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Local Government Funding:

I share constituents concerns that councils across the country are facing real financial difficulty, threatening the vital services people rely on. Local authorities are dealing with added costs such as temporary accommodation, children's services and the pressures of the cost-of-living crisis.

I am aware of recent analysis conducted by the Guardian newspaper. It found that "between 2010-11 and 2022-23, real terms spending per head on cultural services was cut by 43%, on roads and transport by 40%, on housing by 35% and on planning and development by a third." The reality is that more and more councils are being pushed to the financial brink. More councils issued bankruptcy notices last year than in the previous 30 years combined.

Despite the additional £600 million funding for 2024-25 announced by the Government in January, I remain concerned that this represent a short-term fix when a long-term solution is required. The Local Government Association has warned that councils will still need to raise council tax and make cuts to local services in order to plug funding gaps. I worry that this risks making regional inequalities worse as richer areas can raise more money than poorer ones.

I support proposals to move to multi-year funding settlements for local authorities in order to help councils plan better and make sure money is directed to the areas that most need it.

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. I believe that 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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