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Local Government Funding:

Councils across the country are facing a financial emergency, threatening the vital services people rely on. According to the Special Interest Group of Municipal Authorities, at least 26 local authorities are considering issuing a section 114 notice this year or next, indicating that expected income will not be enough to cover costs and freezing all but essential expenditure.

Many local authorities this year were left with little choice but to increase council tax when families are struggling, with the average Band D council tax rising by £99. I worry that the Government is not only passing responsibility for difficult decisions onto councils, but also risks making regional inequalities worse as richer areas can raise more money than poorer ones.

Local authorities can bid for additional funding from the Levelling Up Fund, but I do not believe they should have to spend valuable time and resources competing for funding. Many communities lose out and there are serious concerns about how that funding is allocated. Of the 80 successful bids in England in the latest round of allocations, only half were in the 100 most deprived areas.

I am concerned central Government is taking control over an increasing range of funding decisions. It is choosing which areas receive grants for various services, from the maintenance of local traffic lights as part of its Traffic Signal Maintenance Scheme to the removal of chewing gums by its Chewing Gum Task Force.

I believe overcentralisation is at the heart of our problems with the economy, which is not working for most people in most places. I support calls to give local leaders the tools they need to drive growth and prosperity, with sustainable, long-term funding for councils and greater powers over economic policymaking their area. I believe the only way to achieve growth is to power the economy everywhere, spreading wealth, security and opportunity across the whole country.

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