



Summary Note – Meeting of Responsibilities Working Group

Title: **Responsibilities Working Group**
Date: **Thursday 21 July 2016**
Venue: **Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ**

Attendance

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

1. Welcome

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

2. Feedback from Steering Group Meeting

- 2.1 The Steering Group met on 19 July 2016. The key message to all of the technical workings groups was for them to refer more questions to the Steering Group, with the aim of utilising the Steering Group more effectively. In order for the Steering Group to have a more detailed picture of the milestones each technical group is working towards, they requested that each individual group create a project plan for their work.
- 2.2 The Steering Group highlighted the importance of factoring in the growth path of services into future calculations; this will help to determine the sustainability of those services which have been identified as candidates to be devolved.
- 2.3 The Steering Group discussed the Responsibilities Working Group's paper on the funding of devolution deals through 100% retained business rates. The paper took the stance of the position set out within the Government's consultation, whereby retained business rates could only be used to fund commitments in existing or future devolution deal areas and that funding for these service areas would be not be universally devolved. The Steering Group raised concerns that this approach will lead to the perception that such areas are receiving more funding than other areas.
- 2.4 The Steering Group stated they would like the Working Group to re-apply the themed groupings of services which were agreed at the previous Steering Group meeting to the list of services in existing devolution deals which have been identified as candidates for being funded through retained business rates. The 'deep dive' workshops scheduled for 4 August 2016 will help to explore certain service areas in more detail.
- 2.5 The option of using retained business rates to ensure continuity of EU funding was discussed. The Steering Group stated that this does not appear to be viable option

as EU funding does not fit the criteria used to assess the suitability of potential responsibilities to be devolved.

3. Update following publication of 100% Business Rates Retention consultation

3.1 The 'Self-sufficient local government: 100% business rates retention' consultation was published on 5 July 2016. The deadline for consultation responses is 26 September 2016. The relevant section of the consultation for the Working Group is chapter 3 'Devolution of Responsibilities'.

3.2 The criteria listed within the consultation for possible candidates for devolution is the same as the Working Group originally decided upon.

3.3 The Steering Group reported that they felt the list of responsibilities in the consultation was not ambitious enough, stating that many of the responsibilities listed are grant based and are not skills or growth focussed. However it is important to note that responsibilities listed within the consultation are only suggestions; other ideas are encouraged to be put forward in response to the consultation.

3.4 The section of the chapter which relates to the funding of devolution deals through retained business rates, reflects the views of the Government at the time of publication, whereby retained business rates could only be used to fund commitments in existing or future devolution deal areas and that funding for such service areas would be not be universally devolved. If local government has concerns over this approach, then it is important that these concerns are reflected in the response to the consultation.

3.5 Overall the consultation chapter on the Devolution of Responsibilities broadly reflects the discussions the Working Group have had at previous meetings. The list of responsibilities in the consultation is very much open to challenge, which in turn opens up opportunities for local government in their responses to the consultation.

4. Agreement of structure for deep dive workshops into individual service areas

4.1 Bevis Ingram introduced the draft proposal for the structure of the deep dive workshops into individual service areas. The workshops will be held on 4 August 2016 and will explore the service areas of economic growth (focussing on skills) and public sector reform- focussing on welfare and health & social care integration. The "deep dives" will aim to identify what the role of local government should be in these areas and identify new responsibilities that this would involve local government taking on. The proposal suggested that the workshop on economic growth (focussing on skills) should be held for three hours in the morning, with the workshop on public services reform scheduled for three hours in the afternoon.

4.2 In response the Working Group stated it was too ambitious to facilitate a thorough discussion on each service area within the timescale of three hours, especially when those attending may not have a full understanding of the proposed reforms to business rates. The group proposed that both workshops should be run in parallel

over a full day to allow more time for a detailed discussion on each service area. Running the workshops on one day would also allow for an introductory session in the morning to help bring attendees up to speed with the current state of play on business rates. It was also suggested that it could be useful for attendees to be sent some background information/ homework ahead of the workshop. The LGA and DCLG agreed to re-work the plan for the workshops to reflect the suggestions from the Working Group.

4.3 The outcomes from the workshops will be fed back for the Working Group to consider during the summer. It is proposed that a discussion via email takes place over the summer in order to inform a paper which will then be provided to the Steering Group for their consideration as to whether outcomes from the workshops can be fed into the local government sectors response to the consultation.

5. AOB

5.1 The next Steering Group meeting is scheduled for 7 September 2016 and the next LGA Task and Finish group is scheduled for 9 September 2016. The date for the next Working Group meeting is to be confirmed but will take place on the week commencing 12 September 2016.

Annex A – Attendance List (21 July 2016)

Member	Organisation	Attendance
Bevis Ingram	Local Government Association (LGA)	Present
Mark Johnson	Local Government Association (LGA)	Present
Sally Burlington	Local Government Association (LGA)	Apologies
Rose Doran	Local Government Association (LGA)	Present
Eamon Lally	Local Government Association (LGA)	Apologies
Anthony May	County Councils' Network (CCN)	Present [Phone]
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
Nikki Bishop	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 [Phone]
Jeremy Skinner	Greater London Authority	Present
Paul Honeyben	London Councils	Peter O'Connell
Victoria Jones	Department for Communities and Local Government	Present
Richard Enderby	Department for Communities and Local Government	Present
Jonathan Dallaston	Department for Communities and Local Government	Apologies
Jonathan Denning	Department for Communities and Local Government	Present