



18 November 2010

Mr Steven Halls
Chief Executive
Three Rivers District Council
Three Rivers House
Northway
Rickmansworth
Hertfordshire
WD3 1RL

Our Ref: ER/026758/10
Your Ref: SH

Dear Mr Halls

New executive arrangements under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

Thank you for your letter to the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP about council governance arrangements. I have been asked to respond as an official at the Department with policy responsibility for such matters and I apologise for the delay in doing so.

In your letter you request further information on the Government's proposals to allow councils to return to the committee system. The Government believes councils in England should be able to decide what decision making structure is best for them and their local area, whether that be a mayor or leader and cabinet model or the committee system. It is therefore fully committed to removing the current legislative prescription which prevents councils that wish to do so, from operating the committee system.

The Government intends to identify and implement measures to allow councils to return to the committee system, as part of the Localism Bill which is due to be introduced into Parliament shortly. Whilst enactment is a matter for Parliament, we estimate that the Bill will receive Royal Assent by November 2011. Further details will be published in due course.

Notwithstanding the above proposals, councils remain under a duty to act in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("the 2007 Act") unless or until relevant provisions are repealed. Under schedule 4 to that Act, non-metropolitan district councils are under a duty to resolve before 31 December 2010 to make a change to one of the existing governance models - either the "new" leader and cabinet model or the mayor and cabinet model. The purpose of the provisions at schedule 4 to the 2007 Act is to ensure a smooth and phased transition from the now defunct "old style" leader and cabinet model to one of the existing governance models set out above. In his letter of 7 July, the Rt Hon Grant Shapps explained that the Government expected councils affected to take a sensible, cost-effective approach to the associated statutory consultation requirement, and expressed the Government's belief that the cost of such consultation could be kept to a minimum.

While the Government acknowledges that the legislation may create short-term practical difficulties for some councils, there remains, nonetheless, a statutory obligation which must be met - how and at what cost councils meet that obligation is a matter for them.

Yours sincerely

K Billington

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Karl Holden
Local Governance