

Shadow Executive Minutes

Date: 23 July 2019

Time: 10.00 am

PRESENT: Councillor M Tett (in the Chair)

Executive Members: Councillors K Wood, S Bowles, B Chapple OBE, J Chilver, A Cranmer, I Darby, T Green, C Harriss, P Hogan, A Macpherson, D Martin, N Naylor, M Shaw, W Whyte, G Williams and F Wilson

Also Present: Councillor Robin Stuchbury and Councillor David Watson

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED –

That the Minutes for the meeting held on 9 July 2019 be approved as a correct record.

4. QUESTION TIME

A number of questions had been submitted by Councillor Stuchbury ahead of the meeting. The Chairman permitted for two questions to be asked at the meeting:-

a) Conformity within waste and recycling

Councillor Naylor advised that the Shadow Executive were actively considering the matter in partnership with the procuring District councils. Generally the services for residents were aligned across Buckinghamshire with a few minor exceptions and there was an ambition to ensure a consistency in all services delivered by the new council.

b) The use of IT in the Planning Service of the new council

Councillor Chilver confirmed that there were a number of workstreams preparing for the new council to ensure conformity and ease of access to services including Planning. The ICT workstream was working on a number of projects which included implementing a new website, amending/rebranding applications and delivering changes to telephone systems and email domains. The ICT workstream was also working collaboratively with other workstreams such as Customer & Digital, Finance, and HR & Communications. This was so that a single solution would be available across Buckinghamshire for residents.

An undertaking was given by the Leader for the other two questions and their answers to be published in the minutes. These are as follows:-

c) Equality of opportunity to public services

The creation of the new single council for Buckinghamshire provides a unique opportunity to strengthen local democracy, as well as improve services and outcomes for the people of Buckinghamshire. A core part of the business case for setting up a single council was establishing Community Boards to ensure that the council has strong local connections with communities. A key part of the role of Community Boards will be in looking at the needs of the population in each locality and working with officers and partners to ensure that services are designed to meet the needs of all our communities – including rural ones who face particular challenges in relation to accessibility – as well as areas of high population density. A consultation on the detail of Community Boards will be launched in the late summer. Proposals on Local Access Points are under development to ensure that residents are able to continue to access services locally to them to meet their needs. There are currently a wide range of services delivered across our rural communities and the new unitary council is committed to ensuring that service continues to be provided on the basis of need.

d) IT legacy from the five local authorities

At this stage, it is our understanding that current services such as planning will continue to be provided area by area. Members of the public will be able to access current arrangements, via existing and re-branded websites/portals. In addition, there will be a new website and telephone numbers to help guide members of the public to the appropriate services. Once we develop and agree our ICT transformation strategy, plans will be executed to provide a consistent and unified approach to services across the county.

5. 28 DAY NOTICE

Members considered the Forward Plan that had been submitted as part of the agenda.

RESOLVED –

That the Forward Plan be noted.

6. APPOINTMENT OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Shadow Executive received a report which outlined the formal process for the appointment of the new Chief Executive for the Buckinghamshire Council. The Senior Appointments Sub Committee had met on 19 July to consider the candidates and submitted an appointment recommendation for the Shadow Executive to consider. The Shadow Executive could choose whether to accept the appointment recommendation or refuse it, not appoint at this time and re-advertise the position.

For the consideration of the private appendix, the Shadow Executive resolved that under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for this item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Paragraph 1 Information relating to any individual

After this consideration, the public were invited back into the chamber. All Members involved in the recruitment process were thanked for their work in the rigorous recruitment exercise. This had culminated in a unanimous recommendation from the Sub Committee that Rachael Shimmin be appointed to the role of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service of the Buckinghamshire Council.

RESOLVED –

That Rachael Shimmin be appointed to the role of Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service of the Buckinghamshire Council with a salary of £210,000 on a personal contract.

Note: All Chief Executives left the room during the consideration of this item.

