

Finance Panel

Agenda

Friday 10 May 2013
11.30am

Millbank Room (8th Floor)
Local Government house
Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ

To: Members of the Finance Panel
cc: Named officers for briefing purposes

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Finance Panel
10 May 2013

There will be a meeting of the Finance Panel at:

11.30am on Friday 10 May 2013 in the Millbank Room (8th floor), Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ.

A sandwich lunch will be available at 1.30pm.

Attendance Sheet

Please ensure that you sign the attendance register, which will be available in the meeting room. It is the only record of your presence at the meeting.

Apologies

Please notify your political group office (see contact telephone numbers below) if you are unable to attend this meeting, so that a substitute can be arranged and catering numbers adjusted, if necessary.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Labour: | Aicha Less: 020 7664 3263 email: aicha.less@local.gov.uk |
| Conservative: | Luke Taylor: 020 7664 3264 email: luke.taylor@local.gov.uk |
| Liberal Democrat: | Group Office: 020 7664 3235 email: libdem@local.gov.uk |
| Independent: | Group Office: 020 7664 3224 email: independent.group@local.gov.uk |

Location

A map showing the location of Local Government House is printed on the back cover.

LGA Contact

Frances Marshall Tel: 020 7664 3220
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Finance Panel

Date: 16.01.13

Finance Panel 2012/2013

| Councillor | Authority |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| Conservative (4) | |
| Melvyn Caplan [Vice-Chairman] | City of Westminster |
| David Finch | Essex CC |
| David Westley | West Lancashire BC |
| Nigel Ashton | North Somerset Council |
| | |
| Substitutes | |
| Stephen Baines MBE | Calderdale MBC |
| John Fuller | South Norfolk DC |
| Alan Jarrett | Medway Council |
| | |
| Labour (3) | |
| Sharon Taylor OBE [Chair] | Stevenage BC |
| Catherine West | Islington LB |
| Steve Houghton CBE | Barnsley MBC |
| | |
| Substitute | |
| Mike Connolly | Bury MBC |
| | |
| Liberal Democrat (1) | |
| Paul Tilsley MBE [Deputy-Chair] | Birmingham City |
| | |
| Substitute | |
| Sam Crabb | Somerset CC |
| | |
| Independent (1) | |
| Councilman Matthew Richardson [Deputy-Chair] | City of London Corporation |
| | |
| Substitute | |
| Marianne Overton | North Kesteven DC and Lincolnshire CC |

AGENDA

Finance Panel

10 May 2013

11.30am

The Millbank Room (8th floor), Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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| FOR INFORMATION | | |
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Date of the next meeting: 11.30am, Friday 12 July 2013, Local Government House

Update on Universal Credit

Purpose of report

For decision and direction.

Summary

This paper briefly updates Members on the overall progress of the Universal Credit Programme and the local authority face-to-face pilots. Sir Merrick Cockell, LGA Chairman, is meeting Lord Freud, Welfare Reform Minister, on 2 May and officers will report back to Members on the outcomes of that meeting at the Panel.

Recommendations

That the Finance Panel:

1. note the update on overall progress of the Universal Credit programme and the local authority face-to-face pilots; and
2. give a further steer on actions following feedback from the LGA Chairman's meeting with Lord Freud.

Action

Officers to take forward, as directed by Members.

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Update on Universal Credit

Background

1. The statutory framework for Universal Credit (UC) will progressively remove local government's role in benefits processing for working-age claimants. LGA members have always considered benefit claimants will still be people to whom councils have a range of inescapable legal and moral duties.
2. As a result of much work by the LGA family and partners over the past 18 months, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has begun to recognise that there will be a potential role for local government in the delivery of frontline support for UC. This has resulted in the establishment of the face- to-face pilots programme and the Local Support Services Task Force.

UC Pathfinders

3. On 29 April the first UC pathfinder went live in Ashton-under-Lyne Jobcentre (Tameside). The other three job centres - in Wigan, Warrington and Oldham – who were due to start at the same time, will not now start processing UC claims until July, to allow “safe and controlled” testing. The first claimants of UC will be single jobseekers. Around 7,000 people are expected to receive UC during the pathfinder period, which runs from now until October on DWP's current plan. The LGA is closely following the early experience of Tameside Council and officers will update members on latest developments at the Panel.

Local Support Services Framework

4. The LGA has set out a position on the future role of councils in Universal Credit in response to the Local Support Services Framework, which was developed by a joint DWP/LGA task group, and describes the sort of support services councils might need to provide or commission for UC claimants, and how those services might be paid for and managed.
5. Our response (**Appendix A**) was informed by an LGA Conference and discussions at the LGA Executive and the Finance Panel. In a covering letter to Lord Freud, Sir Merrick Cockell and Councillor Sharon Taylor emphasised that supporting UC clients is inevitably a core part of local government's mission, but we need to get the deal right and it needs to recognise local government's role in managing the face-to-face elements of UC.
6. As DWP works with us to develop the next iteration of the framework, the key issues for councils, which we are taking forward, are:
 - 6.1. Clarity on the timetable and geography of transition.

Item 1

- 6.2. Agreement that UC support services should be commissioned through local partnerships, with councils accountable for outcomes achieved with funding allocated by DWP centrally.
 - 6.3. A joint process between local government and DWP, in accordance with the new burdens doctrine, to agree the right amount of funding for UC.
 - 6.4. A joint local government / DWP approach to managing staffing implications of UC.
 - 6.5. Making the case for flexibility over investing in the housing stock to enable councils and ALMOS, working in partnership with Housing Associations, to transform existing housing stock and invest in new build to help meet the acute shortage of smaller properties.
7. The Welfare Reform Deep Dive on 7 May will bring together decision-makers and experts to shape our thinking further on the impact of welfare reform on housing and employment, but also the relationship between the citizen and the state; behaviour change, and issues around economic development, social geography and the influences and pressures on living costs.

