

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Environment & Housing Programme Board
Date and time: 11am, Wednesday 16 November 2011
Venue: Local Government House, Smith Square, London

Attendance:

Position	Councillor	Council
Chairman	David Parsons CBE	Leicestershire CC
Vice chair	Clyde Loakes	Waltham Forest LB
Deputy chair	Keith House	Eastleigh BC
Members	Frances Roden	Stroud DC
	Eddy Poll	Lincolnshire CC
	Tony Newman	Croydon LB
	Ed Turner	Oxford City
	Tim Moore	Liverpool City
	Tracey Simpson-Laing	City of York
	Terry Stacy JP MBE	Islington LB
	Andrew Gravells	Gloucestershire CC/Gloucester City
Substitutes	Peter Hardy	South Bucks DC
	Angela Lawrence	Vale of White Horse DC
Apologies	Andrew Cooper	Kirklees MBC
	Simon Galton	Leicestershire CC
	Clare Whelan	Lambeth LB
	Mike Jones	Cheshire West and Chester Council
In attendance	Cllr Andrew Proctor	Broadland DC
	Phil Kirby	Broadland DC
	Sandie Dunne	LGA
	Abigail Burrige	LGA
	Clarissa Corbisiero	LGA
	Sarah Monaghan	LGA
	Romily Beard	LGA
	Alice Lester	PAS
	Richard Crawley	PAS

1 Meeting the Housing Challenge

The Chairman welcomed Angela Brady (President, Royal Institute of British Architects), Steve Partridge (Director of Financial Policy and Development, Chartered Institute of Housing) and Liz Peace (Chief Executive, British Property Federation) to the meeting.

Angela Brady discussed the work which RIBA is doing to promote improved design and quality of new homes. Angela set this in the context of a housing shortage and the significant reforms happening in the housing sector, but stressed that better quality housing should be an essential factor in the design of all new housing development. She also emphasised space as an important factor, as existing research shows that newly built homes aren't big enough, which has been shown to impact on basic lifestyle needs and can have significant impacts on health, educational attainment and family relationships. Angela also suggested that any new ways to change and use land intelligently would be most welcome to the sector, particularly as land supply in itself is such a key issue for developers.

Angela suggested that the LGA should submit evidence to the RIBA's Future Homes Commission and work with RIBA to define what guidance would work best for local authorities in the next housing context for councils.

Steve Partridge discussed the Government's forthcoming Housing Strategy, which would bring together the several strands of housing policy into a comprehensive document. However, Steve pointed out that this strategy would not go beyond 2015 and stressed that it was imperative for all those in the sector to look beyond this date to help identify some of the long-term objectives and challenges.

Steve informed members that the strategy was expected to have three broad themes around Affordability, Quality and Stability based on Localism as a principle and brings together strands around planning reform, HRA reform, funding for personal support, developments in the green agenda, moves to flexible tenure, incentives to build, funding for supply of new affordable housing and welfare reform.

Steve added that for the wider LA strategic role, while we know about planning reform and delivery of tenancy strategies, there may also be issues around possible growth in the private rented sector and a need to think through the associated LA enforcement role.

Liz Peace discussed the role of the private rented sector, and the growth which this sector has experienced over recent years, which is now at the same level as social housing. Liz outlined some key issues for the next few years which include finding ways of attracting larger investors into the market to help drive quality and standards up for tenants. She also suggested that local authorities could play a helpful role in this by using land more flexibly for private rented sector housing.

In discussion, Members outlined their key concerns about some of the policy changes, proposals and initiatives in the housing sector and made some key points:

- Members endorsed the LGA's lobbying approach that councils should retain 100 per cent of the proceeds from sales under the right to buy scheme following Government's announcement to increase discounts.
- Members expressed concern on the proposals to increase the discount on Right to Buy which could significantly affect future sustainability of self financing if the number of sales increase and councils are not allowed to retain enough of the receipt to invest in replacement stock.
- Members stressed the potential impact of inflation on rents which could significantly increase the debt that councils are required to take on. Members stressed that this uncertainty will be challenging for councils in business planning as they will not be sure of their income streams, which could ultimately feed into higher borrowing costs.
- Members stressed the growth of the role of the private rented sector in providing housing, and suggested strengthening links between the LGA and the sector through groups such as the Private Sector Housing forum.
- Members noted the importance of building strong links between the National Housing Federation and the Housing Ombudsman.

