

Appendix B –Submitted Response to the Consultation

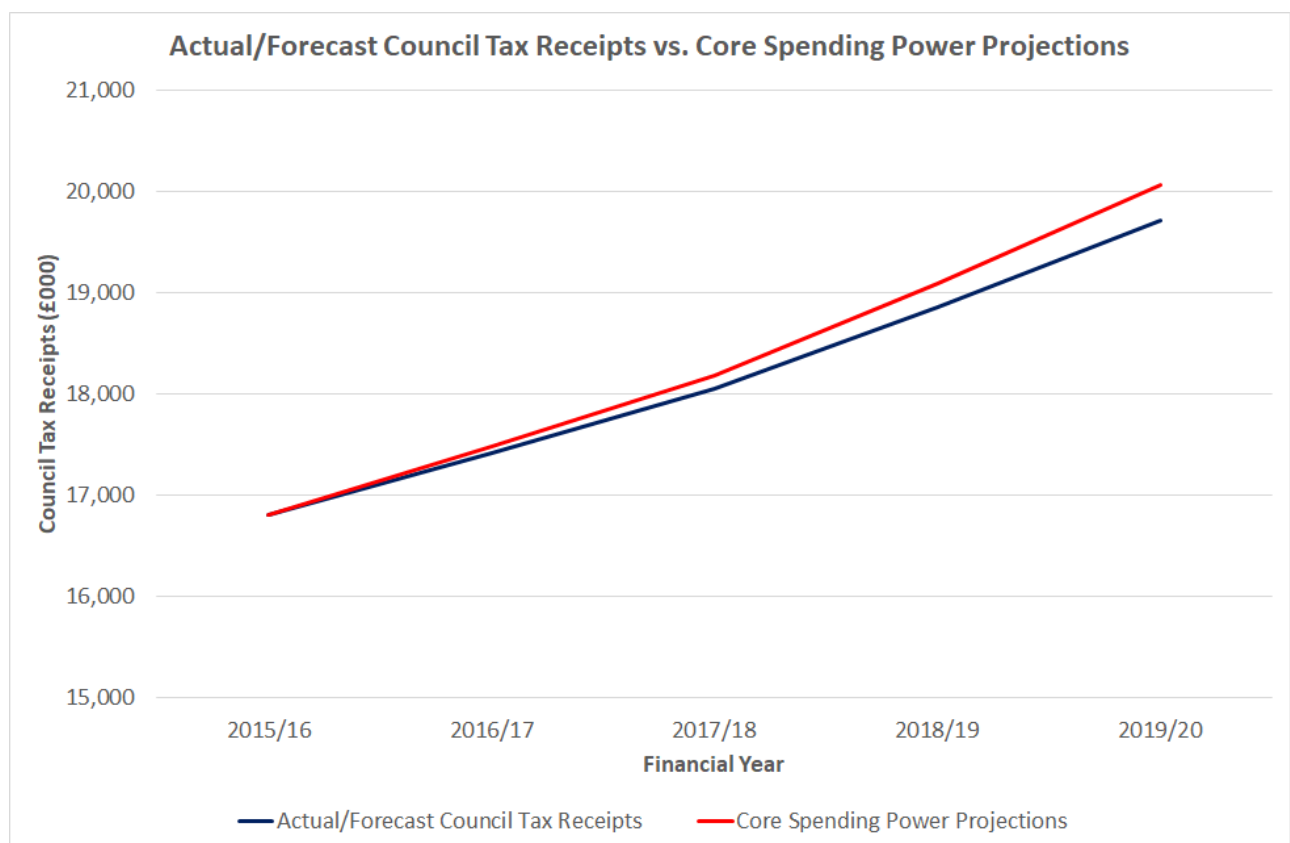
The following is Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority’s (BMKFA) response to the Provisional 2018-19 Local Government Finance Settlement Consultation Paper. This should be read in conjunction with our submission to the 2018-19 Local Government Finance Settlement: Technical Consultation Paper.

Question 5: What are your views on the council tax referendum principles proposed by the Government for 2018-19?

The Authority is disappointed that, despite responses to the Technical Consultation Paper, there were no specific council tax referendum principles set for fire and rescue authorities. BMKFA would reiterate all of the points raised in our response to the 2018-19 Local Government Finance Settlement: Technical Consultation Paper. All of these points remain valid and we would also highlight the following additional considerations based on data released as part of the provisional settlement.

