

25 January 2018

Note of last Councillors' Forum meeting

Title:	Councillors' Forum
Date:	Thursday 19 October 2017
Venue:	5th Floor Conference Suite, 5th Floor (South side), Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street,. London, EC1M 5LG

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Welcome, apologies and declarations of Interest
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The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. There were no declarations of interest.

2	Local government, migration and immigration - the Rt. Hon. Brandon Lewis, Minister of State for Immigration
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The Chairman welcomed the Rt. Hon. Brandon Lewis MP, Minister for Immigration, to the meeting and thanked him for agreeing to speak to members.

The Minister thanked Councillors for the work they had done so far in supporting refugees through the Syrian vulnerable person resettlement programme (VPR) and he emphasised the benefits of having strong local leadership, as well as a good working relationship between central and local government. He discussed Brexit and advised members that the Government was clear that it wanted EU nationals already living in the UK legally to be able to remain here, while also protecting British citizens living abroad. The Minister touched on the immigration system and the importance of ensuring it works best for the country, while also noting the need to carry out a detailed assessment of migration from the EU. He praised participating local authorities and said that the UK was on track to honour its commitment to resettling 20,000 refugees under this scheme by 2020, but also said that the Government was keen to see more support for the children's resettlement scheme.

The Minister thanked local authorities for their responses to the funding review and explained that the Home Office would do what it can to make additional resources available to help manage migration and integration within local communities. He emphasised that the UK remains committed to playing its part to support refugees via international aid and resettlement schemes, but noted the ongoing need to distinguish between economic migrants and refugees.

The Government was due to publish its integration strategy in autumn 2017 and the Minister was keen for councils to continue engaging with the Government on how to ensure resettlement offers work best for all.

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The Minister was not able to stay after his speech so Cllr David Simmonds, Chair of the LGA's Asylum Refugee and Migration Task and Finish Group, led a brief discussion and assured members he would put any questions they had to the Minister at a meeting of the Task and Finish Group on 26 October.

The following points were made:

- Members welcomed the Minister's comments on dealing with homelessness and rough sleeping caused, in part, by a number of people having no recourse to public funds. Cllr Simmonds noted that a more detailed conversation about this particular issue would be had at the meeting of the Task and Finish Group.
- Concerns were raised about councils being unwilling to resettle children due to the cost of taking on private healthcare fees. Cllr Simmonds agreed with this and said that unfunded costs were the main reason councils had so far been reluctant to participate in the resettlement scheme.
- Members noted that many councils were having problems with HMOs being set up illegally and they emphasised the pressure this was causing to the population of effected areas. Concerns were raised about planning departments rejecting applications only to have their decisions overturned by the Planning Inspectorate. Cllr Simmonds said that legislation had been changed to allow councils to take more robust action against landlords housing people who were in the UK illegally but that the wider issue was the level of interaction between housing departments and the immigration system. He said that the contracts used by the Home Office to procure accommodation were effectively a race to the bottom and was leading to asylum seekers being placed in the cheapest available accommodation, which was often owned by slum landlords. The Minister said that these contracts were due to be re-procured around the end of November and Cllr Simmonds assured members that the Task and Finish Group would provide ample evidence to the Minister as to why contracts need to be procured to a much higher standard.

The Chairman thanked both the Minister and Cllr Simmonds, and the discussion was drawn to a close.

3 Chairman's Update

The Chairman introduced his Update and noted that he had attended a roundtable meeting with the Prime Minister that week on housing. He told members that the meeting was productive and that it was made clear during the meeting that the fault of the housing crisis did not lay with local government.

Members **noted** the Chairman's Update.

4 LGA Boards & Portfolio Chair's Reports

The Chairman listed the Chair's reports.

Chairman of the Community Wellbeing Board, Cllr Izzi Seccombe, noted that the

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NCAS Conference had taken place the week prior to the Councillors' Forum and that many authorities had received communications from the Department of Health and the Department for Communities and Local Government. Cllr Seccombe spoke to members briefly about the view that the LGA should take a strong line on the Better Care Fund and she suggested that it would be helpful if authorities could provide information to help build a case for unilateral action to be taken by the health sector.

The Chairman of the Improvement and Innovation Board told members that 150 peer challenges had been booked for this year but that more could be arranged if members wanted them.

Members **noted** the Board Chairs'/Chairmen's reports.

5 Digest of the last meeting

Members noted that those who were not appointed members of the Councillors' Forum did not appear on the attendee list from the previous meeting.

Aside from the attendee list, members **agreed** the notes of the last meeting as an accurate summary of the discussion.

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Appendix A -Attendance

*Please note that you must sign the attendance sheet at meetings in order for your attendance to be registered. If you have any queries about this, please contact the Member Services team: ms@local.gov.uk.

