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Update on other Board Business

Purpose of report

Members to note the following:

- Inland Flood Risk Management Report – March 2011 (**attached**)
- February and March Chair's Reports to Councillors Forum (**attached**)
- Members' Feedback
- Any other Business

Recommendation

Members to note the reports.

Action

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

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LGA Inland Flood Risk Management Group report March 2011

Introduction

1. The LGA Inland Flood Risk Management Group was set up to advise the Environment and Housing Programme Board on flood risk management issues, particularly in relation to new local authority responsibilities for managing inland flood risk. Most of the provisions in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, giving significant new powers to unitaries and counties, come into force this April.

Group membership and meetings

2. The Group is chaired by Cllr Mike Haines and consists of 4 Environment Board members (one from each political group); two members from each English region and Wales and a member from LGA's Coastal Issues SIG. It is supported by an Officer Network, chaired by Richard Wills (Lincs CC) and links to a wider network of members and officers.
3. All member representatives are now in place and quarterly meetings have been arranged. The most recent meeting was held on 20 January 2011.

Recent work and recommendations

4. The Inland Group has now completed two major pieces of work:
 - 4.1 LG Group responses to flood risk management consultations on:
 - 4.2 National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England
 - 4.3 Future Funding for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management
 - 4.4 draft statutory guidance for Co-operation between Authorities and requesting Information
 - 4.5 draft statutory guidance on Local Flood Authorities' contribution to sustainable development
5. At recent meetings the Inland Group discussed the consultation proposals with Defra and EA colleagues and then developed their response to these important consultations on behalf of the LG Group. The Board endorsed the Inland Group's recommended responses and these were submitted to EA and Defra on 15 February. The responses are available on the LGA website at:
<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageld=16941564&path=18370.18281.13892&activeId=16941949>

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Preliminary Framework for the Local Strategy:

6. The Inland Group has developed a work programme of projects to help support LLFAs in their new role and raise the political priority of flood risk management.
7. An Officer Network is assisting the Inland Group by managing the projects. The first project in the work programme – a Framework for the Local Strategy - has now been completed.
8. The Inland Group had identified the need to develop guidance for Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) to help them undertake a key new duty commencing in April 2011, namely to produce a Local Strategy for Flood Risk Management. There is no official guidance planned by Defra and members considered that informal guidance and case studies were urgently needed by LLFAs.
9. Within a very tight timetable, a project team was set up, a project brief and timetable agreed and work undertaken to draft a Framework document. The aim was to provide information on all the elements that will need to be included in a local strategy, as well as advice and case study examples to help all LLFAs in developing their local strategy.
10. Although the Framework has been developed for LLFAs in England (the Floods legislation and requirements on authorities differ slightly in Wales), advisers from WLGA have been involved in the project and will be able to use the Framework to help inform guidance that WLGA and WAG will develop for Welsh authorities.
11. The project team was assisted by colleagues in EA and Defra.
12. The Framework is now complete and following a recommendation to lead members of the Board from the Inland Group, it has been endorsed by the Board on behalf of the LG Group.
13. The Framework has been published as a living document and is available as a PDF, allowing it to be updated as required. It is available on the LGA website: <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageld=18298>

Future Work Programme and meetings

14. The Inland Group has agreed 3 additional projects for the Officers Network to develop work on. Officers have now set up a sub group for each of the work strands, with officers allocated to each. They have prioritised these in the following order:
 - 14.1 Collaboration and joint working to address capacity issues
 - 14.2 Evidence on funding requirements of the lead role
 - 14.3 Promoting a consistent level of service

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15. The next meetings of the Inland FRM Group will take place on 2 June and 28 September. It is planned to open the September meeting to a wider member and officer audience and for this to be the first annual meeting of the Inland Group. The Floods Minister, Richard Benyon, has been invited to attend one of these meetings.

National Partners Group on Flooding

16. The LGA also has a stakeholder group on flooding which meets on the same day as the Inland FRM Group and which many of the Inland Group members also attend. Board members are very welcome to attend the Partners Group to discuss flood issues with key national partners. Please let Sarah Monaghan know if you would like to be invited to future meetings: sarah.monaghan@local.gov.uk .