Local authority-led face-to-face pilots

8. The establishment of the local authority-led face-to-face pilots recognised our shared understanding with DWP that many of those who are affected by the changes will continue to look to councils and the voluntary sector as their principal source of advice and support.
9. The pilots are helping to identify the significant challenges that councils and partners will face when implementing UC, and most importantly, developing practical solutions that other councils can learn from – including innovative tools to help claimants manage their finances and supporting claimants to develop digital skills. The LGA is working with the pilots to capture and share the learning widely through a programme of events and Knowledge-Hub.
10. The latest update from the 8 English pilots is attached at **Appendix B**. The pilots are due to finish at the end of September and we have received strong feedback that they want to continue. The LGA has urged DWP to fund and support all pilots who wish to extend. It would make no sense to wind the pilots up after everybody has put in a year of effort to develop the local partnerships that are now yielding rich learning and when their work will soon be needed to support the live running of UC.

Conclusion and next steps

11. Sir Merrick Cockell, LGA Chairman, is meeting Lord Freud, Welfare Reform Minister, on 2 May and officers will report back to members on the outcomes of that meeting at the Panel. Following this, members may wish to give officers a further steer.

Financial Implications

12. This is core LGA work and there are no additional financial implications.

From the Chairman of the Association
Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell

Lord Freud
Minister for Welfare Reform
Department for Work & Pensions
4th Floor, Caxton House
Tothill Street
London, SW1H 9DA

08 April 2013

Dear Lord Freud,

Universal Credit: Local Support Services

As you know, we were delighted with the joint initiative the DWP and the local authority associations took to publish a draft Local Support Services Framework for Universal Credit in February. We saw that as opening a very important conversation about the future role of local government in helping you ensure that Universal Credit can be delivered with minimum risk.

We have now seen responses from many councils, held a thoughtful conference here at the LGA – at which your participation was hugely valued – and discussed the issues in the LGA’s Finance Panel.

Our conclusion is that local government is up for this challenge. There is a very clear message that supporting UC clients is inevitably a part of local government’s mission to improve the lives of local residents in locations and at a scale that makes sense to them. Councils are your natural partner in this regard. We provide the most effective route to market for the kind of personalised support that a significant proportion of UC claimants are going to need in the short-term and to get them reliably online in the long term.

It seems to us that the department would be missing a great opportunity if it did not take full advantage of what councils have to offer here, not just in terms of processing benefits but stretching the offer to encompass preventative actions like homelessness, employment & training that lie within our core competences.

At the same time, we need to get the deal right. There are elements of the published framework which many councils felt they needed more detail on. There are also elements which simply do not represent a bargain councils are willing to strike. And there are issues such as data sharing and the future role (and potential for transfer) of staff to resolve. Finally, you will recognise that the exact timetable and geography of transition remain to be settled, and councils would prefer there to be an element of negotiation with the department about how that is paced.

We want to work those questions through with you and your officials. The attached note sets out our proposed approach. There are many councils that want to work creatively with you to deliver what you are seeking to achieve.

As we understand it, there is now a window of opportunity to take this forward in the context of a wider programme reset. We cannot be more explicit that we see it as in both councils' interests and the department's to get this right and strike the right deal – visit any council customer service desk this week and look at the queues of people asking for advice on next week's welfare changes, and the force of this argument will be clear to you. Getting it right is achievable, and we look forward to a fruitful conversation over the next few weeks.

We probably ought to meet soon, and officials should get together at senior level in advance of that. We hope you will agree.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Merrick Cockell'.

Cllr Sir Merrick Cockell
Chairman

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sharon Taylor'.

Cllr Sharon Taylor
Chair, LGA Finance Panel

In response to the government's draft Local Support Services Framework, we would like to propose the following approach.

The Model

Local Support Services should be commissioned from a diverse provider base, including DWP and council employees but also drawing on private and voluntary sector expertise and resources but with Councils playing a central and default role, not least because they will be contacting many of the client group with Council Tax Support. Services should be commissioned locally on a geography that makes sense for customers taking into account the location of existing service outlets and the scope for rationalising the public sector estate in both the short and medium term.

Local commissioning should be accountable to the community as well as properly accountable for public money. We therefore strongly endorse the government's proposal for commissioning through local partnerships, with accountability for both funding and outcomes achieved by making the council the accountable body for funding allocated by DWP centrally. In some areas, partnerships may be most effective if they involve more than one council, a single council would be the accountable body for funding although all would account to residents for outcomes.

The partnership should agree a commissioning plan, which should detail the outcomes sought, the funding allocated to each outcome, and the allocation of delivery responsibility. That commissioning plan would be the basis of a funding agreement with DWP. It should be supported by agreements with individual local delivery bodies.

There may be areas - although this point we do not think this will be widespread - where the council does not wish to be responsible for commissioning UC support or they are unable to meet minimum standards that residents and the Department is entitled to expect. In those areas, DWP would commission directly, possibly by convening a partnership itself through the local District Manager.

Outcomes and services

The LSS model should, as the government has suggested, be tasked with achieving outcomes that support and align with those of the overall Universal Credit programme. The key outcomes must be:

- reducing benefit dependency;
- improving labour market outcomes;
- progressively ensuring that as many claimants as possible are able to manage their claims independently of publicly-funded support.

It follows from this that there should be no national prescription of what specific services should be provided or by whom. Local partnerships will find an illustrative menu of services which the LSS budget is intended to fund extremely valuable in helping them consider and shape the local offer, but a prescriptive approach will not only contradict the emphasis on outcomes, but will add needless cost where cheaper and better alternatives may be available, stifle innovation, squeeze out valuable services that have not made it onto the central list, and create an incentive to fund activity at the expense of focussing on claimants' real needs.

