

Roy Perry: Skewed picture of cuts analysis

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As a South East local authority leader, I continue to be concerned about some of the misleading messages being promoted in the debate about future funding for local government.

There is ongoing talk about reductions in council budgets falling disproportionately on city areas, including in a recent Centre for Cities report.

However, I take issue with some of the report's conclusions and challenge the skewed picture it presents.

The reality is that regardless of cuts, many city areas still receive and spend more than neighbouring councils in more rural areas.

All councils have faced significant cuts over the past eight years but metropolitan areas are still ahead in the funding race, with considerably greater spending power per person than many authorities in the South East.

For example, in my authority of Hampshire, with its two-tier councils, combined county and district spending power ranges from £1,522 per household in Basingstoke to £1,620 in Hart. In contrast, Liverpool's £2,010 per household and Blackburn's £1,994 are more than 20% higher.

Analysis of cuts needs to compare the outcomes, not the scale of the cuts. Some authorities may have faced higher percentage cuts but that was possibly because they spent more initially.

The fairest approach for everyone is to allocate local authority funding in a more open and transparent way that bases most decisions on scale of population. All areas face their own service delivery challenges, whether in highly populated urban areas or rural locations. We see scale of population as the key driver for funding what we need to deliver.

Finances are challenging throughout local government and all local authorities would welcome additional funds.

I want to see us work together to agree a fair, accountable approach to a new funding system that can secure the resources that all areas need. I am pleased to see the Government is moving to a fairer formula that is evidenced based.

Cllr Roy Perry, Chairman, South East England Councils and Leader, Hampshire CC