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HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR CAMBERWELL AND PECKHAM  
SHADOW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT  
SHADOW DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER

Boris Johnson, Mayor of London  
Greater London Authority  
City Hall, The Queen's Walk  
London SE1 2AA

31<sup>st</sup> March 2014

Dear Boris,

**Re: GLA consultation: Reform of the fire service decision making in London**

I am responding to your consultation on reforming the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA).

This proposal recommends amending the current composition of the LFEPA, by reducing the number of Assembly Members and London Borough Councillors and tripling the number of Mayoral appointees, for the stated aim of improving accountability in the process of fire service decision making in London. It also proposes to create a new post for Deputy Mayor for Fire and Emergency Planning who would also be appointed by the Mayor.

The governance system for fire service decision making in London has to be accountable, transparent and sustainable. I am not convinced however that changing the current composition of the LFEPA will improve accountability. On the contrary, it will reduce the number of locally elected representatives and therefore lessen the voice of local government and communities in fire service local decision making.

**Camberwell and Peckham**

In the last few years alone, there have been three major fires in my constituency. I've seen fire fighters battle huge fires in Warner Road in Camberwell, Sumner Road in Peckham and, of course the terrible blaze at Lakanal House in Camberwell, one of the most tragic fires in London's recent history.

Camberwell and Peckham has high levels of deprivation with many people living in temporary accommodation and crowded social housing. Southwark also has a large number of high rise blocks (68 blocks of 10 storeys and above) and large estates with complex entry and exit roads with one way systems which can make speed of response and access difficult for fire engines.

Following the terrible fire at Lakanal House in 2009, the LFEPA set up a working group to make sure lessons were learned and followed through, and it is less clear if this kind of initiative would happen if the LFEPA reduces the number of local representatives.

### **Reducing local accountability**

Local councils are responsible for running local fire services. Locally elected councillors know the geography and demography of the area as well as the views of the communities they represent. Through their membership of the LFEPA, their knowledge informs the decision making process.

It's essential that local representatives have a say in how the London Fire Brigade is run and financed because they understand how decisions will impact locally. They also bring legitimacy to the process, having been directly elected to represent their communities.

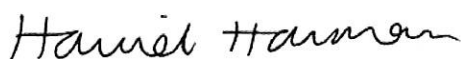
These proposals would dilute the voice of local government in the decision making process.

After the tragic fires in Camberwell and Peckham, my constituents need to be reassured that their safety is uppermost in the minds of fire and emergency planning decision makers.

I believe the current balance of the LFEPA is right and any decision to reduce the locally elected representatives on the Authority would not be in the best interests of my constituents.

Further, given the potential impact these reforms will have on local accountability, I would urge you to open up this consultation to full public scrutiny.

Best wishes,



Harriet Harman