There is, though, a question about the exercise of some statutory functions which might be part of the core funding for local support (see below). Many councils are clear that they want to keep the current role they have in verifying evidence in support of a claim. There is also a consensus that councils – and possibly also Registered Social Landlords - should also be delegated to adjudicate exemptions to normal benefit payment rules when required (the only reason for not delegating this function would be if DWP considered that it was likely to reject on a significant scale exemption recommendations from councils and housing associations). Local authorities should also be funded to provide urgent support for resolving an issue with a claim including making emergency payments and alternative payment arrangements.

Some councils still have concerns about the treatment of those vulnerable contacts described in Appendix C and how the flow-of-funds will work. In turn, voluntary agencies who often step-in to support this group [e.g. YMCA] have concerns in how they can sustain their own finances if their client cashflows are stretched. In this and other examples we would wish to work with you to ensure that unintended consequences do not detract from the policy's wider objectives.

Outcome-based funding

We strongly support DWP's desire for a proportion of the funding to be outcome based. However, if payment is by results per claimant supported there could be a perverse incentive for local partnerships to maintain the level of support to claimants rather than reduce it. Any measures should be geared towards reducing waste and duplication in the UC system, especially as it relates to Council Tax Support. We would therefore like to explore funding models based on a formula mixing up to three components:

- core funding
- per-client (attachment) fees
- outcome payments.

More work is needed to understand the best mix, but the trick will be to both incentivise preventive action that will help clients achieve independence, and make it financially possible where the costs may fall up front.

Roll Out Timetable

Councils need as much clear information about the UC roll out timetable as possible, as soon as possible. To plan – bearing in mind that there are workforce implications and implications for the funding of third parties such as VCS organisations - councils need to know at a local level what their implementation timetable looks like. Currently they do not know which clients will be migrating or when. This makes it very difficult to plan service provision and manage risk. Further clarity is also required around how traditional housing benefit administration grants will change over the same period. Clear timescales for implementation will be vital if the transition to UC is to be managed successfully.

Latest update from the 8 English LA Led Pilots

Bath & North East Somerset Council

Update

Bath continues to highlight the changes that could affect people when Universal Credit starts to be implemented to Support Workers and Housing Associations. They attended events held by the largest local Housing Association and explained UC changes directly to tenants. They also visited a family centre and spoke to Family Support Officers who have close dealings with families), to discuss UC, and the changes that this will bring. And have also engaged with Women's Services and identified access to a further 8 self-serve PCs at the Women's' Services office.

Bath is starting to arrange Jobcentre / Bath and North East Somerset Work Exchange Experiences where staff from both organisations can spend half a day looking at the work that each other do. It is expected that this will strengthen expertise, such as employability, for Local Authority staff.

Communications have started with libraries to explore the impact that digital by default will have on their self-serve PC's when UC launches, and where people can be signposted to, should they need any further help and /or support.

Work has recently started with The Universal Credit Programme on the Personal Planner to help understand how this can be linked to local partner organisations.

Emerging themes from current evaluation are that although many people can claim, lack of digital access and terminology could deter people. People are concerned about completing an 'official' on-line application form. Also, although external partners are highlighted to customers for various degrees of help/support, this isn't always taken up. Further work is under way to identify the reasons for this.

Emerging themes from current evaluation are that although many people can claim, lack of digital access and terminology could deter people. People are concerned about completing an 'official' on-line application form. Also, although external partners are highlighted to customers for various degrees of help/support, this isn't always taken up. Further work is under way to identify the reasons for this.

Birmingham City Council

Update

In Birmingham, 50% of people attending letting suites did not have an email address, as a result this involved more time being spent with tenants helping them to set up this first account before giving access to the log book. In order to address this, the floorwalkers are being given tablets so that they can reduce the time the main letting suite computers are utilised to try and reduce the backlog of tenants waiting to sign up.

At the start of the process people were asked whether they wanted to sign-up to the log book, by giving people this option most automatically decide not to. So now the process has changed to make it a requirement by including the log book in the process of obtaining their tenancy and using appropriate language which has resulted in them signing up.

Channel Shift to Self Serve - Up to date (91%) of new tenants completed their Housing Benefit / Council Tax Benefit form via Self Serve on line application through digital log book, (6.5%) didn't complete due to process issues which were not being adhered to and so we are sure that this will increase and (2.5%) were unable to complete due to learning difficulties or rules imposed on people who are on probation not being able to have access to the internet.

As part of the letting suite process an income maximisation and financial assessment is undertaken. So far 1874 people have been through the letting suite process and over 8.5m worth of benefits have been identified which equates to approximately £12.50 per week for everyone who has gone through the process. The majority of benefit £6.5 m was housing benefit with £1m Council Tax Benefit and £1.5m other benefits.

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| London Borough of Lewisham |
| Update |
| <p>Lewisham has now made initial contact with all 524 families who are the focus of the pilot. 250 have been taken through the triage process. Of those:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 109 were triaged either as exempt, no longer affected by the benefit cap or not vulnerable 125 were booked for Face to face appointments 16 were temporarily put on hold pending an interpreter being booked. <p>The pilot team have been working with the Cabinet Office ‘nudge’ team to identify ways to make contact with those families they have been unsuccessful with to date.</p> <p>They have started to generate some useful learning in terms of vulnerabilities identified at the triage assessment and how this translates into structured support focused discussions. Some examples of recent learning are:</p> <p>Lewisham are compiling results of support planning. Of the support plans: 67% provide advice on an identified housing need, 62% refer to an employment support provider, 39% give advice on getting online and 37% make referrals for budgeting and debt advice.</p> <p>Exit surveys demonstrate that the approach is helping to address knowledge and skills gaps around the transition:</p> <p>83% said they knew nothing about UC and the benefit cap before their appointment. After their appointment, 91% said they think they know all or most of what they need to know about the changes, 80% said they were more likely to work following the results of our better off calculator and 76% said they were personally committed to achieving all of the things in their support plans.</p> <p>One particular learning point has been associated with developing a more intensive complex needs support service for residents who are likely to need a more on-going relationship with the local authority during the transition to Universal Credit. The local authority is considering how it might approach the development of this service alongside pilot activities.</p> |