7. CHIEF OFFICER RESOURCING AND DESIGNATION

A report was submitted to the Shadow Executive regarding proposed arrangements for the new Senior Leadership team that would be in place in advance of Vesting Day on 1 April 2020. This team was referred to as Tiers 1-3 and their reporting lines were represented in the report. It was important that the transition of senior staff into either new roles or their exit was managed to ensure that business as usual continued to be delivered alongside the transformation. The winding up of the legacy councils also needed to be managed during this process. It was felt that due to the amount of posts that needed to be recruited to and the timescales being worked toward, Tier 2 and Statutory Officer appointments should be made by a small group of Members to agree. The Tier 2 and Tier 3 recruitment timelines were contained in the report as was a potential make-up of a Member sub-group to consider senior appointments sub-committee for Chief Officer and Statutory Officer appointments.

Members were advised that in addition to the report, a Statutory Officer included the Director of Public Health. This position would be ring fenced due to the skills and qualifications necessary to undertake the role. It was also clarified that Chief Officers were defined in the Constitution and would attend Committees to report and would report directly to the Chief Executive.

The recommendations were considered and it was

RESOLVED –

That:

- a) All second tier Officers be designated as Chief Officers
- b) Any Deputy Chief Officer appointment (Tier 3) be Officer only appointments
- c) The process for resourcing the second tier of the Buckinghamshire Council be endorsed.
- d) The process for resourcing statutory officers whose role may be in the third tier of the Buckinghamshire Council be endorsed.

- e) A smaller Member sub-group of the Senior Appointments Sub-Committee be established for Chief Officer and Statutory Officer appointments.

8. TIER 2 AND TIER 3 LEADERSHIP REWARD, TERMS & CONDITIONS

The Shadow Executive received a report which outlined the arrangements for Tier 2 and Tier 3 reward, terms and conditions. This was important to establish so that the resources could be known for the programme timeline. The proposals in the report had been benchmarked against relevant public, private and local government sector arrangements.

The appointment processes for the Chief Executive and the Senior Leadership Team (Tiers 2 and 3) were now underway and these roles would be used as a template for other positions in the new council. The principles had been designed to reflect the ambition of the new council's flexible workforce and culture. To support this, the report outlined reward principles for new pay arrangements that would:

- capture the aspirations and expectations of the new council
- reflect the council's philosophy of fairness and transparency
- acknowledge the skill and expertise of staff operating at pace in setting up the new council
- offer reward arrangements and terms and conditions that would attract and retain staff
- provide value for money and be affordable.

The roles would be appointed on a personal contract with pay governance supplied by the new council's Senior Appointments and Pay Committee. Their roles and responsibilities would include pay review, non-consolidated pay and pay control; the details of which were outlined in the report. It was recognised that protection arrangements outlined in the report needed to be in place as there were minor differences between the five councils on contract details such as annual leave or private health arrangements. There would not be a cliff-edge for any such arrangements as they would remain in place for one year during transition. The proposed terms and conditions had been drafted in conjunction with advice sought from the HR & OD Workstream, Haye and ePayCheck.

RESOLVED –

That the Leadership Pay Broad Band, the proposed terms and conditions of employment for the leadership team and the pay and governance process through a Senior Appointments and Pay Committee be endorsed.

9. CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL POSITION

The Buckinghamshire Council would be created from five existing councils all of which currently had balanced and politically agreed Medium Term Financial Strategies (MTFS) for the period 2020/21 to 2022/23. The new council had a responsibility to agree a robust budget before 10 March 2020 and the starting point for the financial planning was the amalgamation of the five MTFSs. The Shadow Executive received a report which outlined proposed principles of the Financial

Strategy of the new Buckinghamshire Council. Risks and pressures were also identified in the report. Included as appendices were the 2019/20 MTFP amalgamation revenue budget and the 2019/20 Revenue Budget by Programme Board and Workstream.

It was important to note that the new council's budget would be set by the full Shadow Council. Engagement was in place for all Members to gain familiarity with District and County responsibilities so that this would be an informed decision. Members would also have a role in scrutinising the budget as it progressed.

The consolidation would review all five local authority savings and their deliverability would be considered and challenged where appropriate. Any issues identified by the Programme Boards would be referred to the Shadow Executive. Members were advised that unallocated reserves were around 4% gross budget so was relatively small. A treasury management strategy was on going which would consolidate the position across the five councils including total borrowing and total investment. This would require Shadow Executive consideration in future.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted. It was felt that this was a useful paper that offered insight into the operation of the new council.

