

**Week in Westminster
Parliamentary Business from 7 June 2010**

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Summary

- Prime minister David Cameron gave a [speech](#) on the need to cut the deficit and deal with Britain's growing debt. Mr Cameron warned of the "enormous implications" for the country of not acting quickly and decisively to cut spending, bring down borrowing to reduce the deficit. But he said that he is determined to carry out the measures in a way that is "open, responsible and fair".
- Chancellor George Osborne published the framework for this year's [Budget and Spending Review](#) which explain the principles behind the Government's approach.
- The Office for Budget Responsibility will publish its first pre-Budget forecast for the economy and public finances on 14 June.
- Communities and Local Government (CLG) set out details of how [cuts to housing and regeneration programmes](#) will be made.
- "The age of aspiration is back", according Grant Shapps in his [first speech as housing minister](#). He acknowledged that home-ownership is a good thing and he would work to help people achieve their goal of owning their own home. Shapps said that responsible lending and borrowing were two sides of the same coin. He went on to say, "borrowers will need to demonstrate financial responsibility and show that they can sustain homeownership. In return lenders will need to support creditworthy homeowners. I know the housing market is still fragile but we in Government will do all we can to help."
- During CLG oral questions, Grant Shapps has also confirmed that the government has no plans to introduce new [regulations for the private rented sector](#) which has been proposed by the previous government in response to the Rugg review.
- In a [Lords debate on competitiveness](#), former the financial services secretary Lord Myners said, "We clearly need a policy of fiscal caution. It was right to support the economy during the global recession but there now needs to be fiscal adjustment, as evidenced by the last Government in the Fiscal Responsibility Act. There is nothing progressive about a Government who consistently spend more than they can raise in taxation, and certainly nothing progressive that endows generations to come with the liabilities incurred by the current generation."
- Other debates of interest this week included the final [debate on the Queen's speech](#) which was on the subject of economic affairs and work and pensions; and a short adjournment [debate on housing policy](#) introduced by LibDem MP Andrew George.
- For the first time, MPs have elected the select committee chairs. Conservative MP Andrew Tyrie was elected chair of the Treasury committee, and Labour MP Clive Betts is the new CLG committee chair.
- The top five MPs to be drawn out of the private members' bill ballot were John McDonnell (Labour); Robert Flello (Labour); Chris White (Conservative); Rebecca Harris (Conservative); Greg Knight (Conservative).

Ministerial Statements

10-06-10 - Financial Services Authority (Annual Report)

Written Ministerial Statement - Treasury

The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Mr Mark Hoban): The Annual Report 2009-10 of the Financial Services Authority (FSA) has today been laid before Parliament. Copies have also been deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

The report forms a key part of the accountability mechanism for the Financial Services Authority under the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 (FSMA), and assesses the performance of the Financial Services Authority over the past 12 months against its statutory objectives.

10-06-10 - Local Government Savings Package

Written Ministerial Statement – Communities and Local Government

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Mr Eric Pickles): The Government have made clear that deficit reduction is their most urgent priority. On 24 May, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Chief Secretary to the Treasury announced therefore that the Government would save over £6 billion from spending during this financial year. Included in that savings package were £1.166 billion reductions in grants to local government. I have today placed in the Library of the House information on the revenue and capital grants that will be reduced.

The Government are clear that deficit reduction, and continuing to ensure economic recovery, is the most pressing issue facing Britain. This will restore confidence in the economy and support the recovery. Advice from the Treasury and Bank of England is that it is better to start to make the reductions in the current financial year. Not to do so will simply delay the need for savings in future years, thereby compounding the impact on public services, including those delivered by local authorities, in the future. It is fair that local authorities make a contribution to the savings to enable Government to take immediate action to tackle the UK's unprecedented deficit in this financial year.

It is time for a fundamental shift of power from Westminster to individuals and their communities. We want to end the era of top-down government by providing a radical devolution of power and greater financial autonomy to local authorities.