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| Melton Borough Council |
| Update |
| <p>Using customer insight, Melton has been developing an engagement plan to ensure that customers are fully informed regarding the Welfare Reform changes. Customers have been targeted by phone and letter, as well as at February’s Town Forum event. The effectiveness of this approach will be tested initially with the implementation of Melton’s first on-line service – the Council Tax Support Service, which will be rolled out from 22 April. Response to this service will provide some early feedback on how successful the engagement plan has been in raising customer awareness.</p> <p>The council’s Employment and Skills Worker continues to provide support to the most vulnerable individuals, providing low level or intense support depending on the customer’s circumstances.</p> |

Currently the majority of referrals are from council staff and Melton is therefore looking for ways of promoting the service and raise awareness with partners, particularly through the Partnership Delivery Group.

Jobcentre Plus and Melton are working jointly to deliver a triage service for Lone Parent New Joiners from two of its Children's Centres in the borough. The new service will be launched on 8 April and will test the benefits of delivering this type of service jointly to customers.

A number of early lessons are beginning to emerge from the pilot including:

Many of the most vulnerable claimants with complex needs are often difficult to reach and interactions with these claimants tend to be resource intensive as one to one engagement appears more successful.

A high percentage of claimants have on line access but this is through devices such as mobile phones and therefore unsuitable for completing an on-line claim.

There is a need to provide free/low cost internet access at a variety of locations to meet customer demand. Library sessions are inadequate both in length and availability.

North Dorset District Council

Update

Spectrum, a housing association within the consortium, are more strongly encouraging their tenants and potential tenants to take up financial training courses and access to the courses has also been expanded to those under occupying properties. Review sessions have been held and feedback from tenants evaluated. The courses have been reworked to take account of the feedback. Generally feedback from the sessions has been good. Continuous evaluation will be undertaken by Adult Learning (the provider) who has confirmed that they have funding available to continue provision of these courses.

North Dorset are providing mediated support for the completion of on line housing benefit claim forms and have been measuring both ability and length of time this takes. This has resulted in a re-design of the Housing Benefit form to make it easier to complete. IT literate applicants are now averaging 32 minutes to complete the form (previously 43 minutes).

They are also investigating the possibility of training volunteers to help complete the Housing Benefit application from other more remote public access points. This is important where IT literacy is low. It is crucial to provide public access points when broadband are not available in some of the remote areas of the District. The volunteers will need to be CRB checked and sign a confidentiality clause.

Oxford City Council

Update

Oxford has spent the vast majority of March dealing with the impact of notifying customers in its area about the under-occupancy size restrictions. There have been a vast number of queries from customers in response to correspondence covering a range of issues.

They are now refining the triage process based on experiences to date, as the next step is to start pro-actively contacting customers affected by the under-occupancy size restrictions who have not contacted the Council in response to letters.

High interest / requests for personal budgeting support were anticipated, but this has not materialised at this time. It was also expected that Housing / security of tenure would be a barrier to work due to the customers targeted and the challenges they face as the Welfare Reforms take effect. The high volume of Housing related issues has resulted in them attempting to recruit additional resource for the Pilot to deal with these issues effectively.

Oxford have provided additional support to 74 customers who have been referred to the pilot, conducted 14 face to face interviews and have made 22 referrals to other agencies on behalf of customers.

Early learning has indicated that the most common barriers to work within the customer group are:

- Debt
- Perceived lack of employability
- Housing / security of tenure

Rushcliffe Borough Council

Update

Building effective partnerships continues to be an important element in Rushcliffe's approach to delivering an improved customer service from its Contact Centre at West Bridgford. Agreement has been reached with Citizens Advice that they will begin to offer a service from the Centre from 1 April. Engagement is continuing with other partners with the aim of strengthening relationships and refining service delivery plans. Rushcliffe will be holding a Partnership Workshop, hopefully in June, to seek further opportunities for the partners to integrate their services. They will also be visiting the Wigan Life Centre in April to seek lessons learned from partner services delivery model.

Jobcentre Plus has developed a Delivery Plan which sets out the steps and timescales for gradually increasing JCP service provision at the Centre. This will enable JCP and Rushcliffe to work together to build and shape the service over coming months to ensure it best meets customer needs. This includes providing training to Council advisors so they can offer customer support when JCP are not on site.

The marketing campaign to encourage customers to use online methods wherever possible is well underway. A second marketing campaign aimed at promoting the many services offered by a variety of partners at the Centre will commence after Easter. Rushcliffe are also supporting

partners in delivering their own campaigns to advertise their specific service from the Centre.

The second pilot evaluation report was submitted this month and early lessons are beginning to emerge. For example:

Effective partnerships are key to success but take time to build. Data sharing amongst partners continues to be an issue that has been identified by both Rushcliffe and Jobcentre Plus as an obstacle to partnership working developing at pace.

Directing customers to on-line services can be seen as a difficult option for front line advisers, who are used to delivering a high quality face to face service to those visiting the centre. There is a desire amongst staff to continue to deliver the service in this way and a change in culture will be required which takes time to embed.

There is still a lack of awareness from those surveyed at the Centre that Universal Credit is coming and that it will bring changes for benefit customers.

West Lindsey District Council

Update

Without the on line HB form, there have been limits to work undertaken by the joint LA/DWP Ops team but it is anticipated that the form will be ready, for internal use only, during March with a view to placing on the council website once internal testing is complete.

