

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Environment & Housing Programme Board
Date and time: 2pm, Monday 27 June 2011
Venue: Crowne Plaza Hotel, Birmingham City Centre

Attendance

Cllr:

Position	Councillor	Council
Chairman	Gary Porter	South Holland DC
Vice chair	Clyde Loakes	Waltham Forest LB
Deputy chair	Dorothy Thornhill	Watford BC
Deputy chair	Mike Haines	Teignbridge DC
Members	Peter Britcliffe	Hyndburn BC
	Andrew Gravells	Gloucestershire CC/ Gloucester City
	Clare Whelan	Lambeth LB
	David Smith	Lichfield DC
	Derek Bateman	Cheshire West & Chester
	Tony Newman	Croydon LB
	Ed Turner	Oxford City
	Paula Baker	Basingstoke & Deane BC
Substitutes	Tim Moore	Liverpool City
	Richard Williams	Southampton City
Apologies	Jason Stacey	Ealing LB
	Roger Symonds	Bath and NE Somerset Council
In attendance	Sandie Dunne	LG Group
	Clive Harris	LG Group
	Caroline Green	LG Group
	Lara Adekoya	LG Group
	Jo Allchurch	LG Group
	Tina Holland	LG Group

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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1 Councils' leadership role in housing – discussion with the Homes and Communities Agency and feedback from the LG Group housing seminars

Pat Ritchie, Chief Executive and Jim Bennett, Head of Corporate Strategy, Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), attended the meeting to update members of the work of the HCA, their priority areas of work, and discuss how the HCA and the LG Group can work together to support councils on current issues and priorities for housing.

Merron Simpson and Lee Shostak also attended the meeting to present the outcomes of the recent LG Group seminars *Changing the way we do housing*.

Pat discussed the new focus for the HCA following spending cuts and the government's housing reform agenda, and its change of focus from investing to enabling and delivery (although 3 investment programmes, including the Affordable Homes Programme, will be continued), with a specific focus on supporting councils in their new role in determining local housing needs and achieving local housing growth. To this end, the HCA has protected funding for local teams despite significant spending reductions, to help ensure that localities are supported appropriately.

Members discussed challenges and priorities for the sector and raised the following key points:

- Members discussed the housing reforms in the Localism Bill, particularly the 'Community Right to Build' and stressed that the HCA should provide a more streamlined bidding process for smaller schemes and also a more simplified grant system. Members also added that it would be helpful for the HCA to support councils not just in increasing housing supply, but also helping councils ensure that existing and new stock is appropriate and sustainable for their local communities.
- Members discussed the HCA's recently published Development and Land Disposal Strategy and stressed

that more focus should be given to supporting councils to act in more commercially focussed ways with developers. In particular, Members suggested that the HCA should do some further work with RSLs to this end.

- Members welcomed the work the HCA has done with local authorities to develop Local Investment Plans. However, Members noted that some LIPs would need to be revised in the light of the proposed abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies in the Localism Bill.
- Members expressed concern that councils are at a disadvantage compared with housing associations in bidding for funding under the Affordable Rent model. Members asked for further information at a later stage about how many local authorities have been engaged in determining successful bids and whether the funding decisions are based on Local Infrastructure Plans.
- Some members expressed concern about the pressures on councils to supply affordable housing, particularly in light of the new provision for social landlords to charge tenants up to 80% of market rent.
- Members stressed that it will be important for the HCA to engage with the new Health and Wellbeing Boards to make the case for investment in housing as a means of driving up health outcomes.

Merron Simpson and Lee Shostak discussed their findings from the five seminars they facilitated on behalf of the LG Group throughout March to consider with local authority representatives the opportunities arising from the government's planned reforms of housing and planning, and how the changes will affect the strategic leadership role of local authorities.

In discussion, Members stressed that only a strong strategic housing function in local authorities will enable councils to adapt to the fundamental reforms to housing policy made by the Government. Following the discussion of the key challenges and priorities for the sector, it was agreed that the LG Group and the HCA should explore the potential for collaboration in supporting councils in providing strong leadership through their strategic housing role.

Decision

Members noted the report and recommended that further work should be undertaken by LG Group and HCA to scope out how a collaborative approach could deliver a strong leadership role

on planning and housing, and what a support offer to councils should seek to address.

Action

- Officers to develop proposals for a programme of support to councils in delivering an enhanced leadership role in housing.

2 Waste Review update

Clive Harris introduced this item which provides members with a summary of the contents of Defra's review of waste policy that was published on 14 June.

In discussion, Members made the following comments:

- The LG Group's lobbying of politicians and officials has resulted in significant successes for the sector in the final review response, most notably that frequency of collection will continue to be decided by local authorities.
- Members endorsed the proposed further work set out in report, and said that further detail would need to be fleshed out in due course.
- Members suggested that further lobbying work should be done by the LG Group to ensure that local government is given better enforcement powers for tackling fly-tipping.

Decision

*Members **noted** the contents of the report.*

3 EU Update

Sandie Dunne introduced this report which discusses two EU proposals which are being developed and require a Local Government Group stance to inform lobbying activity.

Members discussed the suggested overarching strategic principles which could be applied to the issues, commenting specifically that although climate change should be addressed by all public bodies, EU proposals should not add additional administrative or financial burdens to councils.

Decision

Members **endorsed** the principles set out in the report.

Action

- Officers to use the principles as the basis for policy positions when lobbying on these EU proposals.

4 Adaptation to Climate Change

Jo Allchurch introduced this item which updates Members on LG Group work on Adaptation to Climate Change and new arrangements for local/ central dialogue on Adaptation.

Members discussed possible routes for inputting to the newly formed Local Adaptation Advisory Panel, and agreed that although input from elected councillors was essential, this should not be done directly through the Environment and Housing Programme Board.

Decision

Members **agreed** to use the Inland Flood Risk Management Group to discuss adaptation (every 6 or 12 months) to help develop LG Group policy positions and provide recommendations to LAAP.

5 Fire Safety Guidance for Purpose Built Blocks of Flats – Project Update

Decision

Members **noted** the update and draft guidance.

6 Getting Closer

Decision

Members **noted** the report which summarises the Getting Closer process and the next steps for the new organisation.

7 Update on other Board Business

Decision

Members **noted** the report.



Members placed on record their thanks to Gary Porter for his chairmanship of the Environment and Housing Programme Board and congratulated him on his election as Leader of the LGA Conservative Group. The Board also thanked other Members for whom this would be the last meeting; in particular, Cllr Mike Haines and Cllr Derek Bateman for their longstanding service to environment and housing issues for local government.