

Digest of Meeting

Title:	Councillors' Forum
Date and time:	22 November 2012, 12.30pm
Venue:	The Westminster Suite, Local Government House

Item

Welcome and Introductions

Councillor Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the LGA, welcomed members to the Forum meeting and introduced speaker Mark Prisk MP, Minister of State for Housing, Department for Communities and Local Government, to present to members about housing issues, providing an opportunity for members to raise any issues for local government.

1 Housing the Nation

Members received a talk from Mark Prisk MP in which he principally addressed housing issues but also spoke about local growth, regeneration, Local Enterprise Partnerships and high streets.

On the topic of the government's approach in dealing with what has been a dysfunctional housing system for up to twenty years, Mr Prisk explained that the demand for housing has not been responded to sufficiently. To tackle this, Mr Prisk continued, the government is taking a comprehensive and collaborative approach, working in partnership with different sectors to supply housing for the demand.

Acknowledging that central and local government is operating in a constrained financial environment, and that this is not going to change, Mr Prisk emphasised the need for working collaboratively with the private sector to encourage inward investment in housing.

Mr Prisk gave several examples of how the government is focusing its approach, including through planning reform, drawing in private investment, building new affordable homes, reducing empty homes, getting public land back into use, and right to buy and self-build or custom-build schemes. Mr Prisk highlighted the potential of custom-build schemes as an additional tool in local government's armoury for tackling housing problems.

Members were told that local government's input and opinion was welcomed, particularly for non-city areas, and Mr Prisk praised the

LGA for its work in this area. He invited members to contribute to the conversation surrounding the development of housing as such developments affect communities and this is a local issue.

The Chairman invited questions from the Forum and Members raised several issues which were addressed in turn.

Key issues raised in the discussion were as follows:

- The importance of providing quality of life alongside housing so ensuring there are jobs and services for new residents;
- The potential of expanding city deals to rural or county areas;
- Concerns that affordable housing is only affordable for the first buyer;
- The difficulties of tackling homelessness and links with welfare reform and localisation of council tax;
- Representation of district councils on Local Enterprise Partnerships;
- Commuter areas around London becoming unaffordable for many first time buyers;
- The possibility of rural areas unlocking potential for affordable housing; and
- The need for initiatives to be local and flexible.

The Chairman thanked Mark Prisk MP for attending the Forum and for providing councillors with the opportunity to discuss current housing issues.

2 Chairman's Update

Members noted and accepted the Chairman's report.

3 LGA Board and Panel Chairs' Reports

Members noted the updates from each of the LGA's Board Chairs.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 10 January, 12:30pm, The Westminster Suite, Local Government House