10. HARMONISATION OF COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEMES

Members received a report which provided an overarching summary of business in relation to Council Tax Reduction Schemes (CTRS), Council Tax Discounts and Premiums, and Discretionary Rate Relief. The reports would all inform the budget setting process and it was recommended that under or overspend of the policies be ring fenced so that any variations from one policy could be offset from against the others.

There were six options to be considered regarding the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for the Buckinghamshire Council which were based on trying to find a balance between costs and ensuring a minimal impact on claimants in lined with the defined principles. The principles that had been used when considering the harmonisation scheme were that:-

- The same scheme would apply to all working age residents in Buckinghamshire
- The scheme would be developed by harmonising current schemes, for instance by including features that were in place in the majority of districts where possible
- The scheme aimed to be delivered broadly cost neutral
- The scheme would offer protection to residents classified as vulnerable in the context of the scheme
- Council tax payers would be required to make a contribution to their council tax (unless they were in a protected group)
- The scheme aimed to minimise negative impacts on customers whilst acknowledging there would be winners and losers.

The six options were detailed in the report in relation to various key themes. In summary, the main difference between the six options proposed to Members were as follows:

Option One: 100% protection for customers in receipt of qualifying disability benefits

Option Two: 100% protection for customers in receipt of qualifying disability benefits and all customers responsible for children aged under 5

Option Three: 100% protection for customers in receipt of qualifying disability benefits

and lone parents responsible for children aged under 5

Option Four: Same as Option One except it gives 90% protection instead of 100% protection

Option Five: Same as Option Two except it gives 90% protection instead of 100% protection

Option Six: Same as Option Three except it gives 90% protection instead of 100% protection

The report also contained a table which contained a breakdown of the current and modelled council tax reduction scheme awards across the Buckinghamshire Districts. Option 3 was recommended to the Shadow Executive as it offered the best fit in line with the defined principles. Any decision would then be subject to consultation which was expected to take place from August until mid-September. The results of the consultation would then be considered to finalise the scheme.

RESOLVED –

That the three policies be ring fenced and that Option Three be adopted as the CTRS for the Buckinghamshire Council.

11. HARMONISATION OF COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS AND PREMIUMS

It was necessary for the Shadow Executive to determine whether council tax discretionary discounts were awarded in respect of empty properties, whether any discounts would be awarded in respect of second homes and also whether a premium is charged on long-term empty properties. This was due to the four District authorities operating on different levels and periods of discount for empty properties, and it was felt that harmonisation needed to be in place from 1 April 2020.

RESOLVED –

That:-

- a) Unoccupied and substantially unfurnished properties (Class C) receive a discount of 100% for one month with an estimated annual saving of £214,000. There would also be a minimum occupation period of 12 weeks before another discount can be awarded.

- b) Unoccupied and substantially unfurnished property which are empty due to it requiring structural alterations or major repairs to make it habitable (Class D – receive a 50% discount. These properties would receive a class C discount as above) with an estimated annual saving of £25,000.
- c) Second homes receive a 10% discount with an estimated additional annual cost of £91,000.
- d) Long term empty premiums should be charged at the maximum levels allowed by legislation which are as follows:

From 2020/21

- Where a property has been empty for more than two years but under five years a premium of 100% be charged (Equivalent to 2 x Council Tax).
- Where a property has been empty between five years and ten years a premium of 200% be charged (Equivalent to 3 x Council Tax).

From 2021 onwards

- Where a property has been empty for more than two years but under five years a premium of 100% be charged (Equivalent to 2 x Council Tax).
- Where a property has been empty between five years and ten years a premium of 200% be charged (Equivalent to 3 x Council Tax).
- Where a property has been empty over ten years a premium of 300% be charged (Equivalent to 4 x Council Tax).

12. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF POLICY

All local authorities had the discretion to award Discretionary Rate Relief to charitable organisations. Each of the four Districts operated slightly different schemes so it was recommended that a single scheme be adopted by the Buckinghamshire Council from 1 April 2020 so that local charitable organisations could continue to be supported. The schemes all in place were broadly similar and the scheme proposed offered a flexible policy that would allow relief to be considered on a case by case basis. The Shadow Executive were advised that appeals were few in number due to the discretionary nature of the relief. Members acknowledged the importance of supporting the charity economy and noted the importance of signposting charities to Government relief policies where applicable.

