

## Digest of Meeting

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<b>Title:</b>	Councillors' Forum
<b>Date and time:</b>	12 September 2013, 12.15pm
<b>Venue:</b>	The Westminster Suite, Local Government House, Smith Square

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Item	Action by
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### Welcome and Introductions

Councillor Sir Merrick Cockell, LGA Chairman, welcomed Members to the meeting.

The Chairman introduced Nick Boles MP, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Planning at Department for Communities and Local Government.

#### **1 Nick Boles MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Planning, Department for Communities and Local Government**

Nick Boles began by mentioning that his time as a local councillor showed him that local government often has to do the 'dirty work' of central government. Planning policy is an example of this, especially in the context of the current housing crisis precipitated by population growth, immigration, and natural ageing. Nick Boles emphasised that he understands how difficult it can be for local authorities to draw up plans and identify land for development in their communities but it is necessary if we are to provide communities with the homes they need.

Nick Boles then opened the floor for questions.

The following topics were discussed:

- Registered Social Landlords ability to borrow to fund new homes;
- Encouraging developers to commence schemes earlier and build out the schemes that have been granted planning permission ;
- Regulation of pension plans hindering use of empty properties as residential properties;
- Development on greenbelt land;
- Difficulties in funding the infrastructure needed to support new homes through the community infrastructure levy and the requirement to renegotiate developer contributions which

removes benefits to the community. The case for change of use of buildings to be decided locally and the balance between property rights and community interests in enabling change of use;

- Licensing of betting shops and tools available to councils;
- Ensuring that local plans that identify the required five year land supply have primacy and are not overturned by the planning inspectorate;
- Guidance on noise issues with wind turbines.

Nick Boles undertook to talk to colleagues in the Treasury and other departments about specific issues raised and to deal with certain local matters if members wrote to him about them.

He challenged members to provide examples of where Article 4 powers are inadequate tools to deal with the problem of betting shops.

The Chairman thanked Nick Boles for addressing the Forum and fielding so many questions.

## **2 Chairman's Update**

Members noted and accepted the Chairman's report.

## **3 Programme Board Chairs' Reports**

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

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday 24 October 2013, 12:30pm – 1:30pm  
The Westminster Suite (8<sup>th</sup> Floor), Local Government House