So we will reduce the performance management burden on local government through abolishing the comprehensive area assessment and reducing ring-fencing of central government grants, freeing up resources to concentrate on local priorities and the delivery of essential front-line services. We are committed to a full review of local government finance, to giving councils a general power of competence, and to working with local authorities to freeze council tax in England for at least one year as outlined in the coalition agreement and seek to freeze it for a further year, in partnership with local authorities. All of this will help to create the shift of power from the centre to local people that we are determined to deliver.

I am absolutely clear about the importance of the services that local government provides. So we have been determined to ensure local authorities can shield their key front-line services.

The Government have looked at whether it is possible to focus the reductions on grants which have not yet been committed through grant determinations or other statutory restrictions. This has been possible to some extent. Some of the reductions occur in grants where there are underspends, where the money has yet to be allocated or where a grant determination has not yet been made. However, because of the scale of the contribution from local government, it has not been possible to achieve the necessary levels of reduction without reducing some allocations included in grant determinations. Local government, along with the rest of society, is being asked to play its part in helping to reduce the deficit. Where we have reduced revenue grants, no local authority will face a reduction of more than 2%. This compares to the cut in running costs for my Department and its quangos of 10% in 2010-11

We have ensured that councils have the flexibility to take decisions locally on how to deliver the savings needed. I am pleased that we have been able to keep formula grant at the level approved by Parliament of £29 billion. We have also announced further removal from ring-fencing of central government revenue and capital grants. This gives councils extra flexibility to make decisions about where savings are found, although this is subject to the usual rules which ensure that capital funding

is used on capital expenditure. A list of grants that have been removed from ring-fencing is included in the information made available in the House.

There are good reasons for the changes we have made. For example, we believe that the housing and planning delivery grant has proved to be an ineffective and excessively complex incentive. The coalition agreement set out that we will provide incentives for local authorities to deliver sustainable development, including for new homes and businesses.

The Government believe that there is significant scope for local authorities to find efficiencies in the way in which they deliver services. We believe there are further opportunities for an increased role for joint working between local authorities and between different types of public authorities across local areas. Our focus on providing councils with the flexibility to manage budgets effectively will ensure that councils can deliver those services that local people wish to see.

I recognise that making savings in-year will be challenging for local authorities, as it will be for other parts of the public sector. The information that my Department is sending today to every local authority provides the detail councils need to make the necessary decisions as quickly as possible on how they will deliver the necessary changes. I have also made available in the Library of the House a copy of the information that we have sent to each local authority which sets out the revised allocations.

I know that councils want this information as a matter of urgency and we have worked hard to deliver this. The Government therefore wish to provide as much clarity and flexibility to local authorities and other public bodies as quickly as possible so that they can best handle the changes proposed without an impact on key front-line services.

I am satisfied that we have adopted a fair approach to making the necessary reductions in the different grants and funding streams. We are therefore simply asking councils to check quickly to make sure that there are no errors in the calculation of the reductions.

The detailed spending decisions we are outlining today show a clear determination to help tackle the immense public deficit the new Government have inherited.

Oral Questions

09-06-2010 - Social Rented Housing: Finance Commons Written Answers - Communities and Local Government

Natascha Engel: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his policy is on the funding by his Department of programmes for houses for social rent. [1465]

Andrew Stunell: Protecting spending on social housing remains a Government priority. That is why, when we announced £6.2 billion of savings to tackle the deficit, we made available £170 million to safeguard delivery of around 4,000 otherwise unfunded social rented homes.

10-06-2010 - PMQs: Housing investment Commons Oral Answers - Prime Minister

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab): One of the projects that stands to be affected by the Government's decision to put on hold £600 million of housing investment is the housing element of the redevelopment of the Longbridge site in my constituency, which is important not just to that area but to the economic recovery of Birmingham as a whole. Given that the project is supported by the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition that runs Birmingham city council, will the Prime Minister tell me what priority he will attach to the regenerative effects of such housing projects?

