



## Summary Note – Meeting of Responsibilities Working Group

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Title: **Responsibilities Working Group**  
Date: **Thursday 19 January 2017**  
Venue: **DCLG, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF**

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### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Annex A** to this note.

#### 1. Welcome and minutes of previous meeting

1.1 The Chair opened the meeting with introductions and welcomed attendees to the ninth Responsibilities Working Group meeting.

1.2 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed with no amendments.

#### 2. Discussion on the Public Health Grant with the Department of Health

2.1 Upon invitation, Department of Health officials, Alison Ross and Jim Fowles facilitated a discussion on Public Health, more specifically on the possibility that grant funding for Public Health be devolved and funded through retained business rates.

2.2 Issues raised in the discussion included:

- 2.2.1 Impact on health services in local areas;
- 2.2.2 The extent to which mandated services will remain a requirement under a new funding mechanism;
- 2.2.3 Removal of the ringfence from the grant prior to any transfer to being funded through retained business rates;
- 2.2.4 The accountability of local authorities and how this is linked to Government Minister's accountability to Parliament;
- 2.2.5 Distribution of resource (recognition that this work will be intertwined with the Fair Funding Review workstream); and
- 2.2.6 The Manchester BRR pilot which includes the public health grant. The pilot will provide a good opportunity for the group to understand any general implementation issues in devolving the grant and funding it through retained business rates.

### **3. Update on Economic Growth and Skills workstream**

3.1 The LGA provided an update on their employment and skills review which is aiming to determine which employment, skills and related welfare responsibilities could be devolved to local government. The focus so far has been on what a local employment service would look like under a 100% Business Rates Retention landscape.

3.2 The group recognised that engagement with HMT and other government departments will be crucial to the outcome of the review and therefore a priority in the coming weeks will be for the LGA to build upon their initial engagement activity with relevant Government departments.

### **4. Update on the Local Government Finance Bill 2016-17**

4.1 DCLG provided an update on the progress of the Local Government Finance Bill. The Bill was successfully introduced in the House of Commons on Friday 13 January, with the Second Reading scheduled for Monday 23 January 2017. The Bill will then quickly move on to the House of Commons Committee Stage on 31 January 2017, with the final Committee session scheduled for the 21 February 2017.

4.2 The framework legislation simply amends the existing system, with recognition that the finer details of the new business rates system are in the process of being designed. The Bill does not contain any provisions relating to the devolution responsibilities.

### **5. Consideration of other candidates for devolution**

5.1 The Group repeated their request for the full list of ongoing Section 31 grants which local authorities are in receipt of. DCLG apologised for the delay in providing this and confirmed that the list grants will be provided, alongside other grants which were mentioned by respondents to the Government's summer consultation.

5.2 Working Group members were also invited to consider other options for future discussion.

### **6. AOB**

6.1 The Group agreed meetings should now occur on a bi-monthly basis; this will coincide with the Steering Groups new meeting schedule for 2017. Therefore the next Working Group meeting will take place on Tuesday 21 March 2017.

## Annex A – Attendance List (19 January 2017)

Member	Organisation	Attendance
Bevis Ingram	Local Government Association (LGA)	Present
Mark Johnson	Local Government Association (LGA)	Apologies
Sally Burlington	Local Government Association (LGA)	Present (Phone)
Eamon Lally	Local Government Association (LGA)	Present
Anthony May	County Councils' Network (CCN)	Present (Phone)
Nigel Stevenson	County Councils' Network (CCN) - sub	Apologies
Allen Graham	District Councils' Network (DCN)	Apologies
Barry Hastie	Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA)	Present
Leigh Whitehouse	Association of Local Authority Treasurers' Societies (ALATS) - SLT	Present
Caroline Holland	Association of Local Authority Treasurers' Societies (ALATS) - SLT - sub	Apologies
Alison Greenhill	Association of Local Authority Treasurers' Societies (ALATS) - SMT	Present
Joanna Walker	Association of Local Authority Treasurers' Societies (ALATS) - SCT	Present (Phone)
Steve Richardson	Association of Local Authority Treasurers' Societies (ALATS) - SDCT	Present (Phone)
Sean Clark	Association of Local Authority Treasurers' Societies (ALATS) - SUT	Present
Joanne Pitt	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA)	Apologies
Alistair Townsend	Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV)	Present
Jeremy Skinner	Greater London Authority	Apologies
Paul Honeyben	London Councils	Apologies
Peter O'Connell	London Councils - sub	Present
Richard Enderby	Department for Communities and Local Government	Present
Shafi Khan	Department for Communities and Local Government	Present
Jonathan Denning	Department for Communities and Local Government	Present
Alison Ross	Department for Health	Present
Jim Fowles	Department for Health	Present