

Responsibilities Working Group Update

POLICY DEVELOPMENT: NOT A STATEMENT OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

1. Since the last meeting of the Steering Group, The Responsibilities Working Group has had one meeting. This paper is a brief summary of the issues discussed and the approach being taken by the group.
2. The Working Group met on 27 June. The Group considered feedback from the last steering group that rather than accepting the “safe” option of transferring existing grants to business rates funding, further analysis of the service areas for new responsibilities is needed, to help form a view from the sector on the areas where local government can take on new responsibilities. This will help inform response to the summer consultation. Service areas should particularly be those connected with enabling economic growth and public services reform.
3. The Group was concerned about the level and breadth of service and specialist knowledge required to consider service design in more detail and considered
 - a. Who other than the group should be consulted?
 - b. How can views from whole sector and from different types of authority be secured?
 - c. Who is best placed to undertake this work? Does the group have the capacity to carry out the necessary analysis or does the work need to be commissioned from outside?
 - d. How should other government departments be involved?
4. In response the group decided to set up two workshops to be run in August, one on economic growth and one on public services reform (majoring on health and social care integration and welfare), and to invite other specialists to take part. Nominations and invitations are being finalised, and will include a mix of specialist from councils and policy specialists associated with the sector. It was agreed DCLG colleagues will lead on involving other government departments.
5. The Group also considered a paper on devo deals, combined authorities, and the link to funding from retained business rates (this is elsewhere on today’s agenda).
6. The issue of EU funding post referendum was raised and it was suggested that the Group might spend time investigating if transferring that to Business Rates funding might be a way of guaranteeing continuity after exit from the EU. This funding is largely project based and not guaranteed over time for individual areas. A steer from the steering group as to whether this is in the remit of the Group would be welcome.
7. The Responsibilities Working Group has a full meeting timetabled for 21 July, the prime purpose of which is to finalise arrangements for the workshops to be held on 4 August. Further monthly meetings are booked.