



Sent by email to: LGFSettlement@communities.gsi.gov.uk

16 January 2020

The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement 2020 to 2021: Consultation paper

Dear LGF Settlement Team,

This letter represents the response from Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority (the Authority) to the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement: Consultation paper. The Authority continues to call for enhanced precept flexibility for FRAs equivalent to that offered to shire district councils, being £5 on a band D property.

The Authority refers you to our response to the Technical Consultation dated 29 October 2019, as the responses noted there remain valid. This response provides additional compelling evidence not available at the time of the Technical Consultation.

Q1: Do you agree with the Government's proposed methodology for the distribution of Revenue Support Grant in 2020-21?

No comment.

Q2: Do you agree with the Government's proposal to eliminate negative RSG?

No comment.

Q3: Do you agree with the proposed package of council tax referendum principles for 2020-21?

The Authority strongly disagrees with the decision not to provide a bespoke council tax principle for fire authorities, despite the fact that over half of the respondents who requested bespoke principles were either fire authorities or their representative body.¹

Since the Authority's response to the Technical Consultation, it has received its inspection report from Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS). The report noted a cause for concern in that:

*"We [HMICFRS] have serious concerns as to whether Buckinghamshire FRS has the resources it needs to meet its foreseeable risk. As a result of the financial position the service finds itself in, it doesn't have enough operational firefighters to resource its prevention and protection functions and crew the minimum number of fire engines it says it needs."*²

¹ Local Government Finance Settlement 2020-21 Responses to the Technical Consultation, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/854469/Consultation_Summary_Responses.pdf page 9 para. 27.

² Fire & Rescue Service Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19. An inspection of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/buckinghamshire-fire-and-rescue-service-report-2018-19.pdf> page 23.

The report also notes that *"it [Buckinghamshire FRS] is highly efficient: it has an innovative deployment model which, if better funded, would be a cost-effective way of keeping people safe."*³

The overall summary of inspection findings concludes with:

*"Overall, we [HMICFS] would like to see improvements in the year ahead, **but without increased funding**, it is difficult to see where progress can be made."*⁴ (emphasis added).

The Authority therefore calls upon the Government to provide enhanced precept flexibility for FRAs equivalent to that offered to shire district councils, being £5 on a band D property.

Q4: Do you agree with the Government's proposals for the Social Care Grant in 2020-21?

No comment.

Q5: Do you agree with the Government's proposals for iBCF in 2020-21?

No comment.

Q6: Do you agree with the Government's proposal to fund the New Homes Bonus in 2020-21 with the planned £900 million from Revenue Support Grant, with additional funding being secured from departmental resources, and to allocate the funds in line with previous years but with no legacy payments?

No comment.

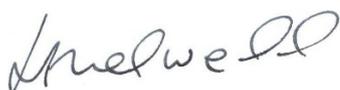
Q7: Do you agree with the Government's proposed approach to paying £81 million Rural Services Delivery Grant in 2020-21 to the upper quartile of local authorities, based on the super-sparsity indicator?

No comment.

Q8: Do you have any comments on the impact of the proposals for the 2020-21 settlement outlined in this consultation document on persons who share a protected characteristic, and on the draft equality statement published alongside this consultation document? Please provide evidence to support your comments.

No comment.

Yours sincerely



**Jason Thelwell QFSM
Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive
Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Fire Authority**

³ Fire & Rescue Service Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19. An inspection of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/buckinghamshire-fire-and-rescue-service-report-2018-19.pdf> page 22.

⁴ Fire & Rescue Service Effectiveness, efficiency and people 2018/19. An inspection of Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, <https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/buckinghamshire-fire-and-rescue-service-report-2018-19.pdf> page 6.