The Chair thanked the speakers for attending the meeting.

Decision

Members noted the discussion.

Action

- LGA to submit evidence to RIBA's Future Homes Commission.

**Clarissa
Corbisiero**

2 The National Planning Policy Framework in practice

The Chairman welcomed Cllr Andrew Proctor (Leader) and Phil

Kirby (Chief Executive) of Broadland District Council to the meeting.

Clarissa Corbisiero introduced this report, and updated Members on the headlines in the LGA's response to the draft NPPF including ensuring appropriate transition arrangements to the new system for councils, and ensuring that the three pillars of sustainability are balanced throughout the document to ensure local flexibility and decision making. Clarissa informed Members that since the LGA submitted its response, Government has agreed that councils need 'appropriate' time to put in place their local plans. The Planning Advisory Service updated Members on the progress which PAS has made on delivering its business plan and the areas of focus for the service over the next 6 months of the year's programme.

Cllr Proctor gave a presentation on Broadland DC's joint Core Strategy with Norwich Council and South Norfolk DC. This work has given them Growth Point Status and access to additional funding (£14m from CLG), and enabled them to share resources and save money. This strategy has been worked across political boundaries because of a clear desire for growth in all 3 councils.

In discussion Members stressed that it was important to ensure that policy and legislation was clearly expressed and focused and that this would mitigate the need for additional guidance. Members requested that officers should undertake detailed work to develop a set of principles on planning guidance and the role of the LGA in supporting the sector to respond to the planning reform agenda. Members also suggested that further work should be done with Parish Councils, particularly around neighbourhood planning.

Decision

Members noted the discussion.

Action

- Circulate contact details for the 4 agencies being sponsored by DCLG to support communities preparing neighbourhood plans.
- Submit a further report to the Board on developing sector led planning guidance.
- Officers to make contact with the National Association of Local Councils to share information on neighbourhood planning.

**Clarissa
Corbisiero**

**Clarissa
Corbisiero**

3 Update on the new Nottingham Declaration and the Green Deal

Abigail Burridge introduced this report and updated Members on the Memorandum of Understanding with the Department for Energy and Climate Change, the development of a new Nottingham Declaration, the consultation on the Feed-In Tariffs Scheme and the progress on the Green Deal.

Members expressed concern about DECC's proposals to reduce the generation tariff for a single installation of solar panels by 12 December, before the end of the consultation. Members also stated that the expectation that councils should deliver their projects and register them with Ofgem in 6 weeks is not acceptable, and supported LGA lobbying to include councils in schemes acknowledged for their local community benefits.

Members indicated concern that LGA and NHF representations to DECC on the affordable warmth element of the new Energy Company Obligation had not been sufficiently addressed as the Green Deal consultation has been delayed.

Decision

*Members **agreed** that the LGA should respond corporately to the Green Deal consultation.*

Action

- Circulate Cllr Parsons' letter to Greg Barker on the Green Deal.
- Invite a Minister from the Department for Energy and Climate Change to the next meeting of the Board.
- Continue to update the Board on progress against the MoU.

**Sarah
Monaghan**

**Abigail
Burridge**

**Abigail
Burridge**

4 Update on other Board Business

Sandie Dunne introduced this report and updated the Board on the Board programme plan, EU draft Energy Efficiency Directive, Localism Bill achievements, metal theft and waste collection.

Decision

*Members **noted** the updates.*

5 Note of last meeting

Decision

Members noted the minutes of the last meeting.

Action

- The Board will write to Grant Shapps MP to reinforce the role councils can play in increasing the supply of housing. **Clarissa Corbisiero**