Cllr Mike Haines, Chair of the LGA Inland Flood Risk Management Group

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**Environment & Housing Programme Board – report from
Cllr Gary Porter – February 2011**

The Localism Bill

1. I gave oral evidence to the newly-formed Localism Bill Committee on 25 January. During the session I laid out the LGA's overarching message - that many of the ideas behind the Bill are to be warmly welcomed, but they have been bound up in red tape and complexity in the drafting, something which was not the intention of Ministers. I also discussed the real financial issues in the Bill, the EU fines clauses and the HRA reforms which need to be looked at urgently by the Committee.

Waste Collection

2. The Board's Vice-Chair, Cllr Clyde Loakes [responded](#) to Bob Neill's letter to Leaders about waste collection at the beginning of January. Cllr Loakes emphasised that reports on councils' performance on waste indicated issues affecting a small number of very local areas in a minority of authorities and urged Ministers strongly to ensure that future public comments on this issue are evidence based and based on constructive dialogue with the sector. Meanwhile the LGA will continue to argue the sector's position with Government through the current review of waste policy, which is being led by Caroline Spelman, and which we welcome. This should be the mechanism through which a sensible and evidence-based national framework for council decision-making on waste as a local service should be agreed. We are very grateful for the advice councils are making to evidencing and arguing our positions, and I would urge you to contact us at any time with your concerns and ideas.

Board Meeting with the National Housing Federation

3. My board colleagues, Mayor Dorothy Thornhill, Cllr Andrew Gravells and Cllr Tony Newman, met with Members of the National Housing Federation on 27 January to discuss the current policy landscape and its implications for housing associations and local authorities. There were many positive discussions about what housing associations and councils can do together at a local level to respond to the opportunities and risks of the rapidly changing policy landscape, and what the NHF and LGA can do together to support their memberships in working effectively together locally, through our influencing activity nationally, and the advice and support we offer our member organisations.

Multi agency waste crime meeting - 26 January

4. Cllr Clyde Loakes, vice-chair of the Environment & Housing Programme Board, jointly chaired a meeting with the Environment Agency, LG Group, Defra and other local authority representatives in Waltham Forest on 26 January. The key outcomes from the meeting were around identifying steps that need to be put in place to ensure most effective use of our collective efforts aimed at preventing and tackling waste crime.

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Royal Town Planning Institute's General Assembly

5. Cllr Mike Haines, Deputy Chair, LG Group Environment & Housing Programme Board, spoke at the Royal Town Planning Institute's General Assembly on the the LG Group view on planning aspects of the localism bill. Cllr Haines stressed that local plans should remain the key documents through which a clear strategic view is set out for each planning authority area, embodying the ideas local people have generated at the neighbourhood level, and reflecting what needs to happen to the physical environment to achieve local sustainable development objectives.

Cllr Mike Haines meeting with Defra Minister Lord Henley

6. Cllr Haines met Lord Henley on 26 January to discuss adaptation to climate change, the waste review and littering from vehicles. Cllr Haines and the Minister agreed on the importance of close dialogue between central and local government to ensure continued priority and progress. On the Waste Review, the Minister acknowledged the contribution of the LG Group and his gratitude for the help it has provided to Defra. On littering from vehicles, where LG Group is keen to close the legal loophole that is hampering councils' ability to tackle this problem, Cllr Haines asked the Minister to clarify Defra's intentions regarding a possible amendment to the Localism Bill. The Minister was not able to confirm yet if the Government would table an amendment to allow councils to be able to prosecute the registered keeper of a vehicle where litter had been seen being thrown from the vehicle. Cllr Haines confirmed that if Government did not table such an amendment, then the LG Group would lobby to get this tabled.

Flood Risk Management

7. I wrote to the Floods Minister Richard Benyon before Christmas to raise members concerns that a new statutory duty on Lead Local Flood Authorities to submit Preliminary Flood Risk Assessments by June had a very challenging timetable and to request flexibility about the deadlines.
8. I am pleased to report that the Minister has listened to our members concerns and has agreed a helpful flexibility on the submission process. The assessments will still need to be submitted by 22nd June, but to avoid rushing the process to ensure Scrutiny Committee sessions and sign off happens before submission, authorities can now, if necessary, submit first but hold Committee sessions and seek approval later. This may be particularly helpful for authorities holding elections in May. We believe this additional flexibility will be useful to authorities and help ensure they have the time to produce the comprehensive assessments they want to deliver.

