

Summary from the meeting on 6th September 2014 of the Independent Commission on Local Government Finance.

Commissioners

Darra Singh (Chair), Anita Charlesworth, Alan Downey, Stephen Lewis

Tony Travers, Jonathan Portes, Stephen Hughes

Guests

Carolyn Downs (LGA) Michael Lockwood (LGA) Nicola Morton (LGA) Rob Whiteman (CIPFA) Richard Vize.

Secretariat Eamon Lally (LGA) Alison Scott (CIPFA) Joanne Pitt (CIPFA)

Apologises Bridget Rosewell , Paul Gray

Summary of Submissions

The Commission considered a summary of the submissions

It was noted that:

- The respondents had not identified many strengths of the existing system
- Many of the submissions had focused on changes that should be made to the detail of the current system

The Commission recognised the value of the detail, and were keen also to focus on some of the fundamental issues. The Commission also wanted to see a more granular analysis of the evidence.

The Commission noted that its reports would build on the ideas presented in the submissions and that they would need to address issues of public interest. It would also be important to ensure that there was a good understanding of the public perception around key issues such as variation in entitlement and access to services.

Housing

The Commission noted that the submissions had raised a range of issues in relation to the issue of housing supply. These included:

- The implications of including local authority borrowing in public sector debt in contrast to how borrowing by social registered landlords was treated.
- The scale of housing benefit expenditure and the scope for rebalancing housing subsidy and investment

The LGA's 100 days document was referenced in the context of the housing discussion

New Homes Bonus

The Commission looked forward to the release of the government's research into the effectiveness of the New Homes Bonus.

Growth

The Commission heard that government would be receptive to suggestions for new incentives to growth and that Commission had an opportunity to bring these forward.

Welfare

The Commission's discussion on welfare focused on the scope for further devolution. It was noted that:

- Some local authorities were keen to explore this area.
- The role that local government had in underpinning the welfare state, but concluded that not all parts of the welfare system could be usefully devolved at that time.
- Some aspects of the national system were too rigid, for example the universal welfare cap, which took no account of variations in cost of living across the country.

In addition the Commission agreed that it would look further at Housing Benefit and welfare to work provision

Health and Social Care

The evidence submitted on health and social care was noted. In addition the Commission commented on the scope or asset rationalisation across health and local authority property holdings.

Early Support

The commission debated early intervention and noted that the submissions had raised the difficulty of establishing a definitive with cost savings.

Fire and Police

The commission were grateful for all comments from fire and rescue authorities and police and crime commissioners.

Interim Report Section Headings and timescales

- Draft by 6th October published middle of October
- Initial draft for comment by 29 September
- Clear indication of what the report is required for
 - o Why it is a problem and why it has occurred
 - o Explain the vision and principles and set out options

Chair confirmed that there would be a

1. Narrative
2. Executive summary
3. Tables
4. Supporting documents