

1 October 2015

## **Housing Commission**

### **Purpose of report**

To decide on the direction of an LGA housing commission

### **Summary**

This paper sets out the background for an LGA housing commission which the Board has been requested to undertake by the LGA Leadership Board, and asks members to discuss and agree the objectives and governance for this work.

### **Recommendation**

The Board comment and agree the objectives and governance for an LGA housing commission.

### **Action**

Officers to progress as directed by the Board.

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## **An LGA housing commission**

### **Background**

1. As part of the recent member-led review of governance, the LGA Executive and Leadership Board have been asked to commission work from the LGA Policy Boards where a clear corporate priority has been identified or where an important policy issue straddles more than one Board.
2. At the Leadership Board in July 2015 members were asked to consider the policy priorities for the work programme for the coming year.

### **Work commissioned by the LGA Leadership from Boards**

3. The following cross-cutting areas of work have been commissioned from relevant Boards in 2015-16. Specific Boards have been asked to lead this work as stated below:
  - 3.1. **Housing.** This work is to be led by the Economy, Environment, Housing and Transport Board, with any supporting evidence submitted to EEHT from other relevant Boards. There should also be support from independent expert advisers (to be developed by the Board).
  - 3.2. **Devolution and the future shape of local government.** To be led jointly by the City Regions and People and Places Boards, with any supporting evidence submitted to these Boards from other relevant Boards.
  - 3.3. **Finance.** This work should be commissioned from the Resources Board, with support from all relevant Boards.
  - 3.4. **Promoting health and wellbeing.** This work should be commissioned from the Community Wellbeing Board, with input from other relevant boards and potential wider contributions from think-tanks and other parts of the public sector including the NHS and Public Health England. It can draw on ongoing projects such as tackling Child Sexual Exploitation, Ageing and Skills which already operate across Boards.

### **LGA Leadership Board steers on Housing**

4. The Leadership Board has given a strong steer for the development of the housing commission. The Leadership Board agreed that:

- 4.1. Addressing housing need was a clear priority at LGA conference from all political groups, and that our recent work and evidence base has supported councils' clear role to support residents in this area.
- 4.2. Through leadership of the debate on the Housing Bill we have the opportunity to ensure that a much bigger agenda about place shaping is developed, focusing on issues such as skills, welfare reform, community safety and an aging population that are vital parts of delivering our housing ambition.
- 4.3. Whilst we would commission new research, it has also stated that we should draw on existing work such as Hidden Talents which showed that empowered local government can deliver the local construction skills needed to be able to build the number of new houses required.
- 4.4. The focus on housing needed to be clear, rather than a wider debate on infrastructure in general.

### **Taking the LGA-wide work forward**

5. In 2016, it is intended that we could draw on all of these pieces of work to inform a more forward-looking vision for the future of local public services and the relationship with communities, perhaps for a launch at next year's annual conference.
6. All lead Boards have been asked to detail the scope of the Leadership's request at their first meeting and to report back to the LGA Executive.
7. Members are asked to comment and agree the proposed objectives and governance for the commission, set out below.

### **LGA housing commission, proposed objectives and governance**

8. This short paper proposes early options for the Board to establish an LGA housing commission, requested by the LGA Leadership Board.

#### Objective

9. An LGA housing commission would aim to take forward the role of councils as central to delivering housing critical to resolving a number of public service challenges. It is proposed that the commission build on the findings of recent reviews into the council role in housing, such as the Elphicke-House Review and Lyons Review, focusing on how central and local government can practically deliver on those recommendations in a way that:

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- a. drives housebuilding
- b. shapes prosperous communities and places
- c. boosts employment and social mobility
- d. supports an ageing population.

10. The commission would take a medium-term view incorporating current housing reforms but looking beyond them in making the case for the specific powers, flexibilities and support that councils will need to innovate and deliver.

#### Governance

11. It is proposed that the Board shape and lead the housing commission internally, reporting into the LGA Leadership Board and seeking the input of other Boards as and when it is important to do so, in particular the LGA Resources Board and the LGA Community and Wellbeing Board.

12. The Board would also seek the input from a small network of key expert stakeholders. The expert advisers may not need to meet regularly, but would provide input into the development and activity of the commission. The network would include a representative from local government, the housing association sector, private developers, tenants, third and health sectors, and academia.

#### Process

13. The commission would work towards delivering a final report in spring 2016, the findings of which will be brought together with those of the other commissions into an overarching report for the 2016 LGA Annual Conference.

14. In working towards the final report the commission might seek to undertake and launch specific pieces of research, reports or improvement activity focused around four priority themes, including housebuilding, prosperous communities and places, employment and social mobility, supporting an ageing population.

15. It will be important to engage councils in the development of the commission's activity. As a starting point, the commission would open a call for evidence, inviting short submissions on the key issues for councils, the good practice successfully seeking to address those issues, and the further powers and flexibilities needed to build on those successes.

#### Proposed next steps

16. Subject to member views, it is proposed that the Board lead members shape and agree a work plan to feedback to the Leadership Board.



**Environment, Economy,  
Housing and Transport  
Board**

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