The Prime Minister: Everyone wants regeneration to continue in Birmingham, and I pay tribute to Birmingham city council, which is jointly run, I have to say, by Conservatives and Liberal Democrats, who are continuing with the very good work that they do. We want that regeneration to continue. The problem with the previous Government's housing commitments, particularly on social housing, is that they simply were not funded. One of the things that we and the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills have been able to do, in making £6 billion of cuts this year, is plough back some of that money into social housing schemes, which the last Government promised but never funded.

Jonathan Evans (Cardiff North) (Con): Did my right hon. Friend have the opportunity to reflect overnight on the noble Lord Myners's candid and forthright remarks in the other place about the appalling financial legacy left by the Labour party? Does he share my view that Lord Myners's remarks make it clear that the Office for Budget Responsibility should clearly be supported on both sides of the House, and if anything is to be regretted, is it not the fact that he said that after, rather than before, the election?

Hon. Members: Give him a job!

The Prime Minister: That is a good idea, on that performance. It is great to welcome my hon. Friend back to the House of Commons. He is right that Lord Myners, who was hand-picked by the last Government to be a Treasury Minister, put his finger on the button when he said:

"There is nothing progressive about a Government who consistently spend more than they can raise in taxation, and certainly nothing progressive that endows generations to come with the liabilities incurred by the current generation." -[Official Report, House of Lords, 8 June 2010; Vol. 719, c. 625.]

Those words are absolutely right, but what a pity he did not say it when he was in office and had the chance to do something about it.

11-06-2010 - Housing Revenue Account Commons Oral Answers - Communities and Local Government

Jonathan Edwards: What plans he has for the future of the housing revenue account. [1545]

Grant Shapps: The Government are committed to reviewing the unfair housing revenue account in England, and want a funding system that gives local communities more power and responsibility. I can therefore announce that I intend to continue with the review that was undertaken by my predecessor, which reports back to me on 6 July.

Jonathan Edwards: Is the Minister aware that Welsh local authorities returned more than £80 million to the Treasury as a consequence of the scheme last year, and that my home local authority, Carmarthenshire county council, which has retained its stock, returned £5.5 million in 2008-09? Does he agree therefore that the scheme does not provide a level playing field between local authorities

and housing associations, and that it would be far fairer for moneys to be retained locally to increase investment in public housing, help Welsh local authorities to achieve the Welsh housing quality standards and help to create jobs in the local economy?

Grant Shapps: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that there are numerous problems with how the housing revenue account operates at the moment, in England as well as in Wales. The simplest answer that I can give him is that I agree, and we will continue the review.

Mr Philip Hollobone: Kettering council, on which I serve, collects £12 million a year from its council tenants, £3 million of which is handed straight over to Her Majesty's Treasury. How is that fair, and will the Minister receive a representation from the council on this issue?

Grant Shapps: I would be happy to receive a delegation from the council on the issue. It is absolutely the case that it is not fair. I think that there is cross-party agreement that the housing revenue account has become increasingly unfair over the years. That must be fixed, in the interests not only of transparency and of the tenants within those authorities that are paying in, but of efficiency. I would be very happy to meet my hon. Friend and his colleagues.

11-06-2010 - Affordable Housing Commons Oral Answers - Communities and Local Government

Kerry McCarthy: What steps he plans to take to increase the supply of affordable housing in areas of high demand. [1547]

Andrew Stunell: We recognise that there is a continued need for affordable housing, and we remain committed to its provision. When we announced on 24 May the £6.2 billion of savings to tackle the deficit, we made available £170 million to safeguard the delivery of about 4,000 otherwise unfunded social rented homes, starting on site this year and prioritising provision for the most vulnerable. Decisions on future levels of funding for affordable housing will be made in the spending review.

Kerry McCarthy: I thank the Minister for that reply. Given his professed support for social housing, will he explain why the Homes and Communities Agency has put a moratorium on all spending on new council housing, including the site in central Bristol on which work was planned to go ahead?

Andrew Stunell: As the hon. Lady will know, the moratorium is in existence until the emergency Budget is announced, and I cannot go much further than that at this point. However, the reason why there will be an emergency Budget, and the reason why there is a moratorium, is that there is not enough money to complete the programme that was put in train by the Opposition's Front Benchers when they were in government.