Those that are coming into the Guildhall are being supported where necessary to complete JSA online and directed to Housing officers on the same site to complete Housing Benefit claims at the same time. The provision of the public access PCs has also provided support for those logging on to Universal Job Match and there have been many customers coming back regularly for this purpose. When questioned the vast majority of customers said that they welcomed the help and support provided at the early stage.

The Credit Union are soon to be based in the Guildhall too providing more of a one stop shop. Discussions are underway about verification of documents so that a bank account could be opened whilst the customer is in the Guildhall.

Partnerships are being developed and a working group set up. Meetings have been held with training providers and community link champions and a training session is planned for volunteers in early March. This will help to support the later phases in other parts of the District.

Item 2

Spending Review Submission

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The LGA's Spending Review submission was sent to the Treasury, Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and other Government Departments on 29 April. Officers will provide a verbal update at the Panel meeting on the early reaction from Government.

Recommendation

The Panel are invited to discuss the submission and the follow up with Ministers.

Action

LGA Officers to proceed as directed.

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Spending Review Submission

1. The LGA's Spending Round submission was sent to the Her Majesty's Treasury (HMT) and CLG on 29 April, following a request in a recent letter from Brandon Lewis MP to the LGA Chairman to submit evidence that day (which was also the deadline for departmental submissions to HMT).
2. The Finance Panel commented on:
 - 2.1. an overview of the LGA Spending Round submission;
 - 2.2. a paper on local government finance; and
 - 2.3. a paper showing how a typical council has been affected by the funding reductions in SR10, its contribution to growth, the impact of further reductions in 2015-16 and how our proposed measures would help.
3. There were also 9 other themed papers on: adult services; children's services; culture, sport and the digital economy; energy; fire; growth; housing; transport; and waste.
4. Community Budgets was a theme running through all of the papers.
5. These 9 papers were cleared through the relevant LGA Boards. The main asks of the Government for the Spending Round was covered in the overview. The main themes, and the approach, were agreed by Leadership Board on 10 April.
6. Individual themed papers were sent only to Ministers in the relevant Department or Departments (not to all Departments). CLG and HMT received all of the papers plus the overview and the impact on a typical council paper.
7. Follow up meetings with Cabinet Ministers are now beginning to take place, along with meetings with other lobbying bodies who can support our positions. We are keen to continue working with Government Departments in the run up to decisions being taken before the outcome of the review is announced on 26 June.
8. In particular, we are seeking an outline of the process until then. We will identify the key decision points - the bi-laterals between the Chief Secretary and Spending Ministers, and meetings of the group within Cabinet that take the final decisions - and time our interventions to influence them too.
9. Copies of the full LGA submission are attached at **Appendix A**.

New Model for Local Government Update

Purpose of report

To update the Finance Panel on the LGA's work to develop a new model for local government.

Summary

Work is continuing on a suite of papers which will present proposals for a new model of local government to the LGA conference to be held on 2 - 4 July. Its purpose will be to influence political manifestos in the lead up to the 2015 general election and the spending round that will immediately follow it. This paper provides a brief update on the work to date and seeks any comments that Finance Panel may have to help steer the work further.

In particular, a copy of the draft finance policy paper will be **circulated separately** and the Panel's comments on this will be sought.

Recommendation

Members are asked provide input to assist discussions and steer further progress.

Action

Any input will feed into the final drafts of the new model which will be cleared with the Chair of the Panel.

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New Model for Local Government – Update

Background

1. At its January and February meetings, the LGA Leadership Board considered reports setting out a proposal for a new model for local government. The proposal's purpose was threefold:
 - 1.1. developing a clear case for the future national role of local government in order to inform party manifestos in the run-up to the next general election;
 - 1.2. setting out Local Government's offer in order to inform the expected 2015 spending review immediately after the election; and
 - 1.3. providing the LGA national conference with a practical explanation of the above and informing its longer term planning processes.
2. Initial policy papers were drafted and circulated to Boards and Panels covering the following key priorities:
 - 2.1. Independent Local Government;
 - 2.2. Growth;
 - 2.3. Good adult social care;
 - 2.4. Future children's services;
 - 2.5. Welfare reform; and
 - 2.6. Sustainable future funding.
3. The Leadership Board sought national communication of the work in order to ensure that voices could be heard across the sector and from key partners. Good numbers attended national roadshows and subject specific workshops.
4. Work is now under way to develop the papers based on the feedback received. The LGA's submission to the spending round for 2015/16 has been developed in parallel with this activity. It has drawn from the discussions and provides a solid foundation for future development in the new model.

Future activity leading to conference and beyond

5. Drafts of the papers for the new model will be circulated separately and members' comments on it will be very helpful. An update on our submission to the spending review may be found at Item 2 on this agenda and Panel Members are asked to consider what further developments they might wish to see included and to review the draft with that in mind.

Item 3

6. The structure of the new model has been reviewed and it is envisaged that it will now be a portfolio comprising a comprehensive overview paper and the six detailed policy papers outlined above. It will also have a more descriptive name which will be less inwardly focused on local government and emphasise that its purpose is to enable effective support of communities in challenging times by rewiring public services.
7. The Leadership Board has been very clear that it is important that the national conference should have the new model at its focus and be able to contribute to its development. Accordingly, it will not be presented with a fait-accompli. Whilst the new model will be delivered in a well-developed form, its purpose will be to seek conference's thoughts and views on a number of issues and questions. The following are the key activities leading up to and including conference:

| Week/ Month beginning | Activity |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 29 April | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt of second drafts of papers. |
| 6 May | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency review of papers. • Development of overview paper. • Copywriting review of papers with communications team. |
| 15 May | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Board review of progress. • Copywriting review continues. • Workshop to highlight questions and issues for conference. |
| 20 May | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of final draft. |
| 27 May | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final review of full suite prior to June Leadership Board. • Develop campaign and draft designs. |
| 3 June | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further preparations and production for conference. |
| 12 June | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership Board discuss final draft. |
| 17 June | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further preparations and production for conference. |
| 24 June | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporation into speeches and design of sessions. • Warm up press campaign. |
| 1 July | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LGA national conference. • Finalise new model in light of conference discussions. • Follow up campaign. • Political input into manifesto preparation. |
| 1 August | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of presentations for political conferences. |
| 1 Sept | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of key messages at party conferences. |
| 1 October | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of campaign and decisions on next steps. |

8. Whilst the above table revolves around the LGA and political conferences, work of various kinds has already begun on draft manifestos by the political parties. Accordingly emerging themes and messages are being shared with them on the basis that the LGA has yet to come to a firm view, in order to ensure that there are openings for more formal input over the summer.

