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Dear Kirsty

SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (SFRS) PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2020/21

I would like to express my thanks to you, the Board and Senior Leadership Team for attending the eighth Annual Performance Review (APR) of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) which was held virtually on 5 October 2021.

During the review meeting I asked the Board a number of questions across a range of themes which included COVID, Climate Change and COP 26, Service Modernisation and People issues. As you know it is an important aspect of the APR that questions can also be asked by stakeholders and the general public and I was pleased that this year, although the meeting was still held virtually, we were able to extend an invite to stakeholders and other interested parties. I was particularly encouraged by the positive way stakeholders spoke of the SFRS and their contribution within communities.

Our review discussion was wide-ranging, but I would like to highlight a couple of issues in particular that we covered:

COVID Response and Lessons Learned

As expected much of the Review meeting was taken up with our discussion around the COVID pandemic and both the SFRS response and lessons learned. This reporting year covered a full year of COVID restrictions and response and as I mentioned in my opening remarks this has probably been the most challenging year most of us have experienced both professionally and personally.

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We discussed the overall SFRS response to COVID and I know we were both keen to record our thanks to all SFRS staff for their contribution and the way they have risen to the unprecedented challenges that COVID brought.

You discussed the quick response in terms of your first COVID meeting being before many restrictions were brought in and how even in the early stages you were considering recovery planning and what would be needed to pick up on work that would have to be paused as a result of your COVID response. We also touched on the Make the Call Campaign and the quick and agile way SFRS were able to develop this work to support those who may be at most risk of fire during the pandemic.

SFRS's clear commitment to partnership working was another key area of your COVID response and that was made clear through your part in projects like the establishment of the Louisa Jordan hospital right through to hosting testing centres in your stations and assisting in the delivery of prescriptions to local communities.

We progressed to discussing your Recovery, Reset and Renew work with Recovery taking into consideration the resumption of non-critical backlog work, training, recruitment, property maintenance and Home Fire Safety Visits, Reset looking at returning adapted processes back to pre-pandemic business as usual and finally, Renew looking at the implementation of new working practices gained throughout the pandemic. Learning lessons that can be kept as new good practice is one area that we can see benefits of the COVID response and I was pleased to hear that you have given this area considerable thought. We discussed what the COVID response to Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) looked like and how this learning could be used going forward. This also covered your UFAS consultation which is now closed and I will be interested in hearing about the response to that as soon as you have it available.

COP26 and Climate Change

We discussed the significant work that has gone on throughout the reporting year and beyond to prepare for COP26 in Glasgow later this month. It was only right that in discussing COP26 we also discussed how SFRS as an organisation is playing its part in reducing its carbon footprint.

With regard to COP26 you covered the resources you have committed to both planning and response and the significant work that has been overseen by your COP26 Project Board. We heard about your key work with stakeholders over this piece, and how multi agency planning has ensured robust operational plans are in place. As we know the event takes place from 31 October 2021 and it may be useful at the 2021/22 Mid-Year Review for officials to hear how you are reviewing and learning from your response.

In terms of the organisation you told the meeting of the SFRS commitment to the Scottish Government net zero carbon emissions by 2045 policy. It was clear from the conversation there is commitment across SFRS functions such as fleet, buildings and the wider estate to tackle this issue. At a strategic level you brought to my attention a Board agreed Climate Response Plan which will aim to reduce carbon emissions by six percent every year to 2030 which you are on target to deliver and would result in an 80% reduction in emissions. At a

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more operational level we heard of the introduction of 98 electrical charging points across 61 SFRS sites and the deployment of 110 electric vehicles, of which there is a clear demand for from staff along with many other initiatives.

Conclusion

As always I found the Review meeting to be an excellent discussion covering a wide range of issues over the last reporting year. We all know that COVID has had a major impact that will inevitably lead to challenges in the years to come and it was encouraging to hear your assessment that SFRS is well placed to meet these challenges.

I would once again like to express my thanks to you, your Board and the Senior Leadership team for your responses to my questions and I would also like to record my own thanks again to the SFRS and all its staff for their response to the COVID pandemic.

In an effort to continue to be as open and transparent as possible I am content for this letter to be published on the SFRS website as a record of the Review meeting.



ASH REGAN

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