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## HM Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland

HM Chief Inspector  
Robert Scott QFSM MBA FFireE

Councillor Stephen Curran  
Chair  
Police and Fire and Rescue Board  
Midlothian Council  
Midlothian House  
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Our ref: SDAI/01/RDS

9 February 2022

Stephen.Curran@midlothian.gov.uk

Dear Councillor Curran

### **Review of Inspection Arrangements across Local Authority Areas**

As you may be aware, HM Fire Service Inspectorate (HMFSI) has a statutory responsibility, detailed within the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, to provide independent scrutiny of the fire and rescue service and to give assurance to Ministers, and the people of Scotland, that the Service is operating in an effective and efficient manner.

The Act places specific responsibility on the fire and rescue service to engage with partners, and to produce local area plans that ensure local needs are considered and incorporated into service delivery arrangements. To ensure the Service is delivering against this obligation the Inspectorate has, since 2013, carried out regular inspections of service delivery at a Local Authority level. To date we have carried out a total of 15 of these inspections, averaging between 2 and 3 inspections per year.

As a recently appointed Chief Inspector I am keen to review existing practices and identify opportunities for improvement. Whilst I fully appreciate the rationale behind the current arrangement for local area inspection, I am concerned that to continue in this way it would take around 16 years to visit all 32 of Scotland's Local Authority areas. As such it is my intention to review this process and to move to a system of inspection that will allow me to provide assurance, and make relevant recommendations for improvement, across the entire country, in a greatly reduced timeframe.

In carrying out this review I want to provide assurance that it will still be my intention to meet with relevant people from each of Scotland's Local Authorities, and to ensure that the fire and rescue service continues to work in partnership and deliver against its statutory obligations defined within the Act.

**Integrity, Objectivity  
and Fairness**

I wrote to the Chief Executive and President of COSLA to advise them of this revision and to offer an opportunity to discuss this change should they wish to do so. I would also be delighted to discuss this with you, or any member of your team, should you feel that would be of benefit. If you would like to do so then please do not hesitate to contact me and I will arrange a briefing session via MS Teams.

In closing, I genuinely believe this review will provide a better opportunity to understand performance across Scotland within greatly reduced timescales. In addition, I assure you that HMFSI remain committed to ensuring that arrangements for the delivery of fire and rescue services in Scotland give appropriate consideration to local needs, and that SFRS play an appropriate part in partnership arrangements.

Yours sincerely

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**Robert D Scott QFSM MBA FIFireE**  
**HM Chief Inspector of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service**