Angie Bray: Does the Minister agree that, although the previous Government made lots of pledges, the problem is that they never lived up to them?

Andrew Stunell: Yes.

John Healey: Why did Ministers not make an announcement about the first £230 million of cuts to the affordable housing investment programme instead of sneaking them out on the Homes and Communities Agency website? Do they not accept that the hardest-hit areas are the poorest, and that the poorest families will be hit first? Given that the Prime Minister said this week that the Government's cuts will be open, responsible and fair, can the Minister not see that that fails each one of those three tests?

Hon. Members: Just say yes.

Andrew Stunell :I shall not be quite so quick to do so this time. The fact is that we have tried to do our work in a measured and careful way to protect the vulnerable, as the coalition agreement set out. That is what we are about. That is what we are doing.

11-06-2010 - Private Rented Housing Commons Oral Answers - Communities and Local Government

Julie Elliott: What plans he has for the future regulation of the private rented housing sector. [1537]

Grant Shapps: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her question. It is important that we strike the right balance between tenants and landlords. The current legislative framework, which I have been looking

at closely, does exactly that. We therefore have no plans to take forward the previous Government's ideas about further regulatory measures on this subject.

Julie Elliott: I thank the Minister for that answer. In light of the massive budget cuts announced in the Department, can he assure me that there will be no threat to the measures that the then Government introduced and, indeed, confirm that the Government have no plans to reverse the further powers that Labour has given to councils to introduce local licensing schemes, because in my experience, in my constituency, people want more regulation, not less?

Grant Shapps: In my experience, in my constituency and across the country, people also want a good supply of private rented sector property. Of course, getting that balance right is important. I share the hon. Lady's concern about the extent to which homes in multiple occupation sometimes become a blight on an area. I confirm that we do not plan to overturn the rules that the previous Government introduced, but we will look at them in more detail.

David Wright: What discussions has the Minister held with landlord organisations about possible changes to the capital gains tax regime as it relates to private landlords?

Grant Shapps: That is a matter for the Treasury, but the hon. Gentleman will not have to wait long because the emergency Budget, which has been made necessary by the previous Government's profligacy, will be on 22 June.

11-06-2010 - Affordable Housing Commons Oral Answers - Communities and Local Government

Mary Creagh: What estimate he has made of the effect on the number of affordable homes of planned reductions in spending under the Kickstart and national affordable housing programmes. [1554]

Grant Shapps: The national fiscal position is severe, and we have had to make some very difficult decisions on savings. That is why on 24 May we announced that the Government would be making £6.2 billion of savings this year. We have estimated that planned savings in the housing programme will reduce the number of affordable houses. That is why we brought forward another £170 million to ensure that 4,000 could be completed.

Mary Creagh: I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on his new role. The residents of the Lupset estate in Wakefield are anxiously scanning the horizon for the sounds of his private plane jetting in to tell them which of their homes are going to survive the cuts to the decent homes standard. We are also very concerned about what calculation is made as regards the impact on the construction sector of the net cut of £60 million in the affordable housing programme. How will that cut affect the 1.8 million families he is so concerned about who are languishing nationally on the council lists?

Grant Shapps: Those of us on the Government Benches who care about things such as homelessness and affordable housing provision do not need to take lectures from a Government who, during their 13 years in office, produced less affordable housing than the Thatcher and Major Governments. The simple fact is that we want this stuff to go ahead, and that is why the £170 million has been brought forward. The reality is that if one runs the country like the money is never going to run out, one ends up in exactly this position. Rather than blaming us for it, it would be good to look closer to home.

Debates

08-06-2010 - Queen's Speech debate - economic affairs and work and pensions

Commons Debate Summary - House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100608/debtext/100608-0004.htm#1006083600001>

Former chancellor Alistair Darling introduced the conclusion of the debate on the Queen's Speech. From the outset of a debate which considered the economy and work and pensions, Darling assured the government that the Opposition would support several of its Bills. However, he moved an amendment expressing concern at the government's recent measures intended to reduce the deficit.