Item 3

Conclusion

9. There has been considerable intense thinking about the new model over the last four months, aided by Board and Panel Members' work and speedy responses on the spending round. All comments will be very welcome, whether on the draft papers that are being separately circulated or the timetable outlined above.

Council Tax Referendums and Levying Bodies

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This report summarises a potential legislative change on bringing levies into the definitions used for council tax referendum purposes which may be included in the Queen's Speech on 8 May 2013.

Recommendation

That Members agree to receive further reports as the measure progresses through Parliament.

Action

Officers to continue to liaise with Department for Communities and Local Government officials and to report back to the Panel.

Contact officer: Mike Heiser
Position: Senior Adviser (Finance)
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E-mail: mike.heiser@local.gov.uk

Council Tax Referendums and Levying Bodies

Background

1. The current law on council tax referendums was enacted through the 2011 Localism Act. It provides, in short, that if a council or major preceptor (such as a county, fire authority or local policing body) agrees a council tax increase above a limit set by the Secretary of State then they have to hold a referendum to agree it.
2. The law came into being in time for 2012-13 budgets to be set. Different principles were set in 2012-13 and in 2013-14. So far no council or major precepting body has triggered a referendum.
3. In the light of the experience in 2013, the Government has signalled that they intend to change the law in one important respect. A written ministerial statement on 30 January 2013 set out the Government's intention to include levying bodies within the definition of the council tax increase used for referendum comparisons. The statement said that this would be more transparent as it would increase the accountability of unelected levying bodies.
4. Officers understand from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) officials that there is likely to be an announcement at around the same time as the Queen's Speech, on May 8. Any updates will be given verbally to the Panel meeting.
5. The change will affect, for example, transport, waste and internal drainage bodies all of which are financed in whole or in part by a levy on council tax. The fact that these were outside the definition used in 2013 meant that a council tax increase including levies higher than the referendum limit could be set without triggering a referendum limit because levies did not count for referendum purposes.

Issues

6. LGA officers, together with officers from London Councils and Treasurers' Societies have been discussing the change with DCLG officials. We have been encouraging them to consult on the change more widely, particularly as we understand there are mixed views in local government on the desirability of including levying bodies in the calculation.
7. There is also an issue as to the extent to which councils themselves are able to change levies or if they are passed through to them with little opportunity to change them (such is the case, for example, for the Environment Agency) and the extent to which levy increases may follow on changes which fit in with broader ministerial priorities (such as the City Deal in Greater Manchester).
8. We understand from DCLG officials that although Ministers are unlikely to deviate from the policy as set out in the written ministerial statement (that levying bodies should be included), they recognise that there are implementation issues relating to when councils receive information from levying bodies and how levies are distributed, (which can be on the basis of council taxbase or population), and that DCLG might look at consulting on these.

Item 4

9. It should be noted, by the way, that this legislative change does not cover local precepts – that is those set by parish and town councils. The Secretary of State already has powers to set principles to force parish and town councils to have referendums on council tax increases. However, he has not so far chosen to exercise this power.

Financial Implications

10. This is core work for the LGA and will be contained within existing budgets.

Updating the LGA's Funding Outlook Model

Purpose of report

For discussion and decision.

Summary

Last year the LGA published Funding outlook for councils from 2010/11 to 2019/20: Preliminary modelling. Based on assumptions of future changes in income and demand for service spending, the LGA estimated there would be a funding gap of £16.5 billion a year by 2019/20 or a 29 per cent shortfall between revenue income and spending pressures.

Since January 2013 the LGA has been working on making a number of changes to the funding outlook model. The purpose of this report is to update members of the Finance Panel on the changes made to the model and agree a plan for publication later in the year.

Recommendation

The Finance Panel is invited to discuss the work to date and agree a plan for taking this forward.

Action

Officers to proceed as directed.

Contact officer:

Nicola Morton

Position:

Head of Local Government Finance

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Updating the LGA's Funding Outlook Model

Background

1. In July 2012 the LGA published 'funding outlook for councils from 2010/11 to 2019/20: Preliminary modelling'. Based on assumptions of future changes in income and demand for spending, the LGA estimated there would be a funding gap of £16.5 billion a year by 2019/20 or a 29 per cent shortfall between revenue income and spending pressures. Assuming that demand in social care and waste are fully funded, it was estimated that other services would face a cash cut of more than 66 per cent by the end of the decade. When capital finance and concessionary fares were also funded in full the cash cut for remaining services rose to 90 per cent.
2. The results of this preliminary modelling work were summarised in a report which was launched at the LGA's 2012 annual conference. The work received extensive media coverage and has been used by the LGA in subsequent lobbying and media activity such as around the local government finance settlement and in anticipation of the 2013 Spending Round.
3. In addition, the LGA also made available a council version of the model to each member authority so that they could look at the impact on their own authority. This model which could be altered by local authorities, to reflect alternative assumptions, was well received by member authorities and the LGA has received a great deal of positive feedback on this work.

