

## Note of decisions taken and actions required

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**Title:** Environment and Housing Board  
**Date and time:** 11.00, Wednesday 13 November  
**Venue:** Westminster Suite, Local Government House

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**Attendance:**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Council</b>
Chairman	Mike Jones	Cheshire West and Cheshire
Deputy chair	Keith House	Eastleigh BC
Members	Philippa Roe	City of Westminster
	Clare Whelan OBE	LB Lambeth
	Deborah Croney	North Dorset DC
	Jim Harker	Northamptonshire CC
	Tony Newman	LB Croydon
	Ed Turner	Oxford CC
	Tim Moore	Liverpool City Council
	Gwen Hassall	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
	Brenda Arthur	Norwich City Council
	Terry Stacy JP MBE	LB Islington
	John Northcott	Mole Valley DC
Apologies	Clyde Loakes (Vice chair)	Waltham Forest LB
	Andrew Cooper (Deputy Chair)	Kirklees MBC
	Geoffrey Theobald OBE	Brighton and Hove
	Brian Williams	Shropshire
	Barbara Cannon	Allerdale BC
In attendance	Cllr Peter Britcliffe	Hyndburn BC
	Cllr Eric Allen	Sutton LB
	Paul Raynes	LGA
	Caroline Green	LGA
	Clarissa Corbisiero	LGA
	Dan McCartney	LGA
	Jo Allchurch	LGA
	Tom Coales	LGA
	Stephen Service	LGA

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
1.	<p><b>LGA work programme: Private Rented Sector</b></p> <p>In discussion of the proposed work programme on the Private Rented Sector, Members raised the following points: Ensuring the quality, stability and affordability of private rented accommodation is increasingly important and we need a regulatory system that supports and promotes this.</p> <p>Councils play in addressing <b>standards of properties</b> before complaints arise. The board discussed selective and additional licensing and agreed that it was appropriate to relax the centrally set conditions. Members emphasised that it should be up to the local area to decide whether to introduce a licensing regime and if so, what it should cover.</p> <p>It is important to consider the private rented sector within the context of the wider constraints on housing supply.</p> <p>While varying according to the local area, there are a number of problems with the current system covering the private rented sector including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenants are reluctant to report problem landlords and properties to local authorities as they feared losing their home.</li> <li>• The level of fines imposed by the courts on non-compliant landlords were often so minimal as to be an ineffective deterrent.</li> <li>• Letting agents were sometimes inadequately trained and levied excessive charges on tenants.</li> </ul> <p>At the same time, members also stressed that any regulations should not discourage landlords from entering the market. New measures from Government to encourage <b>longer tenancies</b> should be applied flexibly rather than being forced on landlords and promote a negotiation-based approach between property owners and tenants.</p>	
	<p><b>Decision</b></p> <p>Members of the Board <b>agreed</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. that paragraph 6.3 be redrafted to focus on policy development that supports a legal and regulatory system that is fit for purpose.</li> <li>ii. this should include recognition that the system would need to be flexible to respond to local needs and priorities</li> </ol>	<p><b>Action</b></p> <p><b>Clarissa Corbisiero</b></p> <p><b>Clarissa Corbisiero</b></p>

- iii. that the E&H Board are kept informed of work undertaken by Improvement & Innovation Board on an institutionally funded housing offer.

**Clarissa  
Corbisiero**

## 2. Promoting locally-led planning (project update)

Members agreed the proposed work plan set out in the report. Members also discussed planning fees and clarified the established LGA position in support of locally set planning fees.

### Update – debate on the social sector size criteria

Tom Coales gave an overview of the parliamentary debate on the spare room subsidy which took place on 12 November 2013. Members discussed discretionary housing payment and highlighted variance across councils in terms of how DHP money was spent, how quickly authorities were processing DHPs and how the criteria was being applied to tenants.

Officers highlighted that the LGA will be undertaking a survey of councils on how they are using DHP Results will be reported back to the Board.

### Decisions

### Actions

Members of the Board:

- i. requested clarification of whether changes proposed in the parliamentary debate on the spare room subsidy applied to private rented sector accommodation. Officers subsequently confirmed it did not.
- ii. asked for results of survey work on discretionary housing payments to be reported back to the Board early next year.

**Tom Coales**

**Laura Caton**

## 3. Energy Efficiency (emerging findings from first stage project)

Clarissa Corbisiero updated members on the interim findings of the LGA's research into councils' experience of energy efficiency and sought their views on a proposed set of lobbying principles. Members recommended that the research should be used to strengthen the LGA's argument and should be set out in a letter to DECC based on its findings. They asked for some key issues to be emphasised in the final proposals, including:

- the need for councils to be able to access energy efficiency funding in its brokerage role between energy suppliers; and
- low income and vulnerable households as a core group targeted by current policy.

**Decisions**

Members of the Board **agreed** that Lead members should write to DECC Ministers setting out the findings and proposals from the research and that these should be fed into on-going engagement with HMT in advance of the Autumn Statement.

**Actions**

**Clarissa Corbisiero**

4. **Reducing packaging and getting a better deal for taxpayers**

Members noted the report from Dan McCartney and Clarissa Corbisiero and approved the packaging project outlined in the paper. Members emphasised their willingness to engage with WRAP to build on their work to date.

**Decisions**

Members of the Board **agreed** to proceed with the packaging project as outlined in the report.

**Actions**

**Dan McCartney /  
Clarissa Corbisiero**

5. **LGA position on the community benefits associated with shale gas operations (fracking)**

Members approved the proposed position statement and highlighted that decision making on fracking schemes will need be made through the local planning system.

**Decisions**

Members of the Board **agreed** the LGA's revised position and next steps, subject to the LGA position being amended to clearly reflect that local decisions on fracking will be made through the planning system.

**Action**

**Caroline Green**

Members asked that briefings for the following week's House of Lords debate be shared with lead members.

**Tom Coales**

6. **Environment and Housing Board update**

Members noted the LGA's policy positions and lobbying work on the items contained within the update paper.

Members asked for a progress update on invitations to new ministers, and particularly emphasised the importance of engaging with Stephen Williams MP on the Housing Standards review. Officers confirmed that letters had been sent and agreed to follow these up with Ministers' offices to get meeting dates in diaries.

**Decisions**

Members requested that Officers follow up on letters to new ministers to pursue dates for meetings.

**Action**

**Steve Service /  
Caroline Green**

7. **Any other business**

There was no other business.

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

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