

Environment & Housing Programme Board – report from Cllr Gary Porter

Waste

1. On 31 March, Board Members Clare Whelan and Mike Haines accompanied Margaret Eaton to a meeting with Caroline Spelman and Bob Neill to discuss the Government's waste review. Among other things, they discussed how to promote excellence in local collection while maintaining local choice over methods, business waste, the need to minimise food and packaging waste, the range of approaches needed to ensure residents understand and work with local collection approaches, and tackling serious and organised waste crime. Ministers expressed their gratitude for political and professional input from the sector to the review process. There was press coverage on 10 April about alleged unlawful charging for collection, and speculating about what the review would conclude about sanctions against householders. [Cllr Clyde Loakes wrote round about this](#) at the time and Rob Whiteman will be meeting Defra's Permanent Secretary next week to discuss our concerns about this episode.

Meeting with Lord Henley regarding vehicle seizure powers

2. Cllr Clyde Loakes, vice chair of the LG Group's Environment and Housing Board met with Lord Henley, Parliamentary Under-Secretary at Defra in March to press for the implementation of vehicle seizure powers, created under the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005. Alongside the Environment Agency, the LG Group highlighted the need for stronger powers to assist with investigating serious, persistent fly-tippers and called on the Government to commit to this as part of the forthcoming Waste Policy Review.

Air quality meeting with Ministers

3. Mayor Dorothy Thornhill, Deputy Chair of the Environment and Housing Board and Cllr Peter Box, Chair of the Economy and Transport Board met with Ministers Lord Henley (Defra) and Norman Baker (DfT) to discuss air quality. It was agreed at the meeting that a more coordinated, strategic approach across local and central government is needed to tackle the problem. Officials will now be working together more formally to coordinate evidence in order to create a better shared understanding of the problem and potential measures at local and national level. This work will inform a further political meeting later in the year.

Changing the way we do housing

4. Environment & Housing Programme Board members recently chaired a seminar series exploring the nature of the recent housing reforms. The seminars were

well attended and ran in five areas up and down the country alongside an online conference on the LG Group community of practice *Local Housing Knowledge*.

5. The events which looked at issues such as meeting housing supply, reinvesting in existing homes and supporting vulnerable people through the housing agenda prompted a lively debate. Delegates discussed ways in which councils could be more creative about how they attract resources and achieve the greatest value for the local area; the importance of linking housing outcomes with the work with the new Health and Wellbeing boards and the crucial role of strong local leadership to bring partners together to work to local priorities to achieve local ambitions. A report on the events will shortly be made available on the LGA website and you can view the online discussion by logging in to Local Housing Knowledge at <http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/welcome.do> .

Board Meeting

6. Trudi Elliott (Royal Town Planning Institute) Tony Burton (Civic Voice) and Liz Peace (British Property Federation) attended the last board meeting on 16 March to discuss with Members their views on the opportunities and challenges that the large number of changes, proposals and initiatives to planning policy present both within the Localism Bill and outside it will present. There was much discussion with the Board about the role of elected councillors in delivering these reforms and agreed that it was necessary that CLG's specific funding for planning and the LG Group's member development programmes should focus on ensuring that appropriate support was available to enable all Members to deal with these radical changes and the ensuing cultural shift they will have in their communities.

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