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Dear Matt,

Thank you for your letter of 11 April regarding the response I provided to Alison Seabeck MP on transitional protections.

I should first make clear that there is a difference in the design of the Police Pension Scheme 1987 and the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992 which explains the different approach adopted on transitional protections. This can be seen by the example quoted by Alison Seabeck MP in that her constituent would be 10 years from retirement in the Police Pension Scheme 1987 but is not 10 years from retirement in the Firefighters' Pension Scheme 1992. The benefit structure is different and therefore different considerations apply.

You make clear in your letter that FBU officials did not pursue transitional protections as part of the scheme reform discussions leading up to the Proposed Final Agreement. As you say your focus at that time was on opposing a Normal Pension Age of 60 and the need for reform. However, as you set out you did raise the transitional protections formally in your Trade Dispute letter of 16 May 2013, which was a year after the Proposed Final Agreement was published and which set the parameters for the protections.

The Department was clear from the start of the reform discussions that the reference scheme design would be implemented unless changes to the scheme design were agreed. It was for the FBU to make a proposal to the Department as part of the discussions leading up to the Proposed Final Agreement. However, no proposal was put forward by the FBU indicating that it would be sufficient to reach agreement.

I stand by my response to Alison Seabeck MP that "at the time that arrangement was made with the Police, the Fire Brigades Union did not go down that road". Your letter helpfully confirms that position.

BRANDON LEWIS MP