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**Environment & Housing Programme Board – report from
Cllr Gary Porter – March 2011**

Environment & Housing Programme Board away day

1. On 2 February, Cllr Clyde Loakes co-hosted a meeting with representatives from the LG Group Environment & Housing Programme Board and the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities in Stockport Town Hall. Cllrs Mike Haine and David Smith also attended on behalf of the Board. The event was successful and well-attended by several Members and officers throughout the country. The Greater Manchester Environment Commission shared good practice about what they are doing to make energy and climate part of the wider economic strategy they are developing through their Local Enterprise Partnership, and what they are learning as one of the Local Carbon Framework Pilots. There were productive discussions with Members from around the country about the Group's work, talking to Government about policy, and supporting the sector with know-how and development programmes.

Meetings with regional representatives

2. As part of the Group's commitment to strengthening further the involvement of all interested elected Members in the development of its activities, the Board has decided to get out into the regions to inform the wider membership on the issues we are currently working on and more importantly to seek views on what we should be working on in the future. Board members have been attending regional meetings over the last month (and will continue to throughout the next year) – so far I have attended the South East England Councils meeting on 18 February and Cllr David Smith attended the East Midlands Councils meeting on the same date.

Cllr Haines meeting with the Nappy Alliance

3. Cllr Mike Haines met with representatives of the Nappy Alliance on the 26 January to discuss Defra's review of waste policy, the Decentralisation and Localism Bill and how these will impact on waste prevention with particular reference to re-usable nappies. It was agreed that both sides would continue to keep the other informed of significant policy developments in this area with the possibility of sharing best practise as and when appropriate.

National campaign to reducing litter

4. Councillor Clyde Loakes attended a stakeholder meeting in February to help shape Defra and Keep Britain Tidy's national work focused on litter reduction. Councils in England spent around £860 million last year on clearing up litter. At a time when councils are having to provide vital services with much less money, this more than ever seems an unnecessary expense. A national campaign – "Love Where You Live" – is planned to help change attitudes to and behaviour on littering and it is hoped councils will play a key part. Councillor Loakes emphasised a number of points to help make the campaign as effective as possible such as ensuring that the campaign is relevant to all places including those with high levels of enviro-crime, and forging the right links with broader

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initiatives such as “Community Payback” and “Eco-schools”. The public campaign is planned to go live in the summer.

Meeting with Lord Henley

5. Following Cllr Mike Haines’ meeting with Lord Henley on 26 January to discuss adaptation to climate change, the waste review, littering from vehicles and Sustainable Drainage, Cllr Haines met the Minister again the following week when he visited Dawlish Warren to look at the need to adapt national infrastructure to future climate impacts.
6. The Minister followed up these meetings with a letter. He stressed the key role of local government in embedding adaptation across service delivery and influencing the development of the Government’s National Adaptation Programme. The Minister also stressed the need to build a strong relationship between central and local government and to continue the close dialogue with the LG Group.

Housing Finance Reform conference- seizing the moment - 17 February 2011

7. On 17 February over 60 Members and professionals came together at the LGA one-day conference, *Housing finance reform: seizing the moment*. I gave a speech to delegates on the case for change and the LGA’s campaigning work, informed by member councils, that has been so important in getting us to where we are today. Cllr Porter stressed the need to continue lobbying hard on the Localism Bill to remove some significant government proposals that run counter to the principles of self-financing. The imposition of a borrowing cap, the power to reopen the settlement at a later date, and the continued pooling of 75% of Right to Buy receipts were flagged as key issues that the LGA would be challenging. Delegates were in clear agreement that these issues needed to be addressed.

Any other business

Revision of the WEEE Directive

Members of the European Parliament voted on February 3 on the revision of the WEEE Directive, supporting the LGA's calls for the extension of producer responsibility to cover kerbside collections. The Council of the European Union - Member States – will likely issue their position on March 14; an **oral update** will be given. It is likely that negotiations will continue to a second reading starting in July with final agreement possible by the end of the year.

Biowaste consultation

The LGA responded at the end of January to the European Commission's consultation on biowaste targets, highlighting that mandatory targets for separate collection should not be forced on councils which are best placed to make decisions on biowaste management. In its response, the UK Government also emphasised that local authorities are best placed to work out the most appropriate recycling options to meet local needs. The European Commission has acknowledged these arguments and will address this issue in its future impact assessment looking at the appropriateness of setting targets.

Cllr Mike Haines meeting with Defra Minister Lord Henley

Following Cllr Haines' meeting with Lord Henley on 26 January to discuss adaptation to climate change, the waste review and littering from vehicles, Cllr Haines received the letter attached as **Appendix A** from Lord Henley which follows up on the work the Government has done to address these issues.