

States of Jersey Fire & Rescue Service Association

Rouge Bouillon | St. Helier
Jersey | JE2 3ZA



Deputy Catherine Curtis
Chair
Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

10 November 2025

Dear Deputy Curtis,

Review of the Government's Proposed Budget 2026-2029

Thank you for the invitation to provide comment and views on the Panel's review into the Proposed Budget 2026-2029.

Fire and Rescue Services Workforce (I-JHA-B26-002)

The FRSA, as a body representing the interests and health and safety of firefighters, has been a long-time advocate for increased funding for the States of Jersey Fire and Rescue Service (SJFRS) and this continues alongside and, in addition to, the proposed expenditure growth in the Fire and Rescue Services Workforce. For too long, Government has not adequately invested in the SJFRS to provide an environment that appropriately considers the risk to staff, Islander's and visitors, particularly in respect of an increased professional competence within the sector, as measured against UK best practice of the Fire Standards Board and the National Operational Guidance framework.

While the investment uplift over the current Budget 2023-2026, was welcomed, it has provided a foundation on which to continue growth into subsequent budgets, rather than allow the Service just to catch its breath, but to push forward with real change that can be seen and felt by the Island. For example, the recommendations from Phase 1 of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry have yet to be implemented locally and, along with investment in the Emergency Services Control Centre, can provide safe systems of work in which firefighters can operate within an assessed risk to save life in a safe and effective manner.

But, as demonstrated by the recent guilty plea of the States Employment Board to charges of failing in their duties to ensure the health and safety of both employees and the public, there rightly are consequences, which could very likely be traced back to years of under-investment and limited capacity. The events which led to the spotlight being shone on these specific failings were tragic, and our thoughts remain with all those affected by the Haut du Mont incident, however the FRSA is concerned that further tragedy cannot be repeated to elicit progress in effective preparation and response, it must come first and as a priority.

It is accepted that this work of this nature takes time and, throughout the varying disciplines in which the SJFRS operates, while it remains outstanding it creates further risk not only directly to firefighters and Islanders, but also to the States Employment Board.

It is understood that part of the proposed 2026 growth expenditure is assigned to the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE). The FRSA has previously highlighted the carcinogen risk to firefighters as identified by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a World Health Organisation (WHO) body, which is only increased with access to limited or degrading PPE, therefore investment in this area is a necessity but should also extend to health screening of

firefighters, just as was recommended by PFAS Panel in relation to the occupational exposure to PFAS chemicals in firefighting foams.

Moving forward into 2027 onwards, the proposal to increase capacity and resilience by increasing frontline firefighter numbers is also welcomed but, we would stress that while it could provide improvements in safe systems of work and specialised disciplines, capacity may still be limited when consideration of all elements of the Island's emergency response, resilience, protection and prevention that are provided by SJFRS, are taken into account – more a stepping stone of justified investment toward a safer Jersey.

It is further noted that the Comptroller and Auditor General has initiated an audit into SJFRS and while the report is awaited, the FRSA is confident that proposals in this Budget would be supported by audit findings in relation to whether Government is able to enable the running of an effective, efficient and economical Fire and Rescue Service.

Fire and Rescue Headquarters capital project

The FRSA previously provided comment in the previous Scrutiny Panel review of the proposed Budget 2023-2026 when there remained the intent to build a joint fire and ambulance headquarters. With the focus now being on independent headquarters, something which provides greater Island resilience, the FRSA's position is one of representing its members' voice, and there does not appear to be a huge cry from rank-and-file staff for a new headquarters, with any haste at least.

The FRSA recognises it is a large capital expenditure which the Government needs to balance against competing priorities but not least, because we are fortunate to have firefighters who are purpose-driven and with some investment in the current site, the timing of a new headquarters can be marked for the most appropriate stage. The desire for a new headquarters is one for SJFRS management and Government to determine, rather than the FRSA but, we would reiterate comments made in the last scrutiny review.

Were an alternative site be considered for a new headquarters, SJFRS has already determined that any of the identified sites away from its current Rouge Bouillon location will, by nature of increased attendance times, put the high-risk populations of St. Helier at greater risk than they already are currently. With St. Helier school space also a priority, any increase of the Rouge Bouillon school site into the current Fire & Rescue footprint will naturally have an impact on the remaining space. That said, Government must balance the needs of the emergency services, the risks to the public and their pledge of Putting Children First, very carefully.

Trusting these comments will prove useful to your review and thank you for the opportunity to provide them.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Le Cocq', written in a cursive style.

Tim Le Cocq
President, States of Jersey Fire & Rescue Service Association (FRSA)