

13 November 2006

Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) and Safer Communities

Decisions

1. Members are asked to agree the headline messages for the safer communities section of the draft Environmental, Protective and Cultural Services (EPCS) CSR submission.

Actions Required

2. Officers to action as directed by the Board.

Action by: LGA Policy Consultants as required

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Summary

1. *This paper provides members with an overview of the CSR context, timetable and LGA strategy, and seeks agreement on the key service objectives and pressures.*

Background

CSR07 overview

2. *CSR07 is being conducted in a different climate to more recent reviews. Taking place a decade on from the last comprehensive spending review, it is seen as an opportunity to assess the government's achievements following a sustained increase by government in public spending and to prepare for the challenges of the future. Importantly, these challenges will have to be met at a time when public expenditure is expected to slow significantly. Figures in the budget report show public spending expected to rise by 1.8% pa in real terms for CSR. Once commitments on health, education and aid and increases in benefits and tax credits are taken into account, this could remove any scope for real spending increases for local authorities. Members should also note that the expectations for local government efficiency are high, with Treasury reporting potential for 'at least' 2.5% with 'far greater' cashable savings.*
3. *Faced with a potential real terms freeze in funding, the LGA has developed a strategy for CSR07 which recognises the overall fiscal framework realities, whilst ensuring local government has the resources and tools necessary to meet the challenges of the future and drive forward the LGA's vision for local government, as outlined in People and Places.*
4. *Our central objective is to convince government that local service delivery is the key to cost-effective, quality public services, in a constrained resource environment, and redirect resources accordingly. This is consistent with the core objective of more fundamental improvements in public services and making better use of public money, as expressed in People and Places. To achieve this, the LGA's strategy is based on the following key principles: resources, prioritisation and mitigation.*

Resources

5. *Our core objective must be to obtain additional resources from central government to fund the pressures faced by local government. Local government faces increasing prices and demand for services and a funding freeze in this environment will lead to a deterioration of services. The LGA must develop an evidence-based case, highlighting and evidencing cost increases, quantifying the overall resources requirement and outlining the service consequences of not receiving resources. This should include a case for maintaining capital resources sufficient to meet investment need.*

Prioritisation

6. *In terms of obtaining additional resources, the LGA is focusing its lobbying on key services where success is most likely, both in terms of potential for resources and meeting the government's agenda.*

Mitigation

7. *In its early work on 'value for money' in CSR07, the government is placing emphasis on ways to mitigate pressures, rather than what additional resources might be required. Accepting that local government is unlikely to obtain sufficient resources to fund all pressures, the LGA must develop proposals on mitigating factors. This could include fees and charges, local taxation, new powers, and cross-public sector efficiency.*

Service submission

8. *The service working group for EPCS, comprising local authority finance and service officers, has prepared a draft CSR submission, on the basis of the LGA's people and places vision and the principles described. Members are asked to consider and agree the principles and headline messages for safer communities:*

Principles

The principles underpinning the submission are:

- *Recognising that resources are tight. Therefore the aim is to secure essential funding rather than making any significant new bids for funding. The exceptions for new funding bids are key priorities and considerable additional burdens.*
- *Demonstrating the importance of these services to government's agenda and local people.*
- *Highlighting the potential for cross public sector savings.*

Headline messages

- *Councils fully understand the impact their services have on tackling crime, reducing the fear of crime in neighbourhoods, preparing for and responding to emergencies, providing public reassurance and creating safer and stronger communities.*
- *Partnership working between local authorities, the police and other agencies is key to tackling these issues. Local authorities and the police recognise that after CSR07 resources will be tight and neither partner will be able to look to the other to plug any funding gaps.*
- *If councils are to improve and further reduce crime and the fear of crime in partnership with others, resources are needed in the following areas:*
 - *To sustain beyond 2007/08 the provision of mixed neighbourhood policing teams, particularly increased Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) numbers, so that prioritised and joint problem-solving of crime and anti-social behaviour of most concern to the community can be sustained and developed.*
 - *To facilitate joined up working, particularly through Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships, and have dedicated resources for joint action groups and neighbourhood teams.*
 - *To have joint shared information and intelligence systems and develop analytical support to partnerships to promote the adaptation of the National Intelligence Model to the partnership context.*

