**COVID-19 Update – 16th April 2020**

Update from call with MHCLG 16th April 2020.

**Home Office**

* The Coronavirus legislation states that money raised from Fixed Penalty Notices should go to the relevant local authority. A 3rd party is administering the fines and will pass over the LA’s. There is some uncertainty over which authority this will be in two-tier areas.

**Monitoring / MHCLG Update**

* You will probably have seen the announcement deferring the first 3 months of the central share payments for Business Rates – payments that were due on 30/04 – refer to DELTA for changes to payment schedules.
* Financial Management returns on DELTA - information was returned by 94% of authorities, the highest ever return rate! MHCLG are just starting analysing the data – testing early thoughts from the data. Position will be clearer over the coming days and we hope to get further feedback early next week.
* Returns to be completed monthly, next one will be issued in early May
* Discussions are ongoing with Treasury who have asked a number of detailed questions. We have tried to answer these with some more evidenced examples.

**Sector Feedback**

* London authorities raised the issue of BR Reductions on safety net payments and whether any modelling had been undertaken by MHCLG – MHCLG asked for any data to be shared.
* Concern of how tables will be presented regarding small business grant payments and how the Monday ‘league table’ announcement will be made – risk that this could be used negatively. MHCLG to feed comments back to  BEIS.
* MHCLG not looking to activate the Bellwin scheme – MHCLG views that this wouldn’t be the best way to deal with the current issues.
* The comments made this week about Local Government ‘sharing the burden’ – are unsurprisingly hitting a sour note with the Sector. The SoS is aware of the strength of feeling – awaiting further announcements
* Is any guidance to be issued on S114 notice ?– shared understanding needed on S114 – MHCLG will speak to individual authorities - CIPFA speaking directly with MHCLG – regarding modifications to S114 notice – however if funding isn’t forthcoming then S114 is unlikely to be modified.

It’s clear that discussions with Treasury are not as straightforward as hoped and they are wanting very robust evidence on the pressures that we are facing. We have provided MHCLG with as much of this as possible but there may be more needed. It would also be really useful to keep local MP’s informed to get as much political traction as possible.

Simone Hines

President SDCT