



East
Northamptonshire
Council

Rupert Reichhold
Councillor for Oundle Ward

Home Address:
2 Warren Bridge, OUNDLE, Peterborough PE8 4DQ
Tel: 01832 274315

Date 2nd January, 2016

James McLaughlin,
Democratic Services Manager,
East Northamptonshire Council



Dear Mr McLaughlin,

MEETING OF COUNCIL ON 25th JANUARY, 2016: REPORT BY COUNCIL'S REPRESENTATIVE AT OUTSIDE BODIES

This letter with the attachment comprises my report to our Council on the Outside Bodies at which I represent the Council and I would be grateful if you would arrange for its inclusion on the Agenda for the Council's Meeting on 25th January, 2016.

2. These organisations are the SPARSE RURAL Special Interest Group; the NCC Corporate Parenting Board; Volunteer Action; and CHAT Youth Counselling.

SPARSE RURAL Special Interest Group

3. As part of the Grants Settlement for Councils announced on 17th December, 2015, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government said: "I will increase support for the most sparsely populated rural areas by more than quadrupling the Rural Services Delivery Grant from £15.5 M this year to £65 M in 2019 – 2020 by which time, when 100% Business Rate Retention has been achieved, we can consider what further correction is due".

4. The SPARSE Director commented: "We await the detail of the figures but anticipate the increase to be incremental and that it will only assist the most sparsely populated rural areas. We like the point "further correction" raised by the Secretary of State and will keep adding continual pressure on this point at every opportunity".

5. The Secretary of State's recognition of the pressures on Councils like our's comes as a result of the on-going representations of the All Parties Parliamentary Group on Rural Affairs, working closely with the SPARSE RURAL Group. I reported on this work in my letter to the Leader dated 18th November, 2015 – copy attached.

NCC CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD

6. In 2013, responding to an invitation from Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) to all District Councils in Northamptonshire, the Leader nominated me as ENC

Observer on Children's matters. The role is to support our officers, mainly in our Council's duties as housing authority, to ensure close cooperation with NCC, the Children's authority, in particular on accommodation for Children Leaving NCC's Care – young adults. I record my appreciation of ENC's Housing Strategy Manager, Carol Conway's work in enhancing cooperation with NCC's Leaving Care Team: Carol arranged for the NCC Manager concerned to join the Chief Housing Officers Group.

7. The District Councils' Childrens Observers are now members of the NCC Corporate Parenting Board. This began as a forum comprising key NC Cllrs and senior NCC Childrens Officers to ensure effective oversight of NCC's many Childrens Services. The accession of the District Councils' Member Observers is a welcome development.

VOLUNTEER ACTION – VA

8. Volunteer Action - VA, based in Oundle and linked to SERVE continue to be a very effective charity who provide a care service for people with no access to public transport for door to door travel to medical and other appointments and activities. Last year, VA's volunteer drivers undertook 11,000 trips, driving 80,000 between them. VA also continue to operate a Befriending Scheme: they have an average of 30 Befrienders at any one time: between them they provided 1,500 hours of support last year. VA's funding includes a grant from ENC.

C H A T Youth Counselling

9. CHAT, based in Oundle are a registered charity who continue to provide confidential advice, free of charge, by trained counsellors for young people aged between 9 and 25. They currently see approximately 30 young people a week, whose problems, their Annual Report states, can be summed up mostly as anxiety and depression. Other problems include difficulties with school, home, family breakdown, bereavement, self-harm and eating problems. CHAT's main funding is from the NHS. Their Annual Report also acknowledges funding from other donors.

Yours sincerely,



RUPERT REICHHOLD



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Date 18th November, 2015

Cllr Steven North,
8, Kings Road,
RUSHDEN.
NN10 0DL

cc Cllr Harwood
Cllr Lewis
Cllr Greenwood-Smith

David Oliver
Sharn Matthews
Glenn Hammons

Dear Steven,

Meeting of SPARSE Rural S I G & Rural Assembly – 16th November, 2015

I represented ENC at a meeting of the SPARSE Rural Special Interest Group & Rural Assembly in London on 16th November and write to report back to you and key colleagues here. We re-elected Cllr Cecilia Motley (Shropshire CC) as our Chairman

Fairer Funding Campaign 2015 – 16

2. Graham Biggs, Chief Executive, confirmed developments on SPARSE's Rural Fairer Funding Campaign. In support of SPARSE Councils' clear case, Graham Stuart, MP, chairman of the All Parties Parliamentary Group (APPG), supported by 59 other MPs, wrote to the Secretary of State, DCLG, on 20th October, asking him, in the coming Revenue Support Grant Settlement, to give sparsely-populated rural authorities the balance of the Rural Service Delivery Grant element: the SPARSE secretariat's considered calculations show that this would benefit ENC by an additional £200,000.

3. Graham Stuart, MP, addressed us and answered our questions. He considered that DCLG were sympathetic to his & his APPG's colleagues' case. He acknowledged that, in addition to the unfairness of the RSG distribution formula for rural authorities, individual rural authorities had additional constraints which it would be fair to put to Ministers. He confirmed what he had emphasised when he first came to speak with us (in 2012) that, as and when we encouraged our MPs to support the case for fairer funding for rural authorities, we should give them information in homely language on what they were unfairly missing out on and avoid getting into the abstract, technical language of the Formula Grant systems – which are difficult for non-experts to follow.

4. Graham Stuart, MP, helpfully, also attended for discussion on the implications on the tapering off and ending of Formula Grant, by 2020 and the repatriation of Business

Rates to Councils.

Implications of end of Formula Grant & reliance on Business Rates

5. Graham Biggs said that all that was known that, by 2020, central Government's Formula Grant would be phased out completely and that Councils would have freedom to decrease Business Rates (elected Mayors would have freedom to increase them). Central Government had given no further information. DCLG had stated that they would "carry out detailed work with Councils" and state their conclusions by the summer of 2016. We were all clear that this prospect made for considerable uncertainty, in particular for authorities in two-tier areas (like ENC).

6. Graham Stuart, MP recognised that the prospect raised challenges for authorities. His, robust and very positive message to us was that our authorities should determine what they wanted and go for it !

7. Graham (a Yorkshire MP), volunteered that even in areas, like his, where there as an early opportunity for devolution from central Government to Councils, there were differences in, considered views as to what new powers were wanted and where !

Conclusions

8. You & colleagues here know of the challenges for us ahead and will, I am confident, appreciate that this was an informative meeting. The \$64 dollar question, in the run-up to summer, 2016, will, of course, be, how much of the Business Rates we raise we will be able to keep !

9. In the medium-term, I think SPARSE will continue to "earn its corn". Ministers' concession on the Rural Service Delivery Grant element gives us grounds for confidence. The robust support of Graham Stuart, MP and his APPG, working closely with SPARSE should continue to be effective.

10. Longer-term: when, in 2020, Formula Grant ends, it would be right, in the light of the position then, for SPARSE Councils, to consider whether circumstances and prospects made a case for SPARSE to continue with different objectives. My, very early thoughts on this are that there needs to be an effective lobby for the interests of Councils like us; and that SPARSE Councils representatives & officers have become accustomed to working effectively together.

Yours sincerely,



RUPERT REICHHOLD