RESOLVED –

That:

- a) The Discretionary Rate Relief Policy be agreed.
- b) Standing orders for the Buckinghamshire Council incorporate delegated authority for Officers to administer the scheme.
- c) Delegated authority be given to the Chief Financial Officer in consultation with the portfolio holder for Finance to agree future technical changes in respect of the policy for discretionary rate relief.

13. DEVOLUTION OF HIGHWAYS SERVICES TO LOCAL COUNCILS

Buckinghamshire County Council had devolved elements of its highway services and, following a one year extension, these were due to expire on 31 March 2020. In total, 87 out of 168 Town and Parish Councils were now engaged in delivering devolved high services, with key services including urban grass cutting; 65% of which was now cut under devolved arrangements.

Following the unitary decision in 2018 and in order to allow for development of a new localism offer, a decision was made to extend the existing budget for a further year. The localism workstream was currently engaged with Town and Parish Councils to develop the new devolution framework. To provide sufficient time for this framework to be fully developed and recognise the budget setting timetable for local councils, it was necessary to review the current highways devolution agreements as they were due to expire in less than eight months. It was important to note that the report was not in relation to any future or enhanced devolution opportunity for local councils. Instead it was intended to provide continuity while devolution was developed. The extension of the agreements would allow the local councils to plan for the next financial year. Moreover, the agreements contained a break clause which would allow flexibility should a new localism offer be ready earlier than expected.

It was felt that the extension was a sensible working arrangement and would provide clarity to local councils whilst localism was developed. Officers confirmed that any Parish Council could become involved in these agreements during the extension if they were not already.

RESOLVED –

That funding be extended for a further two years for the devolution of highway services on the current terms due to expire on 31 March 2022.

Note: Councillor B Chapple OBE declared a personal interest as a member of Aylesbury Town Council.

Councillor I Darby declared a personal interest as a member of Chalfont St Peter Parish Council.

Councillor F Wilson declared a personal interest as a member of Chesham Town Council.

Councillor M Shaw declared a personal interest as a member of Chesham Town Council.

Councillor P Hogan declared a personal interest as a member of Beaconsfield Town Council.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 the public be excluded from the meeting for following items of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information because the reports contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

15. SPADE OAK LAKE

The Shadow Executive received a restricted report regarding a commercial opportunity that Wycombe District Council's Cabinet had considered. Consideration was given to the confidential information contained within the report and Members sought clarification on legalities regarding responsibility for contamination and the funding for ongoing revenue costs.

RESOLVED –

That the decision of Wycombe District Council's Cabinet be endorsed in the acquisition of Spade Oak Lake, Little Marlow, subject to due diligence.

16. WOODLANDS AND EASTERN LINK ROAD SOUTH

Councillor K Wood was the Chairman for this item.

A confidential report had been submitted to the Shadow Executive for them to consider funding from AVDC and BCC towards the Eastern Link Road South and Woodlands development to progress. Consideration was given to the restricted information in the report.

RESOLVED –

That:-

- a) the funding from AVDC and BCC be approved to allow the ELRS and Woodlands development to progress.
- b) the establishment of a Member and Officer Stakeholder Board be supported to represent the interests of AVDC, BCC and the future Council and provide a steer on the member representation on the Board.

Note: Councillor B Chapple OBE declared a personal interest as the local Member.

Councillors S Bowles, I Darby, N Naylor and M Tett declared personal interests as LEP Board Members and did not take part in the debate or vote on the item.

Councillor C Harriss declared a prejudicial interest as Director of BA and left the room during the item.

17. INVESTMENT PROPERTY

Councillor M Tett resumed Chairmanship for this item.

A confidential report had been submitted for the Shadow Executive to consider a commercial opportunity proposed by South Bucks District Council of an investment property. Members considered the restricted information contained within the report.

RESOLVED –

That the proposed purchase investment property by South Bucks District Council be approved subject to due diligence.

Answers to questions – Meeting of the Shadow Executive 23 July 2019

Questions from Councillor R Stuchbury

Question 1 - IT legacy from the five local authorities

- What approach will the shadow authority be undertaking regarding legacy issues relating to IT within the five authorities to ensure conformity, ease of access and use within the new structures within the future unitary council?

