Written evidence submitted by Andover Town Council [FSR 007]

This working group was set up in order to respond to the announcement by the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee of a new enquiry into local government finance. Ahead of the Spending Review 2019 expected this Autumn, the enquiry will consider how effective the existing funding set-up for local government is in providing resources to meet need and demand for local services both now and in the future.

The Committee is inviting submissions specifically around:

1. **What lessons can be learned from past changes to local government funding in England, the current financial situation of councils and how this has affected their ability to deliver services.** There is no funding for parishes and any money that should have been passed down from Government via the Lead Planning Authority has not been the case with Test Valley Borough Council. Andover Town Council does not have a General Power of Competence so this also limits the type of services we can deliver.

2. **The efficiency, fitness for purpose and sustainability of the current system for funding local government (central government funding, council tax, business rates retentions and other income); how it could be improved, including options for widening the available sources of funding and what lessons can be learned from other jurisdictions.** The Health & Safety requirements for allotments that we provide have not allowed us to make any money since we took them over from TVBC, who did not maintain them and offset allotments against their leisure facilities in order to balance their books. Are the Government proposing that some of our Precept will come from business tax? At the moment town and parish councils are funded solely from residents precept.

3. **How funding needs of local government are assessed. The current and forecast funding needs of local government and how these needs can be better understood at both national and local level.** Town and parish councils in Test Valley have never been asked to contribute to the LPA’s five year plan. We get input into their Local Plan which is currently under review but that is from an individual’s point of view. ATC have never been asked for our five year plan. Is the Government proposing to put a cap on Parish and Town councils as they have done with Borough and County?

4. **The approach the Government should take to local government funding as part of the 2019 Spending Review, what the key features of that settlement should be and what the potential merits are of new or alternative approaches to the provision of funding within the review.** Understanding that “one size does not fit all” and that some LPA’s actually resent any money going to their Towns and Parish councils and see them merely as a “cash cow”. Basingstoke and Deane (also in Hampshire) does not make a charge on their town/parish councils for local elections, whereas TVBC does. The last election run at the same time as that for Borough Councillors cost ATC £60,000.

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