- To develop and maintain two-way communication and engagement with local people and empower communities to assume responsibility for action in their areas.
 - To turn national and regional Reducing Re-offending Action Plans into delivery across local and sub-regional partnerships.
- Councils support the principles of neighbourhood policing. However there are significant issues around the sustainability of neighbourhood policing and the funding for the provision of PCSOs. If PCSOs are to become a permanent feature of policing and the wider community safety agenda then guaranteed long-term funding from central government must be provided. In return, local authorities will continue to work with the police and other partners to achieve the outcomes of reducing crime and the fear of crime as part of a broader neighbourhood management approach.
 - Anti-social behaviour is a rising problem with councils working in partnership with the police and other partners to prevent and tackle the problems. Whilst there are many examples of councils having services to prevent and tackle antisocial behaviour, more resources are needed to implement the government's RESPECT action plan and for early intervention schemes.
 - Criminal justice agencies alone are not able to provide or guarantee effective resettlement of offenders. Local authorities have a major role to play in reducing re-offending, through their community leadership role and their key contribution to prevention and rehabilitation. Evidence of 'what works' in the rehabilitation of people who offend points to community based solutions delivered locally.
 - Early intervention is key to reducing re-offending and anti-social behaviour. Investing in early intervention and preventative measures would in the long run pay back dividends in terms of the impact of crime.
 - Local authorities have a major role to play in reducing high volume crimes with high rates of re-victimisation, including domestic violence. Councils have a vital role to play through leadership and input into local partnerships, corporate responsibilities and direct service provision.

Emergency Planning

9. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 introduced, for the first time, duties relating to the preparation for civil emergencies. As Category 1 responders under Act, councils, along with the police and fire and rescue authorities, play a key role in preparing for response to civil emergencies. An effective response engages a wide range of council functions, not only from emergency planning but from housing, social care, environmental health and many more.

10. Funding for this activity was significantly increased in the last spending round but since the implementation of the Act the cost pressures have continued to grow rather than diminish because of a number of factors, including:

- Greater public awareness of risks (in part due to terrorist scares) has increased public expectations that victims needs will be met. Following criticism of the help provided in the immediate aftermath of the London bombings in July last year, local authorities now have to ensure that multi-agency plans are put in place well in advance of an

emergency occurring, so that bereaved families, friends and survivors will receive the help they need through humanitarian assistance centres.

- One of the highest current risks to the UK is the possible emergence of an influenza pandemic – that is, the rapid worldwide spread of influenza caused by a novel virus to which people would have no immunity, resulting in more serious illness and excess deaths than that caused by seasonal influenza. The risk of a human flu pandemic is currently an emergency planning priority across the UK. Local authorities are preparing all options for dealing with an outbreak of human flu pandemic, including national exercises, and making sure plans are scalable.*
- For functions such as risk assessment and business continuity management to be effectively discharged, authorities are in competition for staff with wide segments of the private sector. Increased cost pressures on councils in these circumstances are unavoidable.*

Fire

12. For fire and rescue authorities, the strategy will similarly be to bid for nil growth in real terms. The LGA's submission will note that:

- Modernisation has changed the balance within fire service budgets. There has been a major shift towards community safety and non fire activity, while at the same time emergency response has broadened dramatically to cover a range of non-fire incidents. All this has been achieved without any reduction in operational performance.*
- The service has already made substantial efficiency savings with major changes to working practices. In addition to funding the additional cost of the 2003 pay award, these savings have provided the means to recycle resources within the service from response to prevention and Community Fire Safety. The big changes have now been made, and it is unlikely that similar level of savings will be achievable in future years.*
- The risk based resourcing of the service means there are very high fixed costs, and there is a base level below which it cannot fall. This means it is vital to fund inflation.*
- The service generates tangible benefits in terms of reductions in deaths and injury (reducing costs to other parts of the public sector) and damage from fire and other incidents (benefiting industry, private householders, and the insurance sector). New sources of funding are required which link fire services' resourcing to those benefits.*
- Real terms reductions in the base level of funding will jeopardise the future of essential parts of the modernisation programme and risk forcing individual brigades to reduce levels of operational response towards minimum acceptable standards.*

Next steps

13. The LGA is planning to publish a pre-budget report submission in November, outlining the key challenges ahead for local government.

14. LGA officers and advisors plan to discuss draft submissions with departments once these have been agreed, and submit them formally by the end of the year. These will then feed in to the LGA's overall CSR07 submission early next year. For the Safer Communities agenda, we will seek to engage with the Home Office, Department for Constitutional Affairs and Attorney General on an expected cross-cutting spending review of the criminal justice system and with the Department for Communities and Local Government on fire issues, as appropriate.

Implications for Wales

15. Wales will be subject to separate processes for CSR07.

Financial/Resource Implications

16. There are no additional finance and resource implications for the LGA arising from this report.

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