

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

LG Group/ Defra Summit

1. Baroness Eaton DBE and I participated in a LG Group/ Defra Summit on the 21st October to discuss Total Environment with Caroline Spelman, Secretary of State for Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Around 50 to 60 Elected Members, Council Officers, and representatives from Defra, the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural England attended and discussed the key issues facing councils in light of the spending review. This was an extremely successful event and we expect a follow-up to be held next year. Cllrs Loakes and Whelan also attended on behalf of the Programme Board.

LG Group Offer on Climate Change

2. We have submitted the LG Group Offer on Climate Change to Government, and I will shortly be meeting with Secretary of State Chris Huhne with other lead Members of the Board to discuss our Offer further. The executive summary of the Offer is on our website, and a copy of the full offer can be obtained by emailing abigail.burridge@local.gov.uk. We will keep you updated on the outcome of these discussions.

Climate Change Month

3. October has been Climate Change Month for the Local Government Group, and there has been a lot of high profile activity going on, including our Climate Change Conference, a Leadership Academy on Climate Change, and the Smith Square debate, *Hard Times: Why Should We Invest in Climate Change in the Current Economy?* Our annual Climate Change Conference was extremely successful and covered key issues such as the role of councils within the Government's new flagship energy efficiency programme and the Green Deal. Director General Phil Wynn Owen from DECC announced at our Climate Change Conference a change in position from Government, stating that councils will be able to be Green Deal providers in their own right.
4. Cllr Ed Turner, on behalf of the Environment & Housing Programme Board, chaired the Smith Square debate on 25th October, about 'Why should we invest in climate change in the current economy?' This was an extremely engaging debate and explored from all angles whether, at this economically challenging time, local government should be investing taxpayers' money in initiatives to

combat the effects of climate change. The debate was well received by attendees, with many moments of fierce disagreement between panellists.

Future Environmental Policy for the Committee of the Regions

5. Cllr Paula Baker's report on 'The Role of Local and Regional Authorities in Future Environmental Policy' for the Committee of the Regions - the EU body for local and regional government - was approved by the October plenary. Cllr Baker's report calls for local and regional authorities to play a greater role in formulating policy, which makes for better legislation and implementation, and recommends establishing permanent legislation implementation networks between the European Commission and Member States working with local and regional councils.

LG Group work on Flood Risk Management October 2010

6. Cllr Mike Haines chaired a meeting on 18 October of the LGA Inland Flood Risk Management Group. The Group has approved work by its supporting Officer Network to develop a Framework for the Local Flood Risk Strategy. This will provide essential support for Lead Local Flood Authorities to help them in producing their local strategy. This is a key new duty in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, commencing in April 2011. The LGA has also submitted written evidence to a new EFRA Committee Inquiry into flood and water legislation.

Contact officer: Sarah Monaghan

Position: Member Support Officer

Phone no: 020 7664 3214

E-mail: sarah.monaghan@local.gov.uk