

## **Environment and Housing Board – report from Cllr Mike Jones (Chairman)**

### **Growth and Infrastructure Bill**

1. LGA lobbying in the **Growth and Infrastructure Bill** has been reflected in a number of developments during the House of Lords stages of the Bill. The government has responded to LGA concerns by limiting the period of time available to applicants wishing to appeal to the Planning Inspectorate to have the affordable housing element of their S106 agreement revised. Government has also responded to LGA lobbying to simplify **Local Development Orders** by inserting new clauses in the Bill that will remove centrally set monitoring and approval requirements, making it easier for councils to apply permitted development locally.
2. We continue to lobby for amendments to the Bill and for a new clause which that would remove the housing borrowing cap to allow councils to increase investment in new council housing.
3. Government has also recognised in the debates on the Bill that sector led has a vital role to play in driving improvement in planning services and addressing poor performance where it exists. In reflection of that, DCLG and LGA have agreed to establish new governance arrangements for the Planning Advisory Service to ensure strong sector leadership of a package of support on planning that is responsive to councils' needs and supports them to avoid designation under the Bill.

### **Meeting with Minister of State for Climate Change**

4. Cllr Keith House, Cllr Frances Roden and Cllr Andrew Cooper met with the Minister of State for Climate Change, the Rt Hon Greg Barker MP, on 4 March. The discussion was positive and constructive, with the Minister confirming that he believes that local government is a key partner in everything that the Department for Energy and Climate Change is trying to achieve. A Memorandum of Understanding between the LGA and DECC setting out shared objectives is expected to be signed shortly.

### **Climate Local conference**

5. The LGA's first **Climate Local conference** is on 11th March: delivering growth, income and safer communities. With over 50 council signatories, the event marks the launch of a report highlighting the impact of council action on climate change on local growth, jobs, savings and protection of vulnerable communities

### **EFRA Select Committee and APPG on Water**

6. The LGA continues to represent councils on flooding issues. We recently provided evidence to an EFRA Select Committee enquiry into water management at which Cllr Cooper of the Environment and Housing Board and Richard Wills of Lincolnshire County Council highlighted councils' leadership in protecting and helping their communities recover from recent floods and the sectors concerns in accessing funding for flood defences.

7. Cllr Eddy Poll has also presented on behalf of the LGA to the All Party Parliamentary Water Group on Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs). During his presentation, Cllr Poll highlighted councils' frustrations with the delays in implementation of the legislative framework and lack of a long-term solution for funding of SUDs maintenance.

#### **Waste Judicial Review**

8. The LGA has successfully supported Defra to win the Waste Judicial Review case, with judgment passed down on 6 March. The case decided that councils can determine of the recycling collection they choose based on their particular local circumstances in accordance with EU law. The LGA invested significant effort in helping DEFRA fight the challenge and as a result has prevented councils from incurring costs likely to be in the order of tens of millions.

#### **LGA Local Waste Review**

9. The Local Government Waste Review, chaired by Cllr Clyde Loakes on behalf of the Board, has met for a second time on 06 March to consider the issues raised in its Call for Evidence. Input from partners will be used to evidence our positions across the range of issues associated with waste management, as the review progresses.

#### **LGA Urban Commission**

10. At the LGA's Urban Commission on 19 February, Cllr Tony Newman represented the Board at a workshop on housing, alongside representatives of DCLG. He made clear that the local government is united in its belief that housing of the right type in the right location and at the right price is crucial for the sustainability of our communities and the success of our towns and cities. Councils are saying yes to applications and are also responding pragmatically to get stalled sites moving. The clauses in the Growth and Infrastructure Bill which allow applicants to appeal to PINS to renegotiate the affordable housing element of the S106 are unnecessary.
11. Cllr Newman also noted that the move to HRA self-financing is positive and will allow councils to take a more business-like approach to managing their assets. The Environment and Housing Board will continue to lobby for the borrowing cap to be removed and are investigating the impact and costs of the welfare reforms and their impact on the ability to invest in housing, commencing development.

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