

Environment & Housing Programme Board – report from Cllr Gary Porter

LGA Housing Seminar – 9 June 2011

1. I chaired a members housing seminar on 9 June. The seminar included a presentation and discussion with the housing Minister, Grant Shapps MP and political perspectives from Cllr Tony Newman, Cllr Chris Naylor and Cllr Mike Haines. Issues discussed included: giving councils a level playing field with housing associations in accessing funding for building social housing, questions about long-term sustainability of the Affordable Rent model, positive impact of past regeneration projects in turning around deprived urban areas and the Importance of sustainability, and social and environmental considerations in delivering housing. Members then took part in detailed workshop discussions on four themes: housing finance, housing growth, housing regeneration and renewal, social housing reform.

Draft Planning Policy Statement for Traveller Sites

2. On 13 April 2011, the Government published for consultation a draft new planning policy statement for traveller sites. Full details available here: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/travellers> On 17 June 2011, Cllr Ed Turner chaired a meeting of CLG officials and LG Group Planning Portfolio Holders to explore some of key issues for local authorities stemming from the consultation. LG Group officers will use the outputs of this discussion to inform the LG Group response to this consultation, which will also be circulated to members for comment.

Homelessness round table with Grant Shapps

3. Further to LG Group Members attendance at the Ministerial Working Group on homelessness, Councillor David Rogers OBE, Chair of the Community Wellbeing Programme Board, and I convened a round table to discuss a community budgeting approach to homelessness. The meeting was attended by over 20 local authority members, senior officers and the Housing Minister, Grant Shapps MP. Following a discussion on the community budget pilots on families with complex needs the group agreed to investigate developing a stronger role for housing issues on the health and well being board agenda and develop a strong evidence base and case studies to support a preventative approach.

National Planning Forum

4. Cllr Mike Haines chaired the National Planning Forum (bringing together private and public sector interests in planning) meeting on the 23rd June. The Forum discussed the recently published draft National Planning Policy Framework and heard from two of the draft's authors, John Rhodes of Quod Planning Consultancy and Pete Andrew, Director of Land and Planning at Taylor Wimpey UK. The meeting also heard from DCLG Chief Planner, Steve Quartermain on changes to the planning system.

Meeting with Chief Executive Homes and Communities Agency

5. Pat Ritchie, Chief Executive of the Homes and Communities Agency, attended the Environment and Housing Board meeting on 26th June for a discussion with the Board on the Government's housing reforms, the implications for local housing authorities and the agency's changing role from investor to enabler. Following a discussion of challenges and priorities for the sector, it was agreed that the LG Group and the HCA should explore the potential for collaboration in supporting councils in providing strong leadership through their strategic housing role.

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