The principles on which the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) operates must be included in the legislation scrutinised by the Commons, Darling said. And, he called for clarification on responsibility for financial regulation - referring to conflicting media reports about whether or not the Financial Services Authority will be brought under the remit of the Bank of England.

Turning to the issue of state-owned banks, Darling urged the government to make clear its policy on Northern Rock, Lloyds and RBS. "We do not want to end up selling a tranche of banks to another big UK operator, because that would mean that we would not get the competition we want," he warned.

Responding, George Osborne offered a stark warning on the national debt: "Countries that cannot live within their means face high interest rates, greater economic shocks and larger debt interest bills," he said.

Turning to the government's legislative programme, Osborne said that reforms to national insurance will reduce the cost of employing people on lower incomes. And, the emergency Budget will contain measures to stimulate private sector employment, he added.

It will also set out the overall mandate for bringing the deficit under control - but it will not allocate departmental expenditure. The spending review will do this in the autumn, Osborne explained. It will "proclaim to the world that Britain is open for business", he said.

The Financial Services Regulation Bill will address the previous government's system of banking regulation and the content of the bill will be set out in more detail next week, he said. And, the decision to remove the historic chancellor's power to make official economic forecasts, through the new OBR, is a revolutionary step, he added.

Turning to the government spending review, Osborne announced that it will deliver on the commitment to increase health spending, and also on promises on overseas aid. "It will limit as far as possible the impact of reductions in spending on the most vulnerable in society and on those regions heavily dependent on the public sector," he said. However, he warned that it would challenge departments, local government and others to consider "fundamental changes" to the way in which public services are delivered.

08-06-2010 - UK: Competitiveness - question for short debate

Lords Debate Summary - House of Lords

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201011/ldhansrd/text/100608-0004.htm#10060837000726>

Lord Levene of Portsoken (Crossbench) tabled a motion for short debate in the House of Lords asking the government what factors are taken into account when making sure that the United Kingdom maintains its competitiveness.

Lord Levene, who is also chairman of Lloyds, said it was important to stop focusing on the "doom and gloom" of the financial crisis of 2008 and start devising restorative policies for the British economy. Increasing support for UK exporters trying to plug into foreign markets and attracting foreign investment by working towards an attractive business environment were cited as two main ways in which the UK could "grow its way out of debt" by Lord Levene.

He warned against curtailing the financial services industry through "sudden taxation" in the government's bid to rebalance the economy. "If we want to boost manufacturing in this country, that is one thing, but we should not view a thriving world-class financial services sector as a barrier to this ambition"

"This is an industry that we happen to be very good at. It is an industry that has driven our economy and created hundreds of thousands of jobs."

He added that he hoped the forthcoming Budget would feature a pragmatic path to economic recovery that is supportive of business and "leads to jobs and money for British people."

Baroness Noakes (Con) agreed that tax and regulation needed to be simplified and reduced in order to reduce the UK's competitiveness. "Growth and jobs are essential to our recovery and they will not come without a big improvement in our competitiveness."

She welcomed the coalition government's plans to limit regulation by removing an old regulation for every new one introduced and attaching sunset clauses for both regulations and regulators. "These initiatives should help to stem the tide of regulation but they may not involve a significant reduction in the burden of regulation."

She said more needed to be done to formulate plans to simplify the tax system in the UK. "A competitive tax environment has to go beyond business taxation; it must embrace personal taxation too."

She commented on the Liberal Democrat policy of increasing capital gain's tax and said that they had "no popular support in our party or with the business community".

Lord Myners (Lab) said, "We clearly need a policy of fiscal caution. It was right to support the economy during the global recession but there now needs to be fiscal adjustment, as evidenced by the last Government in the Fiscal Responsibility Act. There is nothing progressive about a Government who consistently spend more than they can raise in taxation, and certainly nothing progressive that endows generations to come with the liabilities incurred by the current generation. There will need to be significant cuts in public expenditure, but there is considerable waste in public expenditure. I have seen that in my own experience as a government Minister. I hope that the Government will pursue with vigilance their search for waste and efficiencies without making cuts which are injurious to the provision of public service. The difference between the Government and the previous Government was on the issue of timing and when those cuts should take place."

