



Summary Note – Meeting of Responsibilities Working Group

Title: **Responsibilities Working Group**

Date: **Friday 3 June, 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 Suzanne Clarke opened the meeting with introductions and an apology from Victoria Jones and Richard Enderby: Suzanne and Stuart Hoggan from DCLG attended in their place.

2. Quantum update

2.1 Jonathan Dallaston provided an update on 2020 business rates forecasts, noting that little has changed since the previous meeting. The most relevant issue for the working group is the treatment of central list income. Attendees discussed the relationship between this income and the quantum of resource under consideration for devolution through business rates. The level of income allocated to fund new responsibilities will be a separate question to the size of the list itself.

2.2 The group also discussed the relationship between existing service pressures and new responsibilities for devolution, as any business rates resource set aside to fund existing pressures would reduce the available quantum. From a central government perspective, issues of service pressure up to 2019-20 were addressed within the 2015 Spending Review.

2.3 The linkages between quantum and system design options will be primarily considered by the steering group. To supplement this process, Jonathan agreed to catch-up with the system design group ahead of future responsibilities working group meetings, and report back as they begin proposing specific mechanisms for risk management that would be funded out of business rates receipts.

3. Devolution Package: Advice to Steering Group

3.1 Bevis Ingram introduced the draft Grants and Services Paper, seeking feedback on the document ahead of submission to the steering group. Discussion began on issues of scope and tone, particularly whether the paper should come to firm conclusions before public consultation begins, and the extent to which concerns about the suitability of grants / responsibilities for devolution could be framed in terms of fit with the agreed criteria. Specific comments provided by the group included:

- Confirmation that the Revenue Support Grant, Rural Delivery, the City of London offset and the Transport for London (TfL) capital grant should be 'assumed as given' for the purposes of a starting point. At some stage, HMT will need to provide formal confirmation of the shift from capital to revenue baseline funding for TfL.
- Explanations of the link between devolution deals and devolution through business rates reform could be strengthened.
- Expanding the discussion of Public Health Grant to include the issues associated with formula funding would be helpful. The allocation of this grant in future will need to be considered by the needs and resourcing group.
- It would be valuable to reference the benefits of 'graduating' healthcare services towards greater integration within the Better Care Fund paragraphs.
- The paragraphs describing skills funding would benefit from additional detail or an explanation of why programme funding information is not included.
- Discussion of additional detail that could be added to the new 'individual areas' outlined under paragraph 24.
- Agreement to reframe the summary tables at the end of the paper for consistency across the document.

3.2 The group also requested that an Attendance Allowance expert attend an upcoming working group meeting to provide background on policy development.

3.3 Bevis agreed to update the paper to reflect group discussion then circulate an updated paper seeking final feedback ahead of submission to steering group. Attendees agreed to provide Bevis with comments by midday Monday (6 June 2016).

4. Next steps and AOB

4.1 Next steps primarily related to finalising the Grants and Services Paper, to be circulated ahead of the 13 June steering group (actions detailed within item three above).

4.2 Attendees agreed to discuss an updated role for the working group at the next meeting, following feedback from the steering group. No other business was raised.

Annex A – Attendance List (3 June 2016)

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 (phone)
Anthony May	County Councils' Network (CCN)	Nigel Stevenson (Phone)
Allen Graham	District Councils' Network (DCN)	Present
Barry Hastie	Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities (SIGOMA)	Present
Leigh Whitehouse	Association of Local Authority Treasurers' Societies (ALATS) - SLT	Caroline Holland
Nikki Bishop	Association of Local Authority Treasurers' Societies (ALATS) - SMT	Apologies
Joanna Walker	Association of Local Authority Treasurers' Societies (ALATS) - SCT	Present
Steve Richardson	Association of Local Authority Treasurers' Societies (ALATS) - SDCT	Present (phone)
Sean Clark	Association of Local Authority Treasurers' Societies (ALATS) - SUT	Apologies
Joanne Pitt	Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting (CIPFA)	Caroline Lee (phone)
Alistair Townsend	Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation (IRRV)	Present
Jeremy Skinner	Greater London Authority	Apologies
Paul Honeyben	London Councils	Peter O'Connell
Victoria Jones	Department for Communities and Local Government	Suzanne Clarke
Richard Enderby	Department for Communities and Local Government	Stuart Hoggan
Jonathan Dallaston	Department for Communities and Local Government	Present