Core Spending Power

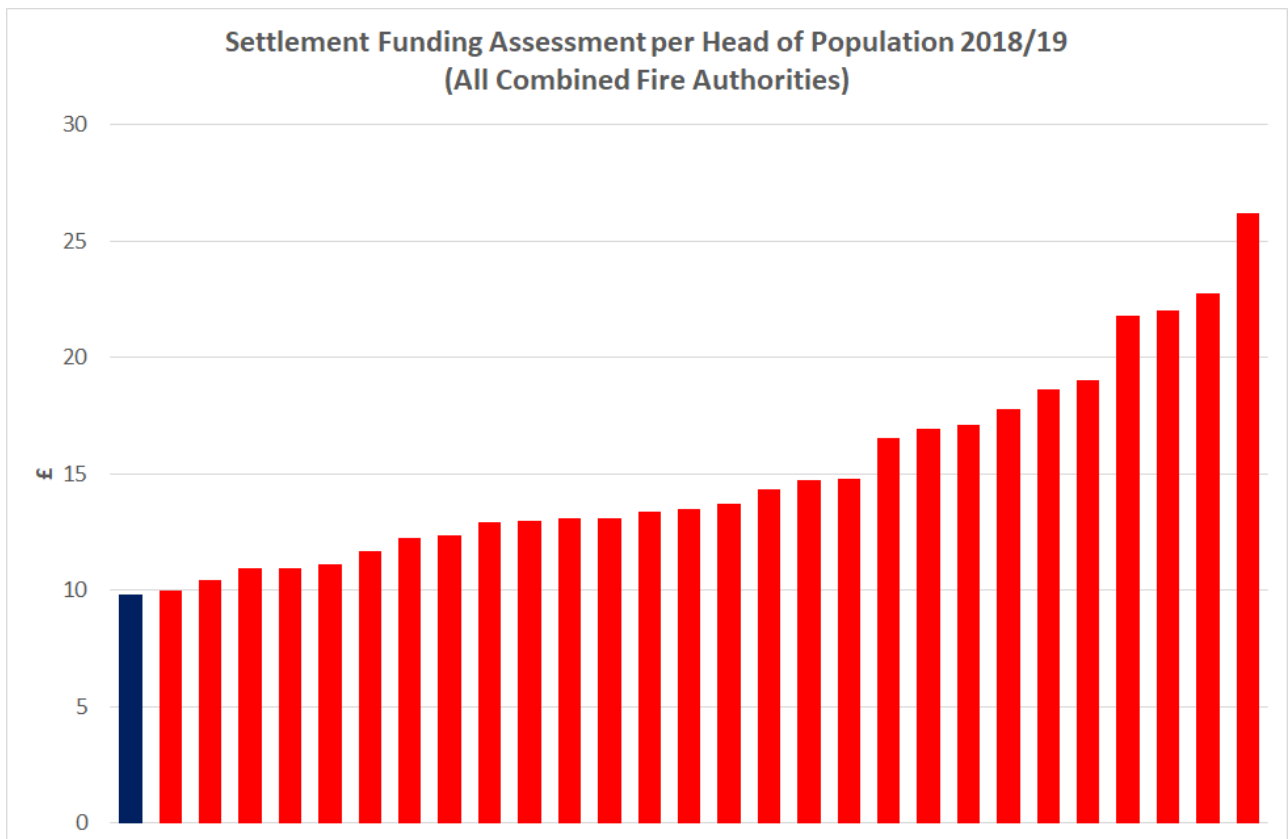
As part of the settlement (and in previous years) figures have been released detailing the core spending power of individual authorities. All core spending power figures released since the 2016/17 settlement have assumed that BMKFA’s council tax base will grow by 2% per annum. However, actual growth has been below this level and is currently forecast to average 1.6% per annum between 2015/16 and 2019/20. The effect of this is illustrated in the chart below:



The cumulative difference between the actual/forecast figures and those assumed within the core spending power figures is more than **£750k** over the four-year period.

Settlement Funding Assessment

The provisional settlement details the settlement funding assessment (SFA) for each authority. The chart below shows the SFA for all combined fire authorities (CFAs) for 2018/19:



In the above chart BMKFA is highlighted dark-blue. This shows that BMKFA has the lowest SFA of any CFA. However, as BMKFA has the lowest precept of any non-metropolitan CFA there is no scope for us to rectify the discrepancy in the SFA without any specific exception.

BMKFA therefore calls on the government to allow us to increase council tax by up to £10 in 2018-19 without the need to hold a referendum.