

## The Decentralisation and Localism Bill

### Summary

At the Board meeting, members will have the opportunity to discuss the forthcoming Decentralisation and Localism Bill and the LGA Group's future lobbying work on this. The Bill is intended to: *devolve greater powers to councils and local communities, specifically to give communities much more control over housing and planning decisions.*

This note gives some background on the current status of the Bill, some of the key provisions that have already been announced, and the Group's view on the overall emphasis of the Bill and specific provisions on localism, planning and housing.

### Recommendations

- Members to note report and use its contents to inform discussion at the meeting

### Action

- Officers to shape lobbying priorities and strategies in light of members' views.

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## The Decentralisation and Localism Bill

### Summary

1. The Government announced, in the Queen's Speech on 25<sup>th</sup> May, that they will be introducing a Decentralisation and Localism Bill. The Bill, which will be introduced after the summer recess: "*will devolve greater powers to councils and local communities, specifically to give communities much more control over housing and planning decisions.*" The Government will be consulting on several areas of the Bill before a draft is finalised. This process will be taking place over summer.

### Localism

2. The Bill will have several provisions taking forward the Government's decentralisation agenda. Some provisions that have already been announced are:
  - a power of general competence for councils;
  - greater financial autonomy for councils and community groups;
  - abolition of the Standards Board regime and CAA;
  - the power for residents to instigate local referendums on any local issue and the power to veto excessive council tax increases;
  - the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (replacing Regional Development Agencies) to promote economic development.

### Planning

3. The Bill will take forward the Government's radical reform of the planning system. Measures already announced are:
  - the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategies and the Infrastructure Planning Commission; and
  - the return of decision-making powers on housing and planning to local councils.
  - The Board will have a full discussion of this aspect of the Bill under Item 3.

### Housing

4. The Bill will look to ending top-down government by giving new powers to local councils, communities, and neighbourhoods. Already announced are:
  - the phasing out of the ring-fencing of grants to local government; and
  - a review of the Housing Revenue Account.

## **LGA Group View**

5. We will be working with CLG officials on the drafting of the Bill to help ensure that we will be fully able to support it once it reaches Parliament. We have requested speedy clarification on some of the key reforms that have been suggested by the Government, particularly around planning and will be continuing to discuss this with ministers and officials. We believe it is important that the consolidated national framework be based on an understanding of the needs of and impact on local economies and strictly limited to national projects. It is important that an end to regional targets is accompanied by powers for councils to coordinate funding and strategically plan collectively at the sub-regional level.

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