



**Department for
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21 October 2013

Pay Policy Statement 2013-14

I am writing following the very obvious public concern that has been raised in recent media reports suggesting that your Chief Fire Officer, Graham Stagg, left your service, accessed a substantial lump sum early, and then rejoined on his original salary.

You will be aware that each financial year all local and fire authorities are required to publish, pay policy statements under the Localism Act 2011. These are designed to ensure transparency and accountability in local decisions on remuneration arrangements, particularly for senior staff. The Act requires that, in exercising any decision on the remuneration of its staff, an authority must comply with the policies set out in its current pay policy statement. In exercising these duties, authorities are required to have regard to guidance issued or approved by the Secretary of State. In February 2012, the Secretary of State issued '*Openness and accountability in local pay: guidance under section 40 of the Localism Act*', which was supplemented with further guidance in February this year

Given the coverage of the circumstances of the recent re-appointment of your Chief Fire Officer, I am disappointed that, in several aspects, your authority's pay policy statement does not appear to meet the standards of openness and accountability we would expect and as set out in the Secretary of State's guidance. In addition, there appears to be a lack of clarity about some important aspects of your local decision making. In particular:

- Your pay policy statement was not easily accessible as a final, published, stand alone document.
- We could not find a clear articulation of your Authority's policy on the reward of chief officers who were previously employed by the authority and who, on ceasing to be employed, were in receipt of a redundancy or severance payment or are in receipt of a fire service pension.
- Comments attributed to your Chief Fire Officer have suggested that the Authority's retirement policy allows uniformed staff of any rank to be "re-engaged" if certain criteria were met. There does not appear to be any mention of this policy or these criteria in your current pay policy statement.

- The Secretary of State has said that full council (or a meeting of members for fire authorities) should be given the opportunity to vote before large salary packages are offered in respect of a new appointment. Your Authority does not appear to have adopted this policy or to have explained clearly how you will achieve the same standards of transparency and accountability without it. Indeed, it is not clear by what process Mr Stagg's re-appointment was approved, and how the Authority ensured that the decision was transparent and accountable.
- Your pay policy statement says that all permanent or fixed term posts are advertised in accordance with the authority's recruitment and selection policy. It is not clear in this instance if the post was advertised in accordance with your recruitment and selection policy and if the post was made available to other candidates to apply.

Finally, examination of your draft pay policy statement has raised some questions about your Authority's approach to the level of pay and reward for senior staff. Your draft pay policy statement states that the Chief Officers' remuneration is subject to the National Joint Council for Brigade Managers of Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (commonly known as the 'Gold Book'). As I understand it, the Gold Book recommends for an authority the size of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, the minimum pay should be £94,638. While this is a minimum, your Chief Fire Officer's basic pay in 2011 was £155,106. In addition, three other members of your senior management team earned from £108,000 to £123,950. For 2011, we can only find four chief fire officers in England who earned more as basic salary. Given that Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is only the 25th largest out of 46 fire and rescue authorities (including the Isles of Scilly), it is not clear why there should be such a large gap between the recommended minimum and the Chief Fire Officer's pay, and what the relationship is between this pay and the Gold Book mentioned in your pay policy.

I would be grateful for your views on the issues raised in this letter. I am placing a copy of this letter in the public domain.

BRANDON LEWIS MP