Answer

- *The shadow authority has several workstreams underway to prepare for Unitary and ensure conformity and ease of access to services. These include changes to data networks to enable access “across borders” to core applications (e.g. SAP), providing a new, single email domain and ensuring information security is maintained or improved.*
- *ICT is also working closely with other unitary workstreams (e.g. Customer & Digital, Finance, HR and Communications) to present a new, consistent and effective way to interact with the new authority. Projects include implementing a new website, amending/re-branding applications, aligning finance/HR systems and delivering changes to telephone systems. All these projects aim to ensure the new authority functions legally and safely as a new entity from day 1 and delivers a good service to residents, businesses, members, staff and suppliers.*
- *The ICT workstream will also develop a customer-led ICT strategy and plan to merge/ integrate/ consolidate ICT systems post-vesting, so that the Buckinghamshire Council operates as a single entity – further improving ease of access and conformity.*

Question 2 - IT legacy from the five local authorities

- How will IT be used regarding matters such as Planning which is used by Members of the Public and are often contentious particularly when challenging planning decisions? Or is this something that cannot be undertaken until the new local authority is in operation through legal considerations and due to limits within the structural changes order?

Answer

- *At this stage, it is our understanding that current services such as planning will continue to be provided area by area. Members of the public will be able to access current arrangements, via existing and re-branded websites/portals. In addition, there will be a new website and telephone numbers to help guide members of the public to the appropriate services.*

- *Once we develop and agree our ICT transformation strategy, plans will be executed to provide a consistent and unified approach to services across the county.*

Question 3 - Equality of opportunity to public services

- What actions are being undertaken within the structural planning for the new local authority which will ensure services are distributed equally throughout the county and not primarily focusing on areas with a high population? It should be recognised that Buckinghamshire is presently & fortunately still a rural county with a very large rural population living alongside equally valued urban communities.

Answer

- *The creation of a new single council for Buckinghamshire provides a unique opportunity to strengthen local democracy, as well as improve services and outcomes for the people of Buckinghamshire.*
- *A core part of the business case for setting up a single council was establishing Community Boards to ensure that the council has strong local connections with communities. A key part of the role of Community Boards will be in looking at the needs of the population in each locality and working with officers and partners to ensure that services are designed to meet the needs of all our communities – including rural ones who face particular challenges in relation to accessibility – as well as areas of high population density. A consultation on the detail of Community Boards will be launched in the late summer.*
- *Proposals on Local Access Points are under development to ensure that residents are able to continue to access services locally to them to meet their needs. There are currently a wide range of services delivered across our rural communities and the new unitary council is committed to ensuring that service continues to be provided on the basis of need.*

Question 4 - Conformity within waste & recycling

- The southern districts are apparently seeking to sign a 10 year contract which would commit the new unitary council to a long-term commitment to the south and AVDC presently delivers waste disposal in a separate way. What ability has the Shadow Authority to ensure conformity with the waste and refuse disposal across the county?
- Could any decision by the southern districts have an impact on:
 - Decreasing employment opportunities within the waste disposal service in the north/Aylesbury Vale area?

Increase the cost on the future unitary council and its residents due to legacy contracts which may not confirm for many years?

- i. Such a decision would tie the hands of the new Buckinghamshire Council unnecessarily into a long term contract. Is there any legal ability within the shadow authority to influence the southern districts not agreeing such a long-term contract in advance of the abolition of the five councils?

Answer

- ii. *The Shadow Executive for the new authority are actively considering this matter and in partnership with the procuring district councils, are reviewing the available and deliverable options for future waste collection services in the southern districts to ensure the continuity for this crucial service at the end of current collection contracts whilst managing the risks and costs.*
- iii. *Generally the waste and recycling collection services for residents are aligned across the Districts with a few minor exceptions. However, there is certainly an ambition to ensure consistency of service, not just in waste collection, but in all services delivered by the new Council, as soon as possible.*
- iv. *The Shadow Executive is considering options to ensure that the new council is able to deliver an efficient and effective service in the future.*

Questions from Councillor D Watson on agenda item 9 Consolidated Financial Position

Question 1: Why is the forward funding projection only for three years when the new council will be elected for 5 years? The Business case was after all for five years.

