Thank you for giving me the opportunity to give evidence and contribute to the work of the Justice Committee's review of Police and Fire Reform.

During the hearing, I was asked a question in respect to the embedding and co-locating of SFRS Local Area Liaison Officers within Local Authority Offices, to which I was unable to answer at the time. Having now made the necessary enquiries, I can advise the Committee that at this current time there are 22 nominated Local Area Liaison Officers of which 10 are co-located on a permanent or partial basis. Although this is a decision for Local Authorities, it is considered good practice and something the Inspectorate would encourage.

Whilst writing I would like to take the opportunity to cover some additional areas we did not have the time to peruse, which I feel would be of assistance to the Committee. To help in identifying the areas, I have placed them under specific headings within this submission.

**Governance**

Since taking up the post as HM Chief Inspector for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), I have been impressed by the development of the Governance within SFRS. During the initial Reform, the focus of the Service and in particular for the previous SFRS Chair, was to concentrate on the merger and the bringing together the eight legacy Services with all the challenges that it brought. This in my opinion was the right approach at that time.

Since the appointment of the new Chair, Kirsty Darwent, there has been a greater focus to Governance, Performance and Scrutiny, with it building on the initial work undertaken and making the Service more robust and focused. The Board operates well, setting clear strategy and direction, and the recent appointment of new Board Members enhances the specialisms which the Board needs to undertake its role. Devolving responsibility to ‘subject specific’ sub-committees allows greater focus and challenge of the Senior Management Team of the Service. HMFSI attends a number of these committees. HMFSI are available to give that challenge and independent advice to the Board on Operational matters.

**Performance and Scrutiny**

The scrutiny arrangements introduced by the Police and Fire Reform Act 2012 are, I believe, an improvement on the previous process. There is now more opportunity for more localised scrutiny of service delivery by Elected Members than was possible before.
HMFSI also have a role in scrutiny of the SFRS, though I like to refer to it as being a ‘critical friend’. I work closely with CO Alasdair Hay and the Chair of the Board. My role is to help improve the Service.

In our Local Area Inspections, we have seen first-hand how highly regarded SFRS officers are to their community planning partners, particularly when chairing committees.

**Community Partnership Working**

In the local areas where we have conducted inspections, I can confirm that Partnership working across all partners is well embedded, and there is evidence of collaborative working towards joint outcomes.

Both Audit Scotland and HMFSI recognise the strength of the SFRS has been to strengthen links with local communities and local authorities. It has shown real leadership in the implementation of the Community Empowerment Act, where the new roles and responsibilities have been embraced, and the principles and ethos embedded within new ways of working. The SFRS has responded to current changes in need and demand by taking a wider community planning response whilst developing its transformation agenda.

**Some examples of this are:**

- The pilot with NHS Highland regarding a SFRS response to falls in the home (Uninjured Fallers Response pilot in the Caithness area).
- Highland CPP has devolved community planning to eight Local Area Committees, of which the SFRS Chair two.
- CPP Partner agencies have expressed how effective the SFRS are performing in leading the local committees they Chair, being a very proactive member at both a local and strategic level within the CPP process, and contributing to the development of the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP).
- Scottish Borders – pilot area for Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OHCA).

We welcome and acknowledge the commitment and contribution of SFRS to the CPP and how they are actively involving and empowering local communities.

**Training**

The changing role of the Fire and Rescue Services brings challenges and particularly with the issue of training of its personnel.

I have some sympathy with the statement raised by staff and Representative Bodies, in regard to capacity and time available under the current training model. This is particularly in respect to the RDS, as the requirements to maintain their existing competencies within a week 2-3 hrs training session are challenging.

The most important element in training delivery is that it should be based on a robust needs analysis. Training should be reflective and focus on risks the firefighter is
likely to encounter by an assessment of risk in the area ie RDS firefighters in the very remote rural areas are unlikely to need to know about responding to a terrorist event, so why train for it? The requirement is more likely to be for OHCA. There is no point in firefighters using limited time to obtain skills they will never use, for example, firefighters in Braemar training in Marine firefighting or firefighters in Orkney or Shetland training in high rise firefighting (not that I am saying they do).

HMFSI are informed that SFRS is focusing on this issue and is undertaking a comprehensive review of training to see if the competency requirements and Core Skills can be reduced (ie reduction in existing roles to meet the changing operational needs) and I would support any move to make training more tailored to risk. The Review is due to be reported on early in 2019.

HMFSI has also commenced a more focused Thematic Review of RDS training which has been borne out of areas raised within its Local Area Inspection Programme.

It is pleasing to note that the Service is focused on addressing the disparity of RDS training and acknowledge the significant investment in training facilities, particularly in support of rural or remote areas.

Secondly, it is my view that the impact on training for the expanded role of firefighters is likely to be limited, if it is addressed and managed correctly. Many of the skills required, firefighters already have, though there will be areas where more training will be required, perhaps around the softer skills.

For example, in relation to OHCA, all firefighters are already trained in trauma care therefore any additional training required would be minimal, and is more necessary around the ‘softer skills’ dealing with patient families. The majority of front line appliances in Scotland also carry defibrillators and therefore crews have already been trained in the use of the equipment. It could be expected therefore to have a limited impact on the RDS.

Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack (MTFA) stations are Wholetime and the skill would be the same as any other specialism eg line-rescue, therefore there should not be widespread impact as the numbers are comparatively small, and minimum training required when personnel are transferred to those stations. There is already a ‘cold zone’ Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in existence for all other ‘non-warm zone’ firefighters.

**Finance**

In my view and from past experience in dealing with Change and Transformation within a Fire and Rescue Service, finance is very important in the concept of ‘invest to save’ in order to undertake significant Reform.

Although I recognise that within the financial direction of Scottish Government, financial budget setting is undertaken on a year by year basis, there is a lack of ability and allowance for SFRS to hold Reserves. This inability stifles that
opportunity of secured long term planning and hampers procurement when funded on a year by year basis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my judgement overall is that the Reform process is currently proving effective. There has been little or no impact on the front-line services since the conception of the new Service of 1 April 2013. HMFSI has seen minimal negative direct impact on the communities served by SFRS. Our on-going inspections are that SFRS is operationally effective and more equipped to deal with major incidents than the previous legacy Services.

I hope this is of assistance, please contact me if you need further clarification or need to discuss further.

Simon Routh-Jones, QFSM
Chief Inspector of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
20 November 2018