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Dear Andy,

Thank you for your letter of 1 August. I was very disappointed that despite progress on areas of concern to you and seemingly positive discussions between us, rather than following up the two Executive Council meetings with a further meeting between ourselves, the FBU leadership have called further industrial action. Although the meeting planned for Thursday has fallen, I hope that you will continue to correspond with my office.

I will continue to make progress on the issues of concern to your members and I will continue to engage in meetings and correspondence with fire fighters across the country. I hope you will still honour a meeting with members of your women's committee as discussed during my meeting with Matt and Sean on 17 July to discuss their and my concerns re fitness.

Strike action is extremely damaging to further progress being made. If it is your belief that more can be done, how you think it becomes easier to ask for anything further, if the response to the Government having made positive changes to the pension and the reassurances I gave you at our meeting on fitness is to escalate strikes rather than continue dialogue, is unfathomable. Any discussions I wished to have with other departments regarding these matters will now be delayed, if they are able to continue at all.

The public may rest assured that business continuity and resilience measures have been and will remain in place. But this takes place at a cost to the public purse; to the income of striking firefighters, but also to those who protect their communities during strike action. I know you appreciate that the strain on colleagues who remain at their posts is considerable, and that strike action is both unnecessary and counterproductive. I therefore find your strategy as a means to resolve this situation illogical and unappreciative of the reluctance to strike - and only as a matter last resort - felt by most firefighters. Furthermore, your attitude towards the wellbeing of colleagues and the public - when strikes are clearly unnecessary - is, at best, at odds with the values of the fire service.

I hope that you will reconsider your decision and call off this reckless and unnecessary action. In the meantime I will continue to make progress.

PENNY MORDAUNT MP