Answer

There are a number of considerations and decisions we have made in developing the proposed Financial Plan for the new authority. Whilst we recognise that there are significant benefits in developing a medium term financial plans which covers a period longer than 3 years, there were a number of significant practical issues in doing so:

- *We do not yet have an agreed Strategic Plan for the new authority on which to base a strategic budget*
- *Neither the political landscape or senior officer structure for the new authority are in place to drive and develop a longer term vision for both the whole organisation and the services within in*
- *There is considerable uncertainty in the Local Government funding regime (Spending Review, Fair Funding Review, changes to Business Rates Retention, changes to New Homes Bonus, Adult Social care funding etc.) which make forecasting key funding streams difficult for the 3 years we are planning for, let alone a further 2 years*
- *There is a significant amount of change / transformation expected across the new authority in its first few years, which will begin post vesting day, and which makes understanding the baseline position, and therefore the scale of future opportunities, very challenging*

Given these constraints and uncertainties it was decided that using the existing plans across the current 5 councils was the most appropriate means by which to ensure a safe, legal and robust budget for the new authority.

Question 2: I note that in paragraph 10 you summarise the latest view on consolidated funding but there is no comparator for prior years on the same basis – would it not make sense to add 18/19 Actuals and 19/20 Budget? Please see my attached workings – I note your restatement of the 19/20 Consolidated Budget in Appendix 1 but it is not in the same format as your funding projections from 20/21 onwards

Answer

We have tried to concentrate on the expected position of the new authority. Whilst Appendix 1 does set out the consolidated 19/20 funding position this reflects the position at the end of the 4 year settlement and the estimated funding for the new authority is based on expectations of funding going forward.

Given all these changes and uncertainties we considered that looking to the future was more pertinent to the new authority than comparing to a different structure and superseded funding regime.

Question 3: Would it not make sense to also compare the Consolidated Financial Position to the Business Case? – for all the BC assumptions e.g. transition cost, savings by year, council tax increases, council tax base growth, staffing levels etc.....

Answer

It is important to recognise that the business case was prepared a number of years ago and that there has been change across all 5 councils since the business case was originally prepared. Whilst the principles underpinning the business case still hold true much of the detail has changed as the funding regime has changed, and as all 5 councils have exercised their sovereign right to manage their affairs as they individually see fit.

As part of building the budget we are reviewing the financial business case assumptions. A separate report to the Shadow Executive has updated the expected transition costs and we are in the process of reviewing and re-profiling the savings to ensure that they are as realistic as possible bearing in mind the timeframes and the implementation plan recently approved by Shadow Executive. Assumptions around council tax levels will be coming to the Shadow Executive in September.

Question 4: It is rather difficult to analyse the council tax projections between former county and districts – see attached – I have used the Feb 2019 BCC Full Council CT projections and the resulting former District numbers indicate a decreasing trend - would you be able to assist?

Answer

Future Council Tax receipts have been modelled using the best information available from all existing councils.

Whilst there are some matters to be resolved around Council Tax discounts, an increasing Council Tax base and an ongoing increase in the level of Council Tax charged will give rise to an increase in Council Tax receipts in future years.

Question 5: A comparison of 19/20 and 20/21 Business rates funding also begs a number of questions.

Answer

The Business Rates Retention scheme is one of the areas where there is the largest change between 2019/20 and 2020/21. We have focussed efforts on ensuring we have a robust understanding of the likely Business Rates we will retain for 2020/21 onwards, and it is our assumption that we will not benefit as much under the proposed Business Rates Retention scheme as we do under the pilot scheme which we are part of for 2019/20, hence a reduction in retained Business Rates between 2019/20 and 2020/21.

I believe that there is an error in the 19/20 district figures (as you suggest) in that the tariff payable back to Central Government has been excluded from the 2019/20 figures, whilst the 2020/21 and onwards figures are net of this tariff.

Question 6: Is it not being unduly pessimistic to assume negative RSG of such a magnitude?

Answer

The figures used in our modelling are in the currently published government plans so we feel it would be wrong to change this assumption. We are awaiting the Spending Review announcement and other potential changes to the way local government is funded. Taking this approach has not put us in a position where additional savings have to be identified, and given the volatility in the current political and economic environment we believe that prudent planning is appropriate. We hope for early sight of the Local Government Settlement, which will hopefully hold some good news, knowing that we are prepared in case it does not.