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Lord Gary Porter CBE	South Holland District Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Howard Sykes MBE	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Marianne Overton MBE	Lincolnshire County Council
Members	Cllr David Simmonds CBE	Hillingdon London Borough Council
	Cllr Peter Fleming OBE	Sevenoaks District Council
	Cllr Izzi Seccombe OBE	Warwickshire County Council
	Cllr Philip Atkins OBE	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr John Beesley	Bournemouth Borough Council
	Cllr Paul Bettison OBE	Bracknell Forest Borough Council
	Cllr Gillian Brown	Arun District Council
	Cllr Simon Cooke	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr John Fuller	South Norfolk District Council
	Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex County Council
	Cllr Peter Golds	Tower Hamlets Council
	Cllr John Hart	Devon County Council
	Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr James Jamieson	Central Bedfordshire Council
	Cllr Donna Jones JP	Portsmouth City Council
	Cllr Robert Light	Kirklees Metropolitan Council
	Cllr Roy Perry	Hampshire County Council
	Cllr Roger Phillips	Herefordshire Council
	Cllr David Renard	Swindon Borough Council
	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Geoffrey Theobald OBE	Brighton & Hove City Council
	Cllr Michael Payne	Gedling Borough Council
	Cllr Peter Box CBE	Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr Sue Murphy CBE	Manchester City Council
	Cllr Simon Blackburn	Blackpool Council
	Cllr Richard Watts	Islington Council
	Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
	Cllr Jon Clempner	Harlow District Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
	Cllr John Merry CBE	Salford City Council
	Cllr Sabia Hussain	Slough Borough Council
	Cllr Kate Haigh	Gloucester City Council
	Cllr Sue Woodward	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Helen Holland	Bristol City Council
	Cllr Linda Thomas	Bolton Council
	Cllr Judith Blake CBE	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Roger Lawrence	Wolverhampton City Council
	Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
	Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr Debbie Wilcox	Newport City Council

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	<p>Cllr Heather Kidd Cllr Alan Connett Cllr Chris White Cllr Peter Reeve MBE Cllr Alan Seldon Cllr Wayne Davies Cllr Carolyn Rule Cllr Chris Townsend Cllr Lisa Duffy Cllr Robert Bucke</p>	<p>Shropshire Council Devon County Council Hertfordshire County Council Huntingdonshire District Council Herefordshire Council Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council Cornwall Council Surrey County Council Huntingdonshire District Council Tendring District Council</p>
Apologies	<p>Cllr Sean Anstee Cllr Paul Carter CBE Cllr Nigel Ashton Cllr Kevin Bentley Cllr Morris Bright MBE Cllr Tom Fitzpatrick Cllr Martin Hill OBE Cllr Rory Love Cllr Colin Noble Cllr Teresa O'Neill OBE Cllr Stephen Parnaby OBE Cllr Barry Lewis Cllr Catherine Rankin Cllr Colin Riley Mayor Tim Bowles Cllr Rishi Shori Cllr Alice Perry Cllr Aaron Shotton Cllr Timothy Swift Cllr Graham Chapman Cllr Anne Western CBE Ms Fiona Twycross AM</p> <p>Cllr Amy Cross Cllr Tudor Evans OBE Cllr Barrie Grunewald Cllr Paul Tilsley CBE Cllr Richard Kemp CBE Cllr Abigail Bell Cllr Keith Aspden</p>	<p>Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council Kent County Council North Somerset Council Colchester Borough Council Hertsmere Borough Council North Norfolk District Council Lincolnshire County Council Shepway District Council Suffolk County Council Bexley Council East Riding of Yorkshire Council Derbyshire County Council Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Castle Point Borough Council West of England Combined Authority Bury Metropolitan Borough Council Islington Council Flintshire County Council Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council Nottingham City Council Derbyshire County Council London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) Blackpool Council Plymouth City Council St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council Birmingham City Council Liverpool City Council Hull City Council North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service</p>
In attendance	<p>Cllr Mike Wilcox Cllr John Clarke Cllr Jo Beavis Cllr Beverley Egan Cllr Phelim MacCafferty Cllr Shabir Pandor Cllr Tom Beattie Cllr Liz Hazell Cllr Ruth Dombey OBE Cllr Paul Smith Cllr Geoff Knight</p>	<p>Lichfield District Council Gedling Borough Council Essex County Council Castle Point Council Brighton & Hove City Council Kirklees Metropolitan Council Corby Borough Council Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council Sutton London Borough Council Colchester Borough Council Lancaster City Council</p>

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Cllr Lucy Nethsingha
Cllr Chris Saint
Cllr Stephen Parker
Cllr Terry O'Neill

Cambridgeshire County Council
Stratford-upon-Avon District Council
Hart District Council
Warrington Council