Updates to the model

4. Since January 2013, the LGA has been working on making a number of changes to the funding outlook model. Some of the main changes include:
 - 4.1. updating the model to use the latest information on budgeted and outturn spend;
 - 4.2. use of the latest information on funding available to local government as announced in the 2013/14 and provisional 2014/15 local government finance settlements;
 - 4.3. use of local authority level data to estimate future demand, cost pressures and local growth estimates. The 2012 model applied national trends in demographic and other data at the local authority level;
 - 4.4. different assumptions have been applied to changes in employee expenditure compared to other running costs;
 - 4.5. granularity of spend data rather than grouping by major service area;

- 4.6. presenting a range of scenarios that allow the local authority to select a series of options on some of the assumptions made such as use of reserves, changes in council tax, potential for future growth in income etc. Councils will still be able to alter the model to be based on their own assumptions.
5. The purpose of these changes, in addition, to reflecting the latest available data on income and spend, is to provide local authorities with a tool that provides a better indication of potential income and spend at the local authority level.

Conclusion and next steps

6. The model is currently going through a number of checks for accuracy of the calculations and data sources and reasonableness of the assumptions underpinning the model. A sample of volunteer local authorities will also be sent their own council's model to undertake these and other checks. Although this checking will not be fully completed by the time of the Finance Panel meeting in May, a verbal update will be provided at the meeting on some of the key numbers emerging from the new model.
7. The intention is to launch the updated funding outlook model at the LGA conference in July. The 2013 Spending Round, which will set out local government expenditure limits (that is the funding available for local government from the Department for Communities and Local Government) for 2015/16, is due to be published on 26 June just a few days before the LGA conference.
8. Subject to the agreement of the Panel, and the relevant information being published on 26 June, the LGA will attempt to update the funding outlook model to reflect the local authority expenditure information contained in the 2013 Spending Round before the model is launched at the conference. This would mean that the model is as up to date as possible at the time of publication but could potentially rule out the possibility of a professionally published document being available at the conference. A hard copy of a report would be available at conference.
9. The Finance Panel is asked to discuss and agree this approach.

Financial Implications

10. This will be met from within existing LGA resources.

Note of decisions taken and actions required

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Title: | Finance Panel |
| Date and time: | 11.30am, 22 March 2013 |
| Venue: | Millbank Room, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ |

Attendance

| Position | Councillor | Council |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Chair | Sharon Taylor OBE | Stevenage BC |
| Vice chair | Melvyn Caplan | City of Westminster |
| Deputy chair | Paul Tilsley MBE | Birmingham City |
| Deputy chair | Councilman Matthew Richardson | City of London Corporation |
| Members | David Finch | Essex CC |
| | Nigel Ashton | North Somerset Council |
| | Catherine West | Islington LB |
| | John Fuller | South Norfolk DC |
| Observers | Alan Jarrett | Medway Council |
| Apologies | David Westley | West Lancashire BC |

Officers: Nicola Morton, Paul Raynes, Philip Mind, Mike Heiser, Aivaras Statkevicius and Frances Marshall

| Item | Decisions and actions | Action by |
|----------|--|-------------|
| | <p>Members were informed that in 2013/14, the LGA's budget funding would be reduced by £2 million. Panel Members would be informed as soon as there was anything concrete to report.</p> | |
| 1 | <p>Social Bonds Investments Update</p> <p>Ben Jupp (Director, Social Finance) provided a verbal presentation on social finance and Social Impact Bonds (SIB). In doing so, he highlighted the benefits in terms of supporting new ways of delivering public services, particularly early intervention and transferring risk since the financial returns, as well as noting some potential challenges. He drew attention to the Peterborough prison pilot to reduce reoffending by short sentenced prisoners and the Essex pilot to prevent young people going into care. He highlighted the opportunity for the LGA and local authorities to work with Social Finance to explore similar opportunities.</p> <p>Members expressed interest in the potential for SIBs to deliver financial returns as well as innovating public service delivery. The Panel welcomed the opportunity to work with Social Finance to promote social investment opportunities to local government and suggested that a workshop on SIB be included as part of the LGA's 2013 Annual Conference programme. It was suggested that in future the term 'social finance' be used instead of SIB, as Members felt this terminology more clearly reflected the area of work and avoided confusion with the work on a collective municipal bonds agency.</p> <p>Decisions</p> <p>The Panel noted the report and agreed to work with Social Finance to promote social investment opportunities to local government.</p> <p>Action</p> <p>Work with Social Finance to deliver a workshop at the LGA's 2013 Annual Conference.</p> | Philip Mind |
| 2 | <p>The Budget</p> <p>Nicola Morton (Head of Local Government Finance) summarised the key implications for local government from the 2013 Budget announced on 20 March. The LGA's 'on the day briefing', which summarised the key announcements and LGA view of them, had been tabled.</p> <p>In the following discussion, Members considered changes to the 'Right to Buy' scheme and the implications for local authorities' social housing</p> | |

stock. Although supportive of the principle of the 'Right to Buy' scheme, Members expressed concerns regarding the impact of the increasing uptake of the scheme on: the availability of affordable housing; overcrowding; rent prices and the social wellbeing of neighbourhoods. London was highlighted as an area where these problems were particularly acute. With reference to the success of the Government's mortgage scheme in certain local authority areas, Members highlighted the need for a strategic approach to addressing the affordable housing crisis.

Decision

The Panel **noted** the update on the Budget.

3 Spending review submission to the Treasury

The Chair introduced the report which included a copy of the LGA's key lobbying asks to the Treasury, which had been submitted to the Government on 12 March in order to influence them in advance of the 20 March Budget announcement. She summarised the key comments which the LGA Executive had made at their meeting on 14 March and thanked Philip Mind (Senior Advisor) for his hard work in developing the submission. The Panel were invited to comment on the submission with a view to informing a more detailed submission to the Treasury in late Spring.

