



Mr Robert Jenrick
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government
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2 Marsham Street
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Councillor Mark Lowry
Cabinet Member for Finance

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Date 16th November 2020

Dear Mr Jenrick,

It is recognised that the Covid-19 Pandemic has been one of the most challenging periods this country has had to face in recent times. Local Government is one of a number of public bodies which has been at the forefront of responding to the pandemic whether it be supporting our local community through the provision of vital services, working with partners to ensure a co-ordinated response to the pandemic or distributing grants to local businesses or vulnerable members of our community. As you will be aware Plymouth has risen to this challenge and has successfully supported our local community and businesses during these difficult times.

We recognise the support and action your Government has undertaken at a national level and the financial support allocated to date. As a council we have been actively monitoring our budgets and assessing the impact of Covid-19 and ensuring we continue to deliver value for money services to local residents and manage all of the additional responsibilities and costs that have been incurred.

We also recall the following statement you made to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee on Monday 4 May 2020:

“We will stand behind councils and will ensure they receive the funding they need to deliver the responsibilities that we are asking of them. So those things that we are asking councils to do in response to Covid-19 which do involve significant extra costs, we will ensure that Councils are fully compensated for those”

We welcomed this statement as you clearly recognised that this national crisis needed a national co-ordinated response which was fully funded at a local level. As we have moved into a second national lockdown we now urge you to ensure this statement is backed up with a guaranteed funding package, not just in the current financial year but also for future years where Covid 19 will continue to impact upon the provision of local services.

As an example Plymouth incurred significant costs for the provision of a temporary mortuary which we believe should be funded separately from the main Covid-19 Emergency Grant allocated to date.

The Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Resilience made a decision that additional mortuary capacity was required. Plymouth was the location for this facility and the council incurred additional costs which amounted to £1.5m. It is understood that different arrangements have been used by other

statutory bodies and other regions may have responded differently e.g. in some areas NHS bodies have taken the lead and financed the provision, in others the military has been asked to give support.

In terms of funding the picture across local authorities is also quite varied with some councils taking a lead and being reimbursed a share by neighbouring councils and others footing the cost themselves. At present I suspect the most councils have used their Emergency Covid-19 grant to finance costs.

We are also disappointed with the Income Compensation Scheme you have set up. We believe full compensation should be provided as these are real unavoidable losses that we cannot recovery. We also worried about the ongoing impact of income losses and ask this is addressed as part of the overall funding settlement for local government.

We will continue to provide details of the additional costs and losses we have incurred arising from Covid-19. I am sure you will agree that as a Council we have responded as you would have expected – protecting our communities and businesses in a professional and effective way. As we enter the second national lockdown we will continue maximise our efforts and ask that you keep to your promise that Plymouth will receive full funding so we can beat Covid 19.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Lowry', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Councillor Mark Lowry
Cabinet Member for Finance