

Note of decisions taken and actions required

Title: Environment and Housing Board
Date and time: 11.00, Wednesday 14 May 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	Keith House	Eastleigh BC
Members	Clare Whelan	Lambeth LB
	Frances Roden	Stroud DC
	Eric Allen	Sutton LB
	Geoffrey Theobald OBE	Brighton & Hove City Council
	Brian Williams (substitute)	Shropshire Council
	Rock Feilding-Mellen	Kensington and Chelsea RB
	Ed Turner	Oxford City Council
	Tim Moore	Liverpool City Council
	Barbara Cannon	Allerdale BC
	Gwen Hassall	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
	Clare Pritchard	Hyndburn BC
	Terry Stacy JP MBE	Islington LB
	Simon Galton	Leicestershire CC
	Peter Jones	Babergh DC
Apologies	Andrew Cooper	Kirklees MBC
	Jim Harker	Northamptonshire CC
	Tony Newman	Croydon LB
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. **Housing**

The Board Chairman welcomed Mark Prisk MP, the Housing Minister, to the meeting. In his introductory remarks, the Minister highlighted that the spending round will reflect the continued focus on deficit reduction and inevitable pressure on departmental budgets. He emphasised the need to use what grants there are available to lever in other sources of funding for housing and invited the sector's experience and examples of good practice to better utilise existing housing stock.

As well as increasing the broader supply of housing, the Minister's focus was on addressing the housing needs of the elderly as the ageing population had growing implications for housing stock.

The Minister noted the LGA's Spending Round submission on Housing and expressed an interest in continuing discussions with the LGA on investment in housing investment.

In the ensuing debate the following themes were discussed:

Encouraging growth of smaller sites – Government has focused on unblocking major sites and members highlighted opportunities to unlock smaller sites that could bring forward housing more quickly than larger sites. The Minister said he would be willing to discuss this further.

Implications of welfare reforms for size of housing - Members highlighted that welfare reforms were likely to lead to increased need for smaller units but that accessing HCA funding for smaller units was problematic, The Minister acknowledged these comments and added that it was important that HCA funding should support the type of housing needed.

HRA borrowing cap – Members highlighted the case for lifting the HRA borrowing cap and asked if consideration would be given to increased flexibility as part of City Deals. The Minister replied that DCLG were engaged with discussions following the Heseltine report and second wave of City Deals.

Local Housing Allowance rates –The Minister agreed to engage with Oxford City and Brighton and Hove councils on issues they raised in relation to Local Housing Allowance rates.

Out of area placements – Members discussed the potential increased need for some councils to look beyond their boundaries to house people. The Minister recognised that this would be an issue for some authorities. The Board Chairman highlighted that a meeting was being arranged to discuss these issues further with LGA members.

Housing benefit Direct Payment pilots – members highlighted the potential problems arising from increased non-payment and rent arrears as a result of the introduction of Direct Payments. The Minister commended the work of the pilot areas. He was encouraged by initial

results regarding non-payment and arrears but indicated that DWP and DCLG are open to flexibility for the small percentage of people who will be unable to manage paying their rent.

Housing for an older society – The Minister explained that he and the Planning Minister, Nick Boles MP were interested in housing models that could provide for an ageing population. He highlighted that this would require collaboration between the health, care, finance and design sectors and invited the LGA to participate in the discussions.

Unimplemented permissions – Members highlighted the need to focus on bringing forward development on sites with unimplemented planning permissions (highlighting LGA research on the issue). In response the Minister highlighted the governments programmes aiming to address access to finance and potential to explore new sources of funding such as pension funds to help unlock schemes.

Decision

Action

The Members of the Board **agreed** that the Environment and Housing Board Chairman should write to Mark Prisk to highlight the case for flexibility on the borrowing cap and outline areas for further follow up.

**Caroline Green,
Clarissa
Corbisiero**

2. Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013

Members received a short verbal update on LGA lobbying on the bill and amendments that were accepted prior to the Bill receiving Royal Assent.

There was widespread concern amongst the Members of the Board that Government measures to liberalise the Permitted Development regime (to be enacted through secondary legislation) which make it easier to change a property's use from commercial to residential would have a negative impact on high streets.

Members highlighted that there was a lack of clarity from DCLG as to why certain areas which applied for exemptions from the changes were successful and others were not. It was suggested that the LGA should continue to lobby on this issue.

Decisions

Actions

The Members of the Board:

1. **agreed** that a note of meeting with Nick Boles MP to be circulated to whole board;
2. **agreed** that officers should follow up with CLG to seek clarity on how decisions on applications for exemptions from change of use from commercial to residential;
3. **requested** that officers circulate information detailing the number of PINS appeals and their outcomes;
4. **agreed** that the LGA Press lines issued against elements of the changes to Permitted Development and use classes be circulated; and

Caroline Green

**Clarissa
Corbisiero**

**Clarissa
Corbisiero, PAS**

**Caroline Green /
Clarissa
Corbisiero**

5. **requested** that officers collect and collate evidence on the impact of permitted development changes as they emerge.

**Clarissa
Corbisiero**

3. **Local Government Waste Review – emerging findings**

Dan McCartney, Adviser summarised the emerging findings of the Review which were circulated at the meeting.

Members suggested that the Waste Review should include:

- Clear headline recommendations for maximum impact;
- Good practice from across the industry;
- Consideration of over-packaging;
- Clear ways forward for local government, as well as suggestions for the Government and partner organisations;
- Highlight the local government role in waste prevention
- The need to reduce food waste.

Members of the Board were invited to attend the launch of the Local Government Waste review on 04 June.

Decisions

Actions

The Members of the Board **noted** the progress of the Waste Review and **requested** that officers incorporate Members' comments into the final draft of the LGA Local Waste Review.

Dan McCartney

4. **Environment and Housing Board Update**

Members noted the LGA's policy positions and lobbying work on the items contained within the update paper and that officers were investigating options for the continuation of the Gypsy and Travellers planning support, currently delivered by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS).

Members of the Board then put on record their thanks for the work of Eddy Poll in support of the Board and the Inland Flood Risk Management Group.

Decisions

Action

Officers to provide an update on the Gypsy and Traveller support offer.

**Caroline Green
PAS**

5. **Any other business**

None.

6. **Decisions and actions from previous meeting**

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