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LGA Environment Board

Item 5

26 May 2010

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## Update on other Board Business

### Summary

- Cllr Gary Porter's reports to the LGA Executive for March to May (**attached**)
- Members' Feedback
- Any other Business

### Recommendations

Members to note the reports.

Members are invited to feedback the outcomes of recent Outside Body and other meetings.

Contact Officer: Fatima de Abreu  
Telephone: 020 7664 3136  
E-mail: fatima.deabreu@lga.gov.uk

## **Environment Board - report from Cllr Gary Porter (Chairman) March 2010**

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### **Greening Communities (Environment)**

#### ***Energy and Climate Change***

- The LGA submitted their response to the Government's consultation on permitted development rights for small scale renewable energy and low carbon technologies including electric vehicles. The LGA has also been participating in events on the consultation to extend the 'Carbon Emissions Reduction Target', CERT, which obliges energy suppliers to invest in home energy efficiency measures. The closing date for responses to the consultation is **12<sup>th</sup> March** and a draft response will be circulated shortly.
- Written evidence was submitted by the LGA to the EEC Select Committee Fuel Poverty Inquiry, outlining the important role that local authorities play in improving home energy efficiency, improving the take up of benefits and reducing fuel poverty. The LGA also attended the quarterly Fuel Poverty Advisory Group meeting, which discussed how carbon reduction policies could affect fuel bills disproportionately for the fuel poor. This was accompanied by a meeting with David Kidney MP to discuss fuel poverty and the inquiry in more detail. Abigail Burrige, Senior Policy Officer, spoke at the London and South East regional National Energy Association meeting, and spoke in detail with several local authorities about the current challenges in reducing fuel poverty at the local level.
- The LGA held its annual Climate Change conference in Liverpool on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> January. A full report on the event will be available shortly.
- The LGA has been maintaining its pressure to ensure that the roll out of smart meters includes meaningful in-home energy displays, and that any roll out programme would take into account local energy and climate change policies. The LGA has participated in several Ofgem workshops exploring the delivery of smart meters across the country. The on-going lobbying from the LGA has resulted in some positive results for local authorities in the Government's announcement of the Household Energy Management Strategy. Energy suppliers will be obliged to work with local authorities to ensure that the delivery of home energy efficiency measures can take place effectively and efficiently at a local level.

### **Sustainable Communities (housing and planning)**

#### ***Housing***

- On 22 February, Cllr Linda Thomas (Vice-Chair, Environment Board) chaired an LGA national conference entitled *Lifetime Neighbourhoods – Vision into Reality* which focussed on the importance of ensuring adequate appropriate housing is available in future to relieve the forecasted unsustainable pressures of an ageing population on homes, health and social care services. The conference was attended by around 100 senior elected members, officers and key stakeholders.
- CLG confirmed that they would issue some information to councils on the *Housing Revenue Account, self financing offer* during February. Information would include

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work on the model they will use to allow councils to assume their debt level to move to self financing. However, the work that CLG has done to date is not complete and the information that we will get will not give councils a full picture of their final financial position. Information that will not form part of the offer includes capital grant allocation and other funding that will be subject to the Spending Review process. The offer to the sector has been delayed, and CLG have confirmed that this consultation and negotiation on the final offer will now not be concluded before the election and before the start of the purdah period. CLG have indicated that it is likely to be a minimum of a 12 week consultation and this will mean that it will run over and beyond the election period.

- In January the Rt. Hon John Healey MP wrote an article for First magazine, which set out his vision for housing finance reform. The Chair of the LGA, Cllr Dame Margaret Eaton has written to the Minister to outline the key expectations of our member councils which will enable them to make sensible judgements about the proposals he would outline in the offer.

### ***National Infrastructure Planning***

- The Rt. Hon John Healey MP has replied to Councillor Dame Margaret Eaton restating the government's position that the new planning arrangements for national infrastructure projects do not impose new burdens on local government – the government's case is that they are de-regulatory and cost saving. He does however ask for more details on our point that there is new policy on infrastructure renewal itself which creates new costs. We will be taking this up with CLG and relevant government departments.
- On 26 March, a free event by the LGA and CLG has been arranged on the council role in the planning process for national infrastructure projects. It provides an opportunity for councils to discuss their role in the new process and meet experts from the private sector.

### ***LGA / LACORS seminar on Private Rented Sector***

- Members of the Environment Board and LACORS Board held a joint meeting on 3rd March to discuss issues and challenges for local government in relation to the Private Rented Sector. The group agreed that as a significant and growing part of the housing provision, with the poorest standards of decency, it is essential that councils have access to the posers and tools they need to influence standards of private rented housing to protect tenants and ensure it can better help meet local housing need. Following the seminar, the group will report back with recommendations to the board and to LACORS.

### ***Conservative Green paper on Planning***

- The LGA is working with the Planning Officers' society in response to the Conservatives' green paper on planning which was published on 22nd February. The LGA / POS work will provide an analysis of the proposals and their proposed implementation.

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## **Environment Board - report from Cllr Gary Porter (Chairman) April 2010**

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### **Waste and Landfill Issues**

#### ***Board Visit to Integra North Energy Recovery Facility***

- On 17<sup>th</sup> March, the LGA's Environment Board meeting took place at Integra North Energy Recovery Facility in Chineham, Basingstoke. Members had the opportunity to hear both industry and council's perspective on alternatives to landfill, as well as taking in a visit to North Basingstoke to witness new development and examples of regeneration. To see a note of the meeting, go to:  
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelid=9436006>

#### ***Responses on Waste Issues***

- On 18<sup>th</sup> March, I responded to the publication of Defra consultations proposing a ban on certain materials (including food waste) from landfill and meeting EU landfill diversion targets.
- On 3<sup>rd</sup> April, I responded to Government plans to increase taxes on throwing away rubbish which will cost council taxpayers an estimated £110m. The Local Government Association is calling for an open and fair way of returning money raised by landfill tax to local councils so that council taxpayers do not pick up the bill. <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelid=10400993>

### **Greening Communities (Environment)**

#### ***Energy and Climate Change***

- The Environment Board's Environment Advisory Group met on 22<sup>nd</sup> March, and received a presentation from Warren Hatter (Ripple PRD) which outlined several policy options for councils to consider as the methodology informing local carbon frameworks is developed. The input of the Strategic Core Group will be important in identifying the key issues for the Board post-election.

### **Sustainable Communities (housing and planning)**

#### ***National Infrastructure***

- On 26<sup>th</sup> March, Cllr Mike Haines chaired a free event – National infrastructure, local impact – the role of councils in the decision-making about major projects, held in partnership with Bircham Dyson Bell LLB and the Department of Communities and Local Government. Nearly 100 delegates and speakers heard from Sir Michael Pitt, Chair of the Infrastructure Planning Commission, legal and policy experts, and representatives of major infrastructure companies, such as EDF and National Grid.