

17 March 2010

Notes of Decisions Taken and Actions

Meeting 18 January 2010

Present

Chairman:	Cllr Gary Porter (Conservative, South Holland DC)
Vice Chair:	Cllr Linda Thomas (Bolton MBC)
Deputy Chairs:	Cllr Mike Haines (Independent, Teignbridge DC), Mayor Dorothy Thornhill (Liberal Democrat, Watford BC)
Conservative:	Cllr Peter Britcliffe (Hyndburn BC); Cllr Andrew Gravells (Gloucestershire CC and Gloucester City); Cllr Clare Whelan (Lambeth LBC); Cllr Jason Stacey (Ealing LBC)
Labour:	Cllr Derek Bateman (Cheshire West and Chester Council); Cllr Tony Newman (Croydon LBC); Cllr Ed Turner (Oxford City Council)
Lib Democrat:	Cllr Berni Turner (Liverpool City Council)
Also present:	Guest Presenter: Justin Johnson (Centrica); Lisa Popa (Centrica); Clare Dudeney (UKBCSE); Jim Campbell (DECC EDU)
Apologies:	Cllr David Potts (South Tyneside MBC); Cllr Paula Baker (Basingstoke and Deane BC);
LGA Group Officers:	Martin Wheatley; Piali DasGupta; Clive Harris; Fatima de Abreu (LGA) Helen Platts and Dan McCartney (IDeA)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Cllr Porter (Chairman) welcomed members to the meeting, and introduced Jim Campbell, Energy Development Director at the Department for Energy and Climate Change. David Green, Chief Executive at the UK Business Council for Sustainable Energy, had also been invited to speak, but had tendered apologies due to illness. The Chairman thanked Justin Johnson (Centrica) who had agreed to attend on his behalf together with his colleague, Lisa Popa and Clare Dudeney from UKBSCE.

2. The local government role in securing the renewal of the UK's energy infrastructure

Jim Campbell and Justin Johnson gave presentations on government energy policy and views from industry – these can be viewed via the link below. A copy of the LGA's draft response to the Government's suite of National Policy Statements for Energy was also circulated at the meeting.

In discussion, Members made the following points:

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- Should tidal energy be given higher priority? Mr Campbell said that the Government was not opposed to it, but it was not as yet a developed technology compared with others
- The development of the suite of drafts NPSs had been led by the Department for Energy and Climate Change and concerns were raised as to Communities and Local Governments' input into this process.
- Consideration of local issues must be taken into account when national decisions are taken, particularly with respect to the impact of associated infrastructure such as transmission lines;
- There were concerns in local government about the ability of authorities to finance full engagement with the IPC on these large planning applications;
- The Chair expressed extreme concern about the lack of finance to be fully involved, as well as a 'democratic deficit' in determining these;
- Hopes that energy conservation programmes could specifically address the private rented sector were expressed. Cllr Bernie Turner mentioned the 'Healthy Homes' programme as one which specifically dealt with that sector, and offered to send details to members if they wished.

It was felt that creation of smaller schemes to provide alternative energy sources, supported by local authorities should be encouraged and members referred to examples of this in Norway. Cllr Berni Turner highlighted a project in Liverpool entitled 'Healthy Homes' which involved tenants and had received positive outcomes to date.

Mr Campbell assured the Board that their points were recognised, and reminded them that they should make clear their concerns during the consultation. He informed them that CLG were under constant consultation in addressing issues of local impact and national targets. In respect of nuclear build, members were told that developers would meet with local authorities and there would be sufficient consultation before progressing to IPCs at the pre-application stage.

The Chairman thanked the Speakers for attending and allowing a useful and interesting discussion.

Presentations are available at:

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=7334391>

Decisions:

- The Board noted the discussion.

Actions:

- Place on LGA website a link to the presentations from DECC and Centrica

Fatima de Abreu

3. LGA Group Environment Policy

Some members suggested that the targets set were insufficiently challenging, while others recognised that the starting position would nevertheless make them hard to achieve. They asked how the targets would be monitored and made suggestions for increasing savings in paper output.

Officers explained that the targets had been set in line with those by other similar organisations but that they would review these to ensure that they were as challenging as feasibly possible. Monitoring would take place at the end of the financial year and that this would be overseen by the LGA Group senior environmental champion – Derek Allen, Executive Director of LACORS.

Members asked about financing and where savings would go. They were told that any savings against energy costs would accrue to Liberata in line with the shared services contract. The up-front capital investments in energy efficiency measures that have been agreed will be funded by the LGA Group.

Members requested an annual summary of progress.

Decision:

- Members noted the report and **agreed** the actions proposed.

