

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Environment and Housing Board
Date and time: 11.00, Wednesday 20 March 2013
Venue: Westminster Suite

Attendance:

Position	Councillor	Council
Chairman	Mike Jones	Cheshire West and Cheshire UA
Vice chair	Clyde Loakes	Waltham Forest LB
Deputy chairs	Andrew Cooper	Kirklees MBC
	Keith House	Eastleigh BC
Members	Frances Roden	Stroud DC
	Clare Whelan	Lambeth LB
	Eddy Poll	Lincolnshire CC
	Jim Harker	Northamptonshire CC
	Geoffrey Theobald OBE	Brighton & Hove City Council
	Tony Newman	Croydon LB
	Ed Turner	Oxford City Council
	Tim Moore	Liverpool City Council
	Gwen Hassall	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
	Barbara Cannon	Allerdale BC
	Tony Trent (substitute)	Borough of Poole
	Cllr Chris Pillai (substitute)	Calderdale MBC
Apologies	Terry Stacy JP MBE	Islington LB
	Simon Galton	Leicestershire CC
	Eric Allen	Sutton LB
	Brian Williams	Shropshire Council
In attendance	Paul Raynes	LGA
	Caroline Green	LGA
	Rose Doran	LGA
	Piali DasGupta	LGA
	Dan McCartney	LGA
	Tom Coales	LGA
	Liam Paul	LGA

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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1. **Growth and Infrastructure Bill**

Members received a short verbal update on LGA influencing work and key areas where LGA amendments have been accepted.

In discussion the following points were made:

- *LGA Lobbying Focus* – Members thanked officers and fellow Members of the Board for their work on the Bill and noted the success of LGA representations regarding Clause 1 (prior notification for authorities deemed to be performing ‘poorly’), Clause 6 (this clause which allows developers to appeal to PINs to renegotiate S.106 agreements will be ‘sunsetting’ and expire in 2016), vigorous defence of clauses reforming the town and village green representation and the insertion of a new clause on Local Development Orders.
- Further briefings on the Bill reiterate opposition to elements of the Bill which will not benefit growth and highlight that the LGA has suggested improvements that have not been taken on board.
- *Lifting the cap on councils’ borrowing for social housing* – Members of the Board highlighted the Government’s continued opposition to lifting the housing borrowing cap as a missed opportunity for growth and that it should remain a lobbying priority. Officers responded that this issue would continue to be pursued through the LGA’s work ahead of the forthcoming Spending Round and thereafter.

Decision

Members of the Board **agreed** that the LGA should continue to engage with Parliamentarians in pursuing the amendments and new clauses laid out in the report.

Actions

Tom Coales

2. **Welfare Reform: housing implications**

Members of the Board received a verbal summary of the report on the housing implications of welfare reform which had been requested at the previous meeting.

The Chair highlighted that responsibility for setting the LGA’s policy position on Welfare rested with the LGA’s Leadership Board and Finance Panel. The Chairman and officers would ensure that the Board’s discussions will be fed back to these bodies when they consider the item. Members of the Board welcomed the fact that Welfare Reform is one of the LGA’s five top priorities within the Business Plan for the 2013-14 financial year.

In the ensuing discussion Board Members made a number of points which are summarised below:

- *New burdens on councils* – It was felt that administering the new benefits system and helping claimants adjust will create a new

resource and financial burden on councils. Certainty is needed from Government regarding the future of relevant grants and reimbursements for the costs of establishing the new system.

- *Review of the impact of the Government's policies* – Members discussed the potential and appropriate timing for a review of welfare reform policies.
- *Principles, costs and savings of the reforms* – Members discussed the potential impact the reforms will have on achieving savings and on local economies.
- *Social housing size criteria* – The reforms will impact on the type of housing needed and adaptations to existing council housing stock will be necessary in many areas to meet demand.
- *Cross-cutting housing issues* – Licensing and enforcement regimes for Homes of Multiple Occupancy (HMOs), and the regulatory system for letting agents and estate agents will be important in managing the housing impacts of Welfare Reform.

Decisions

Actions

The Members of the Board:

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| 1) Noted the LGA's welfare reform programme and supported the proposed research programme to quantify the impact of the reforms; | Rose Doran |
| 2) Requested that officers produce a summary of Board Members' contributions to the debate at the meeting, which can be used to inform discussion of Welfare Reform with the LGA Finance Panel; | Rose Doran |
| 3) Agreed that existing information on the Government Direct Payment and the 8 LGA supported pilots will be circulated to Board Members and Lead Members will consider whether or not to hold an extra-ordinary meeting of the Board based on this data; and | Rose Doran /
Lead Members |
| 4) Agreed that officers will organise a meeting involving the Chairman of the finance and E & H Boards with other senior LGA members to discuss issues arising from out of area placements and local government's response. | Clarissa
Corbisiero |

3. **Waste Judicial Review and Local Waste Review update**

Waste Judicial Review

Members noted a brief verbal update on the Judicial Review and thanked all officers and Members who had contributed to a successful outcome in the case.

