



Mr S Carey  
Chief Officer (Revenue & Benefits)  
Leeds City Council  
Selectapost 3  
Civic Hall  
LEEDS  
LS1 1JF

**West Yorkshire  
Fire & Rescue Authority**  
[www.westyorksfire.gov.uk](http://www.westyorksfire.gov.uk)

Geoffrey Maren CIPFA  
Chief Finance Officer  
Oakroyd Hall  
Birkenshaw  
West Yorkshire  
BD11 2DY  
Tel: 01274 655711  
Fax: 01274 652231  
[geoff.maren@westyorksfire.gov.uk](mailto:geoff.maren@westyorksfire.gov.uk)

Our Ref: GM/JLA  
Date: 25 July 2012

Dear Steve

**Leeds City Council– Introduction of Council Tax Support**

In response to your letter of the 14<sup>th</sup> June 2012 and our subsequent meetings, I have attached the Authority's response to the consultation as you requested. As you are aware the Authority's Finance and Resources Committee considered a report on the implications of the localisation of a scheme of council tax support on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2012 and the attached response reflects the views of the committee. I am sure you will not be surprised by our response as it is pretty much as we have previously discussed.

I would, however, like to thank you for the level of engagement we have had on this issue which I have found very useful and has increased my understanding of the issues facing the Council in what is a major change. I think this is particularly apparent from the discussions we have had around changes to the tax base and the timing of some of the assumptions you will have to make.

As I expressed at the meeting this morning I would find it useful if we could continue to meet as the work on the proposed scheme develops. This will provide the Fire Authority with a better understanding of the potential impact on the precept which will assist in our budgeting process. In addition, it may allow the Fire Authority to provide a more detailed and reasoned response to the scheme in the future.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Maren'.

Geoffrey Maren  
Chief Finance Officer



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**West Yorkshire**  
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## ***Response on behalf of West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority***

### **Background**

When considering this response from the Fire Authority it is important that the Council is aware of the financial position of the Fire Authority which has, to a large extent, influenced the response.

Like the rest of the public service the Fire and Rescue service has suffered grant cuts as part of the spending review, however, the major difference is that the cuts in the fire service are back loaded with the largest single cut in grant expected in 2013/2014. In the first two years of the spending review the Authority lost £5.99m (10.41%) of its grant income against a national cut of 6.5% and had to make savings of over £6.5m to deliver a balanced budget. During this period the Authority has not increased its precept.

The Authority now faces a further cut in grant of around £6m in 2013/2014 and, coupled with the fall out of the 2012/2013 precept freeze grant, will lose over £7.0m of its annual income. This, together with price increase, will leave the Authority with a budget deficit of around £8.0m in 2013/2014. Even with continued non recruitment of fire-fighters, the redundancy of a further 90 support staff and the recent programme of fire station rationalisation, involving the closure of 10 fire stations to be replaced by 5, the Authority still faces a projected budget deficit of over £2.0m in 2013/2014.

The Authority plans to increase the precept by the maximum allowed by the capping criteria and already has plans to use its revenue balances, consequently any further loss in income would have to be funded by further cuts in service.

### **Response**

Whilst the Authority acknowledges the difficult position the Council is facing it is not in a position to support any proposals that would place an additional burden on the Fire Authority and would urge the Council to deliver a scheme which is cost neutral in 2013/2014 and future years.

As explained in the opening paragraph the only way the Authority would be able to meet this additional expenditure would be by additional cuts in service.