The Commercial Secretary to the Treasury, Lord Sassoon, made his maiden speech to the House and said that his new role combined responsibilities for both financial services and business policy, making competitiveness a central concern for him. He commented that immediate action would be needed to simplify the tax system and regulation which were the main drivers for UK competitiveness. "For this reason, the Budget will set out reforms on corporation tax. We will set out a road map for the creation of the most competitive corporate tax regime in the G20."

He said medium term strategies would be devised for "infrastructure and energy policies, dealing with lower skills and planning policy, and translating our science base into profitable enterprise."

He closed the debate by reiterating earlier points made about a supportive taxation and regulatory environment for business by commenting. "Regulation must at all points be proportionate and targeted and must help the aims of businesses and households."

08-06-2010 - Housing Policy - evening adjournment

Commons Debate Summary - House of Commons

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmhansrd/cm100608/debtext/100608-0023.htm>

Andrew George, Liberal Democrat, St Ives: George opened the debate in welcoming the number of statements in the coalition agreement about the abolition of regional spatial strategies, shared-equity accommodation, and the removal of garden grabbing from the planning system.

He continued, "In my part of the world, the most important issue facing local communities is the lack of affordable housing for local people." George focused his argument on the supply side of the coalition government's new housing policy:

"The Government are to abolish the regional spatial strategies and the housing targets that go with them, so what role will development control play in meeting affordable housing need after that abolition?"

George highlighted that measures will include maintaining sites in rural areas and the management and regulation of the private rented sector, its relationship with the housing benefits system, and

whether there should be formal regulation of landlords and letting agents. On the demand side of this policy, there is a need for the Government to address its approach to second home controls and the impact it has on local communities.

There needs to be a strict regulation of land developments and local councils, as often the value of the land is determined by the planning process and what that land can be used for. That determines ultimately whether we can achieve the ultimate goal of developing affordable housing.

George continues to explain that alongside these issues is the problem of mortgage finance for local communities: "The problem is the lack of mortgage finance. Only three lenders are currently lending, and in order to get schemes to go ahead it is necessary to have all three lenders on a site."

He continues to explain the issue preventing lenders to loan to communities lies in the issue of second homes; "For example, recent surveys of estate agents have shown that last year alone four times as many properties were sold to second home buyers as to first time buyers. In some communities a significant number-sometimes 20, 30 or 40%-of the properties in local communities are owned by second home owners. Those circumstances make it difficult for people to have any chance of being able to afford a home of their own."

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Andrew Stunell): Stunell spoke on the need for a reform in the provision of housing through local authorities, and that new housing policy through the coalition government aimed to achieve the housing market availability and stability:

"We need to recognise that the under-supply of housing has consequences. It impacts on the affordability of homes."

"The average age of a first-time buyer is now 37, and that is obviously not acceptable. We have a problem with housing market stability, too. A volatile housing market can quickly translate into instability in financial markets and the wider economy."

Speaking on regional spatial strategies: "Regional spatial strategies have gone. The Secretary of State has written to planning authorities telling them that it is now a material consideration for them to take account of his letter saying that regional spatial strategies are to be disposed of. The legal decision must await legislation, but clearly we are there already."

"It is not just a question of telling local authorities, "You're on your own"; there will be clear incentives for local authorities that permit the development of housing, and a reward system that will give them the opportunity to develop infrastructure and services to match the investment that they are allowing." In concluding his vision for housing provision and policy, Stunell refers the House to the words of his hon. Friend the Minister at the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors this morning:

"We are committed to supporting that intermediate sector and making sure that it flourishes. We want to promote shared ownership and help social tenants and others to own or part-own their home. "Shared ownership is a way of helping lower-income households purchase a share in a home, perhaps for as little as 25%, which is what the current HomeBuy offer says."