Members noted that work remained for the LGA and local authorities to ensure that DEFRA's forthcoming guidance for councils and the MRF Code of Practice reflected the Judgment. Local flexibility should be retained in order that councils can make recycling as simple as possible for their residents. Members also commented upon the value of working in partnership with DEFRA to achieve the successful outcome.

Local Waste Review

Cllr Clyde Loakes gave a verbal update on the second meeting of the Challenge Group, which he had chaired, noting that the event retained

the participation of a large number of organisations across the waste management system who contributed their views and expertise. The following key themes were emerging from the meetings and call for evidence:

- The highly significant existing and potential role of the sector in generating growth, and also jobs across a wide skill range.
- Local determination of waste services is effective.
- Funding
- The need for fit for purpose regulation and enforcement
- Infrastructure

Members made the following key points in discussion:

- Councils have a significant opportunities to maximise the value they extract from waste streams such as Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE);
- The Review must challenge and examine both local authorities and the rest of the waste management sector;
- The importance of waste reduction and the waste hierarchy should be reflected in the review;
- The review should investigate methods of reducing waste miles and the associated benefits in terms of jobs to local economies;

Cllr Loakes added that recommendations of the Waste Review would be pertinent to both local authorities, central government and others in the sector. Certain recommendations would be suitable for local government to implement itself and others would require agreement with partners or government. The Chair added that the Waste Review was an example of the LGA providing strong leadership for the waste management sector.

Decisions

Actions

The Members of the Board:

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Noted the work of LGA officers and Members in support of the Waste Judicial Review which helped achieve a significant victory for local government; 2) Agreed to write to DEFRA Ministers highlighting that the forthcoming guidance on Waste Regulations should reflect the outcomes of the Judicial Review and that officers should work with DEFRA to inform the guidance; 3) Agreed that officers should draft a response to the MRF code of practice; and 4) Noted the progress of the Waste Review and requested to be kept informed as the project continues. | <p>Dan McCartney</p> <p>Dan McCartney</p> <p>Dan McCartney</p> |
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4. Locally-led action on fuel poverty

Members received a short verbal summary of the report and then discussed the recommendations for the LGA's future work programme in this area.

There followed a short discussion during which the following key points were made by Members of the Board:

- Councils' need for clarity on procurement in regards to collective switching.
- Not all those classified as living in Fuel Poverty are in receipt of benefits – many are in employment. The design of the affordable warmth element of the ECO scheme is limited to those on benefits and thus large numbers of those in need will be ineligible.
- Future work on Fuel Poverty by LGA officers should include the experience and schemes underway in smaller district councils, in addition to the large-scale schemes underway in metropolitan areas.
- Local authorities should be given equal access to funding mechanisms such as the Energy Companies Obligation (ECO) brokerage scheme.
- DECC should rationalise the grants system for local authorities to reduce the amount of officer time spent bidding for a number of relatively small amounts of funding.

Decisions

Action

Members of the Board:

- 1) **agreed** the key themes underpinning the LGA's work to support locally-led action on Fuel Poverty, supported the recommendations to be directed towards Government and proposals set out in the report; and Piali DasGupta
- 2) **requested** that officers update the Board on the LGA's offer of support to councils on collective switching LGA Productivity Teams

5. Tackling long term empty homes

Members noted existing powers for bringing empty homes back into use and the LGA's analysis of their effectiveness. Members' made the following comments:

- Incremental improvements to existing legal mechanisms are not the only way of tackling the majority of empty homes and LGA's position should build on what is working at a local level;
- The existence and ability for councils to issue an Empty Dwelling Management Order was a deterrent;
- Taxation and other economic penalties can be effective in deterring home owners from keeping homes empty;
- A proportion of the homes which are listed in national statistics will be empty as a result of probate/will disputes.

Decision

Members of the Board **agreed** that the LGA should develop proposals on Compulsory Purchase Order powers and Empty Dwelling Management Orders outlined in the report, building on councils' good practice and experiences of what approaches are effective.

**Clarissa
Corbisiero**

6. Environment and Housing update paper

Members noted the LGA's policy positions and lobbying work on the items contained within the update paper. The revised governance arrangements for the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) were also noted. The LGA will be represented by Chairman of the Environment and Housing Board and one further member of the Board.

Decisions

Members of the Board **noted** the updates within the report.

7. Any other business

None.

8. Decisions and actions from previous meeting

Members **noted** and **approved** the notes of the last meeting