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LGA Environment Board

Item 6

5 July 2010

Update on other Board Business

Summary

- Cllr Gary Porter's reports to the LGA Executive for June (**attached**)
- Report from the Inland Flood Risk Management Group (**Annex A**)
- Members' Feedback
- Any other Business
 - *A clean bill of health* - LACORS publication for Members (**Annex B**)

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) June 2010

Incoming Government

The key priorities of the Government, deficit reduction, centralisation and being "the greenest Government ever" will all have a major impact on environment and housing issues. Already we are seeing:

- reductions in central government spending, with £230m reduction in HCA capital investment in the current financial year, with a further £610m understood to be at risk;
- some initial announcements on planning, notably the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies;
- an undertaking in the Coalition Document to "review the unfair Housing Revenue Account";
- incoming DECC Ministers want to make rapid progress on the Green Deal. Meetings are booked or being sought with all the relevant Ministers.

Lord Best Commission on Councils' role in Housing Development

In April, the LGA and CLG jointly asked Lord Richard Best, to chair a commission looking at the potential for a stronger role for councils in supporting new housing development. Other members of the commission are drawn from across the housing and local government sector. The commission aims to:

- Examine the extent to which councils have the tools to enable and facilitate delivery of house building (directly or through others) within their current powers and responsibilities. As part of this, identify barriers to delivery and explore the incentives for delivery.
- Assess what councils are achieving in leading on, delivering, or working in partnership to bring about new housing of all tenures and how this could develop in future.
- Consider ways of using local authority assets and land to deliver house building in partnership with the private sector, housing associations and local people themselves.
- Advise how councils' knowledge and skills for delivering and facilitating development can be strengthened further.

The commission team aims to report to CLG and LGA with recommendations in September 2010.

Flood Risk Management

To support a new lead role for authorities in managing local flood risk, and to gather opinions from around the country in line with Getting Closer, the LGA has set up a new Inland Flood Risk Management Group, linked to the LGA Environment Board and chaired by Cllr Mike Haines. Information will be available on the Community of Practice on Flood Risk: <http://www.communities.idea.gov.uk/c/2050378/home.do>

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LGA Group response to Consultation on PPS: Planning for a low carbon future in a changing climate

The LGA Group has submitted a response to the government's consultation on a new draft Planning Policy Statement (PPS) supplement to PPS1 entitled 'Planning for a Low Carbon Future in a Changing Climate'. This consultation document brings together and updates the previous Planning and Climate Change supplement to PPS1 with the 2004 PPS22 on Renewable Energy into a new draft PPS which will become a consolidated supplement to PPS1. In summary we welcome the focus upon renewable energy sharing opportunities for local authorities and the increased prominence of adaptation policy. However, we have also highlighted a number of inconsistencies within the draft policy and have offered solutions we deem to be fairer to both local authorities and prospective developers. The LGA group has also underscored its commitment to work with government to develop a collaborative approach to planning policy and delivery.

Local Carbon Frameworks: An event was held on the 25th and 26th May in Birmingham with the nine local carbon framework research pilots. The event demonstrated the extent to which councils across the country are already addressing climate change and enabling their residents to reduce their emissions and fuel bills. The councils also set out how they could improve their work on climate change, if they were given greater freedoms and flexibilities, better access to data, and more support on determining the most cost effective actions. We are awaiting confirmation from Government on the continuation of their support to enable the research pilot councils to continue developing a realistic and workable framework that other councils can use to account for, fund and deliver local carbon reduction programmes. We will be having a session on local carbon frameworks at the LGA Annual Conference in July.

We have submitted our response to the Government consultation on **allowing local authorities to sell electricity**. Currently, councils are unable to take full advantage of the new feed-in tariff scheme for renewables, because they cannot claim the export tariff element, only the use-tariff. This is because the Local Government Act 1976 prohibits councils from selling electricity when generated without the generation of heat – from, for example, wind turbines and solar panels. This only applies to councils, so businesses, housing associations and other public bodies can be paid for the energy they export to the grid, but not councils. This is completely unacceptable, so the LGA is strongly recommending that the situation is addressed as soon as possible.

Environment Board Meeting held 26 May

The LGA's Environment Board discussed the LGA Group's offer from local government to the new Coalition. A note of the meeting is at:

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelId=11275504>

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Tel: 020 7664 3136 Email: fatima.deabreu@lga.gov.uk

A clean bill of health: how councils' environmental protection work improves health

Pollution is a significant factor in ill health – it reduces life expectancy and it perpetuates health inequalities. Councils and their partners play a crucial role in reducing pollution, but further progress is needed to protect communities. A new publication for councillors from LACORS, “A clean bill of health”, builds on these points. Evidence shows, for example, that air pollution can shorten a person’s life by about 10 years, which is as hazardous as being severely obese or smoking for a lifetime. Research also shows that around 35,000 people in the UK died prematurely in 2005 as a result of exposure to air pollution – comparable to the annual number of deaths obesity contributes to. Chemicals and other pollutants in industrial land can also seriously harm adults, children and unborn babies.

The publication makes the point that tackling pollution should be considered alongside other important local health issues such as reducing smoking, healthy eating and exercise. It summarises, for councillors and other local decision makers, the health effects of pollution and what councils and their partners can do to improve the health of their communities. It also gives examples of councils that have put pollution reduction to improve health into practice and what else can be done. The document is available here:

<http://www.lacors.gov.uk/lacors/ViewDocument.aspx?docID=23824&docType=C>