Written Questions

09-06-2010 - Social Rented Housing: Finance Commons Written Answers - Communities and Local Government

Natascha Engel: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his policy is on the funding by his Department of programmes for houses for social rent. [1465]

Andrew Stunell: Protecting spending on social housing remains a Government priority. That is why, when we announced £6.2 billion of savings to tackle the deficit, we made available £170 million to safeguard delivery of around 4,000 otherwise unfunded social rented homes.

09-06-2010 - Housing: Regeneration Commons Written Answers - Communities and Local Government

Dr Pugh: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what his policy is on funding of Pathfinder housing areas; and if he will make a statement. [1010]

Andrew Stunell: The Government are committed to a range of housing programmes including initiatives to improve the quality of homes, improve access to housing and bring empty homes into use. The Housing Market Renewal programme was included in the £6.2 billion of savings from Government spending in 2010-11 announced on 24 May, reducing the current capital programme budget announced in December 2009 by £50 million. This reduction is subject to consultation. Budgets for 2010-11 will be confirmed after the Emergency Budget is completed on June 22.

Ian Austin: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what assessment he has made of the effects on his Department's funding for housing market renewal areas of changes in public expenditure in 2010 announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 24 May 2010. [1505]

Andrew Stunell: The Housing Market Renewal Programme was included in the £6.2 billion of savings from Government spending in 2010-11 announced on 24 May. The current capital budget of £286 million announced in December 2009 has been reduced by £50 million. The mechanism by which this reduction is achieved will be subject to consultation. Individual allocations for 2010-11 will be confirmed after the emergency Budget is completed on June 22.

10-06-2010 - Housing Benefit Commons Written Answers - Work and Pensions

Andrew Stephenson: To ask the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions what his policy is on the payment of housing benefit to tenants; and what plans he has to renew the effectiveness of the scheme under which such payments are made. [1033]

Steve Webb: Housing Benefit in the private rented sector is normally paid to the customer but there are circumstances in which payment is made to the landlord.

If the customer has rent arrears of eight weeks or more the local authority should make payments to the landlord unless it is in the customer's overriding interest not to do so.

For customers whose benefit is assessed according to the local housing allowance rules, the local authority can make payments to the landlord if it considers the customer should be safeguarded because they are unable or unlikely to manage their rental payments.

Other customers in the private rented sector and those who have tenancies with registered social landlords can choose to have their benefit paid to the landlord. The local authority can also decide to make payment to the landlord if they consider it to be in the customer's best interests.

For local authority tenants Housing Benefit takes the form of a rebate against their rent account.

A review of the first two years' operation of the local housing allowance arrangements is being undertaken to monitor the impact of the local housing allowance at a national level. The review aims to cover a range of issues including direct payment to tenants.

10-06-2010 - Banks Commons Written Answers - Treasury

Christopher Leslie: To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer when he expects to establish an independent commission on the separation of retail and investment banking; what discussions he has had with potential commissioners on that matter; and if he will make a statement. [1076]

Mr Hoban: The independent banking commission will be established under the auspices of, and will report its findings to, the Cabinet Banking Reform Committee. It will be established as quickly as practically possible. The Government will make further announcements in due course.

11-06-2010 - Home Information Packs

Commons Written Answers - Communities and Local Government

Peter Aldous: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what timetable he has set for the ending of the home information pack scheme. [R] [1557]

Grant Shapps: We took swift action to suspend the Home Information Pack (HIP) from 21 May and intend to introduce legislation to abolish the HIP later in the parliamentary session.

Forthcoming Business

House of Commons

22 June	Emergency budget
23 June	Continuation of budget debate
24 June	Continuation of budget debate
30 July – 6 September	Summer recess

House of Lords

29 July – October (tbc)	House of Lords summer recess
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Other dates

18-22 September	Liberal Democrat party conference (Liverpool)
26-30 September	Labour party conference (Manchester)
3-6 October	Conservative party conference (Birmingham)