Fire Officers in respect of the eligibility criteria and application process for the fund and have invited Fire and Rescue Authorities to submit notices of intent to apply for funding by 30 June.

Additionally, this year we have also secured a further £30 million from HM Treasury in order to improve and increase the protection capabilities in fire and rescue services. This funding is being used to provide two grant streams of £6 million and £10 million respectively, in order to fund additional protection resources for Fire and Rescue Authorities, as well as providing funding to the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) to deliver a co-ordinating function and programmes to improve leadership.

Turning to council tax, the Government announced a 2% council tax referendum limit for 2020/21 that applied to local authorities, including fire and rescue. If local authorities wish to increase their council tax level above this limit they are able to hold a local referendum to seek public approval for the proposed increase. I am mindful that your B and D level is the third lowest of standalone Fire and Rescue Authorities, however I am also aware that Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority took the decision to reduce the fire precept level in 2015/16 which has accordingly impacted on your financial position.

I understand that my officials are in contact with yours on a regular basis to ensure we remain informed about the financial health of your organisation. I am keen to ensure that this engagement continues.

Decisions on funding for future years, including pensions grant, protection funding and future council tax referendum limits, will be considered as part of the next Spending Review. We will be working with fire and rescue partners to agree a shared evidence base ahead of the Spending Review and I encourage all services to work through the NFCC and Local Government Association to provide evidence to support the case for the resource requirements for fire and rescue over the next Spending Review period.

Thank you for writing in on this important matter:

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JGH' with a flourish at the end.

LORD GREENHALGH