



Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

Councillor Rebecca Knox, Chairman  
Dorset Fire Authority  
Service Headquarters  
Peverell Avenue West  
Poundbury, Dorchester  
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13 October 2014

Dear Councillor Knox,

**Strengthening our Fire and Rescue Service: A Consultation by Dorset Fire Authority**

Thank you for your letter of 1 August regarding your consultation on the potential merger of Dorset and Wiltshire fire and rescue authorities. I must first commend the progress already made by Dorset fire and rescue authority to drive out efficiencies and all you are currently doing to identify savings and improvements.

Turning to your merger consultation, whilst the Government fully supports fire and rescue authority voluntary mergers where these are shown to deliver improved cost effectiveness and efficiencies, it is important to emphasise they are fundamentally a local decision. It is right that Dorset fire and rescue authority should make decisions on operational proposals about appropriate use of resources in their area, acting on the professional advice of senior fire officers and after effective consultation with the local community. As such, there is no role for central government to comment or intervene in this locally-led matter.

As you know, the government welcomed the findings of Sir Ken Knight's independent review of the fire sector, published in 2013. The review found that, in the context of increased spending pressure on fire and rescue authorities in support of deficit reduction, there is still scope for fire and rescue authorities to make sensible savings, including through locally-led mergers and operational collaborations.

The Secretary of State will consider applications to combine two local fire and rescue authorities where proposals have been consulted on and have local support and I am aware that DCLG officials have been working closely with officials from both Dorset and Wiltshire in order to support you as you prepare your business case for merger.

We remain keen to support Dorset and Wiltshire fire and rescue authorities' exploration of a potential merger where we can and are happy to keep in touch with you and Wiltshire Fire Authority's council members on this matter.

**SIR BOB KERSLAKE**