

## **Environment and Housing Board – report from Cllr David Parsons CBE (Chairman)**

### **Environment and Housing Board**

1. The Environment and Housing Board met on 11 January and discussed waste issues, DECC's Feed-in-Tariffs (FITs), Green Deal consultations and a number of other issues.

### **Meeting with Lord Taylor of Holbeach**

2. I met with Lord Taylor of Holbeach, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at Defra earlier this month. We considered changes to recycling collections as a result of the Judicial Review, and I emphasised the LGA's view that any amendments should continue to allow councils flexibility to choose a collection method that best suits local circumstances and will not present disproportionate costs to councils. I also argued against removal of Waste Transfer Notes (WTNs) and reminded the minister of the importance unblocking Defra's new Waste Control Regulations, which will allow councils to recover their waste disposal costs from non-domestic premises.

### **Green Deal Consultation**

3. The LGA's response to the Green Deal Consultation was submitted in late January, following feedback from member councils and board members. We will continue to urge the Government to reconsider any decision to exclude social tenants from the new Affordable Warmth target fund. We have emphasised how important it is to unlock new sources of funding to help improve the energy efficiency of homes and properties across the country, especially with diminished public funds.

### **Meeting with Association of British Bookmakers**

4. On 19 January, I had a productive meeting with the Association of British Bookmakers to help understand the betting industry's views as the LGA voices its concerns about the limited tools councils have available to tackle the issues of clustering on high streets.
5. I explained that the LGA's was pressing for workable tools through the planning system to be able to respond to local priorities and tackle clustering where this was a community concern.

### **EFRA Select Committee - inquiry into Defra's Natural Environment White Paper**

6. Following consultation with Environment and Housing lead members, officers also submitted the LGA's evidence to the EFRA Select Committee inquiry into

the Water White Paper. It argued for adequate funding to enable councils to discharge their flood risk responsibilities and that any arrangement for the long-term maintenance of sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) should work for local authorities.

7. The LGA would like to see a more joined up approach to investment in nationally significant infrastructure networks that is based on the needs of local economies, understands their impacts at local level, and provides certainty for decision making at local level.

### **Response to the Government's Housing Strategy / Right to Buy Consultation**

8. I have also recently written to the Rt Hon. Grant Shapps MP outlining the LGA's response to the Housing Strategy and the actions we believe the Government should take, in order to allow councils to contribute to meeting local housing need. Lead members have also been liaising with officers and councils to agree a response to the DCLG's 'Reinvigorating Right to Buy' consultation.

### **LGA Housing Reform Seminar - Meeting local housing need: what do the housing reforms mean for your area?**

9. On 23 January I chaired the LGA's housing reform event for members, which was attended by around 65 elected members and featured contributions from CLG, HCA, Lord Matthew Taylor (National Housing Federation) and Lord Best among others.
10. 'Meeting local housing demand', a joint HCA/LGA publication on housing was launched at the conference. The publication lays out many of the options available to councils. It makes some suggestions as to how they could go about delivering new homes, improving existing ones and making housing central to local areas.

### **LGA responds to Defra plans to curb bin fines**

11. On 16 January the LGA replied to proposals from Defra to curb bin fines, and I was active in the press to communicate local government's views on the plans. We continue to argue that councils only ever issue bin fines as an absolute last resort, and that local government must retain the ability to react as they see fit when a persistent minority cause damage and disruption.

### **Feed in Tariffs - Solar Panels**

12. On 25 January the Court of Appeal ruled that the Government's proposed cuts to Feed-in Tariffs would be illegal. The Environment and Housing Board has recognised that as solar panels become cheaper, it is right that the rate of Feed-in-Tariff should be reduced accordingly, but we have continually highlighted the waste of money and damage to local economies caused by the Government's announcement of the cuts at such short notice.

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