

Environment & Housing Programme Board – report from Cllr Gary Porter (Chair)

Planning Reform

1. Over the summer the LG Group has convened a special meeting of LGA Environment Board Planning Portfolio members and also met with numerous external stakeholders to discuss forward strategy for LG Group to work with central government, stakeholders and councils to deliver a decentralised planning system. We plan to have a developed strategy in place for autumn 2010.
2. The LG group is broadly supportive of the devolutionary intent behind the government's announcement on planning reform. Many of the proposals reflect the LGA's fundamental principles that people should have the power to shape the places in which they live; that councils are uniquely positioned as the accountable public body to plan for their communities, and that unlocking councils' potential to play a leadership role is critical to the delivery of housing and other development.
3. Councils should therefore look to these recent developments as a new opportunity to plan and make decisions according to communities' interests and needs.
4. For a more detailed background on our position on recent planning reform, please refer to the Agenda & Paper for the LG Group Environment & Housing Programme Board - 5 July 2010, which is available online <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=37236>

Flood Risk Management

5. In July, I wrote to the Minister for Flooding, Richard Benyon, to express the concerns of member authorities that there had been no indication of any funding support for lead local flood authorities in England (counties and unitaries) to undertake Preliminary Flood Risk Assessments. This is a significant new piece of work to be completed by June 2011 as part of the Flood Risk Regulations, which transpose the EU Floods Directive into UK law. I am pleased to report that at the end of July, the Minister announced £2million funding to help these authorities undertake the Assessments. Payments of between £10k and £30k per authority will be made available in September. This will give authorities certainty over budgets for this essential work and will help them with forward planning. For more details see: <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/2010/07/29/floods-news/> .

LGA Inland Flood Risk Management Group

6. Four members of the Environment & Housing Programme Board are on the LGA's new Inland Flood Risk Group, plus 2 representatives from each of the

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regions in England and Wales and the Chair of the Coastal Issues SIG. The Group aims to support all local authorities in taking forward the lead role on managing local flood risk and new responsibilities accompanying the Flood and Water Management Act. The Group is supported by an officer network which will help take forward the Group's agreed lobbying priorities and work programme for the year ahead. This includes:

- 6.1 Development of a Framework to support all LLFAs in developing the local strategy
 - 6.2 Collaboration and joint working to address capacity issues
 - 6.3 Evidence on funding requirements of the lead role
 - 6.4 Promoting a consistent level of service
7. The Group will report to the Environment & Housing Board. More information on the Inland Group is available on the Library section of the Community of Practice: <http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/c/2050378/home.do>

Adaptation to Climate Change

8. On 20th July, Cllr Mike Haines chaired the first national conference of the Greening Campaign. The conference launched a Community Adaptation Toolkit, which helps communities and councils to work together to assess local climate risks and take action to ensure the local area is better adapted to these risks. The campaign and toolkit encourages local decision making and community planning by engaging communities in practical action, using their local knowledge to build a clearer picture of local climate change impacts. 180 local campaigns are now established. For more information see: <http://www.greening-campaign.co.uk/index.html>

Board Meeting – 5 July 2010

9. At our last meeting of the Environment & Housing Programme Board – held in Bournemouth to coincide with the Group's Annual Conference - members discussed in great detail how best to work with government to benefit all within the funding restraints. Items discussed in detail included the Decentralisation and Localism Bill, Planning Reform, Housing and Waste issues. See a note of the meeting discussion at <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=12629614>

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