Actions:

- Write on behalf of Cllr Porter to the Group Chief Executive summarising the key issues, with a copy to Cllr Keith Mitchell (Chairman of the Resources Panel) **LGA Officers**
- Consider providing an opt-out for members to receive hard copies of papers. **LGA Officers**
- Report back to Environment Board with summary of progress against targets subsequent to the end of the 2009/10 financial year. **LGA Officers**

4. TSA Consultation on Housing Regulation

Piali DasGupta (LGA) summarised the key issues and the Board asked for the following points to be taken forward:

- The threshold for smaller landlords, who will not be subject to this regulatory regime, was considered too high – the response should lobby for this to be reduced to 500;
- More thought needs to be given to the outcomes of the standards which, are too broad at present;
- The standards framework should monitor performance related to value for money (VfM), and the Audit Commission's Use of Resources judgement is likely not adequate. A better approach might be to use the data that councils already collect to ensure that they are providing VfM.

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- The TSA needs to take into account that the maintenance of homes at a Decent Homes standard can be as, or more, challenging than attaining the standard;
- Assurance that the TSA will engage with ALMOs consistently with their involvement with housing associations' managing agents would be welcome

Members were informed that strong member representation at the meeting Board liaison meeting on 29 January is vital to press for the sector's interests. The response from the Board had been low because of lack of availability, but members were asked to do their best to secure representation from within their respective political groups.

Ms DasGupta **agreed** to draft an initial response to the consultation and circulate it to Housing Portfolio Holders of the Board.

Action:

- Circulate draft response to Housing Portfolio Holders for approval
Piali DasGupta
- Contact Leaders of Labour and Conservative Group to nominate members to attend TSA joint Board meeting on 29 January
Fatima de Abreu

5. LGA Group Business Plan 2010-11

Members had received a report outlining the background of the Getting Closer programme and suggested work for incorporation into the Group's business plan for 2010-11. Martin Wheatley (LGA) invited the Board to offer their views on any points to be raised at the LGA Executive meeting on 14 January and to provide a steer on the next phase of planning.

He reminded them that, because of the constraining issues around resources, any additional item to the plan should be countered by removal of something else in its place so that focus can be given to areas of most significance to member councils.

Members raised concerns about the targeting of communications to Members more widely and it was **agreed** that the Chairman would raise this with the Executive. They noted that a dedicated team is being set up in the new Group Communications Directorate to address this.

Decision:

- The Board **noted** the report.

Action:

- Develop detailed plans for next phase
Officers

6. Sustainable Communities Act Progress

The Board received an update from Martin Wheatley on the shortlisting process undertaken by the Selector Panel for proposals from local authorities for consideration by the Secretary of State.

Members were informed that a total of over 300 proposals had been received and 199 shortlisted, many of which reinforced the Board's policies and provided some helpful and interesting ideas for lobbying. CLG had been asked to respond to these proposals and the LGA was expecting a response before the Easter break.

Members were concerned whether the response would still be applicable after a General Election, but were assured that many of the proposals did not require primary legislation to be brought into force. The Board asked that the shortlist be circulated to them.

Decision:

- The Board **noted** the report.

Action:

- Circulate shortlisted information to members

Clive Harris

7. Update on other Board business

Members received Chair's reports to the LGAX for November and December 2009.

Concerns were raised with regard to approval of the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant to councils – applications had been oversubscribed but members were assured that a large number of councils had received funding – and that a list of all successful applications would be circulated.

Cllr Mike Haines provided an update on the National Planning Forum meeting which he attended in December. He had also represented the Board at a joint Environment/Regeneration & Transport Board meeting with LACORS in December to discuss air quality and informed members that Cassandra Harrison (LACORS) had provided a written report of the meeting. Members were invited to request a copy for information.

Cllr Linda Thomas told members that a response had been received from the Minister, Hilary Benn which followed up discussions held at the World Without Waste roundtable discussion that took place in October 2009. It was agreed to circulate the letter.

Cllr Andrew Gravells asked that specific LGA information and breaking news be targeted to relevant Council Cabinet Members. Councillor Porter agreed that he would raise this with the LGA Executive.

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Decision:

- The Board **noted** the updates.

Action:

- Circulate response from Hilary Benn MP **Clive Harris**
- Interested Members to contact Officers for a report of the LACORS meeting **Cassandra Harrison**

8. Decisions and Actions from Previous meeting

The note of the last meeting was approved, subject to the following:

- Members were still awaiting confirmation of dates for both the Private Sector Renting Sub-Group and the Flooding issues meetings.

Action:

- Update members on progress of meeting arrangements

Fatima de Abreu