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15th September 2010

Dear Sir/ Madam

IRRV Response to Consultation: Proposal on the provision of courts services in:

- **Warwickshire and West Midlands**
- **Wales**
- **Staffordshire and West Mercia (covering the counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire)**
- **North and West Yorkshire**
- **London**
- **Kent, Surrey and Sussex**
- **Humber and South Yorkshire**
- **Greater Manchester**
- **East Midlands**
- **Dorset, Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, and Wiltshire**
- **Devon and Cornwall, Avon and Somerset and Gloucestershire**
- **Cumbria and Lancashire**
- **Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria**
- **Cheshire and Merseyside**
- **Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk**
- **Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Thames Valley**

The Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV) is pleased to provide this response to the above consultation paper.

The IRRV is the professional body concerned with all aspects of local taxation in the United Kingdom. Its members are engaged in local tax administration (including council tax), local authority benefits administration, the valuation of property for taxation, the appeals process and financial management in local government. The Institute represents the professional interests of its members who work within this broad church.

Body of Response

The need to find significant savings in budgets in the current economic conditions is well understood and we accept the cost reduction argument for closing certain courts. It is in any case appropriate to review court service provision to ensure it aligns with present day requirements. The Institute would not wish to comment on the appropriateness of closure

of any individual courts. However, local authorities are important users of the courts service and in the Institute's opinion, the closure of local courts may well increase the costs of legal proceedings for local authorities. The impact of the closures will affect some local authorities more than others – on some it will have significant impact. Some Councils are already struggling for court time. We are concerned that these closures could lead to more authorities having to share courts, with possible reduced numbers of summonses and court dates – all of which could impact on council tax collection rates. Any measures that could be taken to counteract this situation would be welcomed.

As the distance between courts and Councils' centres of administration will in many cases increase under these proposals, we would ask that an additional review is undertaken, with the aim to provide greater streamlining of the day-to-day administration of the courts and to consider the impact of listing times on large scale users such as local authorities. In that way local authorities can achieve further efficiencies of their own in parallel with those of the courts.

The Institute would be pleased to discuss these issues further.

Yours truly,



Policy and Research Projects Officer

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