In the ensuing discussion a number of issues were raised, including:

- Members endorsed the key messages within the spending review submission and welcomed the approach taken in the Chairman's letter to the Chancellor, whereby the LGA's key 'asks' were synthesised into a succinct few core messages. Members recommended that these core messages also be included as a form of Executive summary. The Panel asked that this summary be circulated to all key LGA Members, including the Chairs of Boards, so that a robust and consistent lobbying message was delivered across the piece.
- In discussing the key lobbying priorities, a number of different themes were suggested, including: local authorities' role in promoting local growth; community budgets; reviewing local authorities' statutory obligations; the role of local authorities in welfare and job creation; capital infrastructure; integrated health and social care funding; removal of the centrally set Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing cap; and freezing landfill tax.
- Members requested that in addition to high level 'asks', the more detailed submission to the Treasury in late Spring also include some

technical adjustments that would be advantageous to local authorities and cost neutral to Government. Suggested technical amendments, included: changes to the current approach to pension liabilities; streamlining procurement regulations and processes; and removing local authority private borrowing from the PSRB.

Decisions

That the Panel **noted** the submission and **asked** that their comments inform the development of a more detailed submission to the Treasury in late Spring.

Action

Circulate the LGA Chairman's letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to Panel Members. Philip Mind

4 Reserves Survey – Confidential

Mike Heiser (Senior Advisor) presented the tabled report.

A discussion took place and officers agreed to take forward in line with Members' steer.

Decision

The Panel **asked** that this be taken forward in line with their comments.

Action

Officers to proceed as directed.

5 Update of City Deals

The Chair briefly introduced the report which provided an update on the second wave of City Deals and the LGA's lobbying work to make Local Growth Deals available to all areas. In doing so, she noted that Piali Das Gupta (Senior Advisor) would be happy to discuss City Deals with Panel Members individually outside of the meeting.

In the discussion that followed, Members welcomed that ability to negotiate bespoke deals specific to localities and asked that the issue of barriers to growth, such as disproportionate national regulation, be taken forward through the LGA's discussions with Whitehall Departments.

Decisions

The Panel **noted** the report and **asked** that their comments be fed back to the Economy and Transport Board to inform the work stream.

Action

Refer the Panel's comments to the Economy and Transport Board.

Piali Das Gupta

6 Welfare reform: A role for councils in Universal Credit

The Chair introduced the report which updated on the LGA's work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to produce a Framework on how the DWP and councils might work together after the introduction of Universal Credit. The Chair summarised the initial feedback to the draft Framework, including comments made by the LGA Executive at its last meeting. The Finance Panel were asked for their views on the draft Framework. In particular, Paul Raynes (Head of Programmes) asked that Members consider how councils' engagement on this issue could be further increased and asked for Members' views on the government's proposals for accountability for any future funding for services to UC claimants.

In the discussion that followed a number of issues were raised:

- Panel members agreed on the need to engage more local authorities in the debate and suggested that the District Councils Network (DCN), the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy networks be utilised.
- Members were unanimous in their view that the management of local Universal Credit budgets should not sit with DWP District Managers. Whilst Members expressed support in principle for funding being administered through local partnerships or by councils in a commissioning role, Members highlighted the need to clarify the role of councils in the process, before being able to determine exactly how the budgets should be managed.
- There was unanimous support for local government making a proactive offer, which made the case to DWP that the sector is best placed to provide an efficient and cost effective solution. There were a range of views on how ambitious the offer should be. One Member suggested that the devolution of Job Centre Plus's responsibilities to local government should be a precondition of the sector's offer to take an active role in the delivery of Universal Credit. Additionally, concerns were expressed regarding the long-term sustainability of DWP funding, should local councils take

responsibility for delivering frontline support to Universal Credit claimants. However the Panel felt that this was a positive opportunity for local councils and that an approach should be made to DWP setting out the sector's proposal, less as a response to consultation and more as a firm start to a negotiation.

Decisions

The Panel:

- i. **noted** the feedback so far on the Local Support Services Framework;
- ii. **endorsed** the LGA's approach for taking forward the work with Department for Work and Pensions;
- iii. **asked** officers to prepare a statement of the sector's offer; and
- iv. **noted** the progress made by the LA Face to Face pilots.

Action

LGA Officers to proceed as directed.

Paul Raynes

7 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22 January were approved as a correct record.

8. Date and time of next meeting

11.30am on 10 May 2013, Local Government House.

LGA location map

Local Government Association

Local Government House
Smith Square
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Fax: 020 7664 3030

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Public transport

Local Government House is well served by public transport. The nearest mainline stations are:

- Victoria and Waterloo: the local underground stations are

St James's Park (Circle and District Lines), **Westminster** (Circle, District and Jubilee Lines), and **Pimlico** (Victoria Line) - all about 10 minutes walk away.

Buses 3 and 87 travel along Millbank, and the 507 between Victoria and Waterloo stops in Horseferry Road close to Dean Bradley Street.

Bus routes – Horseferry Road

507 Waterloo - Victoria

C10 Canada Water - Pimlico - Victoria

88 Camden Town - Whitehall - Westminster - Pimlico - Clapham Common

Bus routes – Millbank

87 Wandsworth - Aldwych

3 Crystal Palace - Brixton - Oxford Circus

For further information, visit the Transport for London website at www.tfl.gov.uk

Cycling facilities

The nearest Barclays cycle hire racks are in Smith Square. Cycle racks are also available at Local Government House. Please telephone the LGA on 020 7664 3131.

Central London Congestion Charging Zone

Local Government House is located within the congestion charging zone.

For further details, please call 0845 900 1234 or visit the website at www.cclondon.com

Car parks

Abingdon Street Car Park (off Great College Street)

Horseferry Road Car Park
Horseferry Road/Arneway Street. Visit the website at www.westminster.gov.uk/parking

