

## Environment and Housing Board – report from Cllr Mike Jones (Chair)

### Flooding

1. With many areas across the country affected by on-going severe weather and flooding, the LGA is working to support our members in affected areas, by promoting the work councils are doing to protect and assist their communities, participating in the national recovery groups convened by government and presenting the case for additional funding to cover the costs of response and repair. Further information can be found on the [Flooding update: resilience and response](#) pages on our website.
2. We have been lobbying on behalf of councils for funding for response and recovery from current floods and investment in flood prevention. We have argued that this will require **reform of the Bellwin scheme and capital funding**. This has been reflected in government announcements of extension and review of the Bellwin scheme and £130 million for recovery and repair next year. I have sought our involvement in the development of an alternative to the Bellwin scheme.
3. On 22 January, I gave [oral evidence](#) to the **Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee** on the Christmas flooding incidents. I emphasised councils' immediate support for communities, partnership working, reform of the Bellwin scheme and future funding needs for flood defences.
4. The LGA has had significant coverage in the **national media** highlighting the work of councils up and down the country in minimising the disruption caused by flooding. I have given interviews to Sky News and BBC Radio 5 Live and received coverage in the Daily Express, Mail and Times.
5. In December, I wrote to Defra Minister, Dan Rogerson MP to raise councils' serious concerns about proposals to implement new duties for Lead Local Flood Authorities on **surface water drainage systems (SuDS)**. We have been urging the Department to reconsider its proposal to impose in April a new burden that is unfunded and that neither councils nor the development industry believe can be implemented in practice by that date. The Minister has since announced that the new duties will not be implemented in April and that Defra will consult on a charging mechanism for funding long-term SuDS maintenance.

### Fracking

6. The Environment and Housing Board's argument for a more generous **community benefit offer** from fracking schemes has received significant coverage in the national media, following media interviews given by the LGA Chairman and myself.
7. The Government have now announced that councils will retain 100% of business rates from fracking, which is something that the Board has argued for. We continue to argue that community benefit schemes should be increased from 1% to 10%. We are seeking involvement with Ministers, MPs, industry and other key stakeholders to take

this forward. We have recently accepted an invitation to join the **All-Party Parliamentary Group on Unconventional Oil and Gas**.

### **Waste**

8. In a meeting with Dan Rogerson MP on 22 January, I highlighted the draft recommendations from the LGA Reuse Commission on **waste prevention** and acknowledged DEFRA's input to date in the work of the Commission. The Minister confirmed that there will be no guidance from the Department on separate waste collection. He indicated that he is keen to see reform in the waste producer responsibility regime by creating greater parity between export and domestic reprocessing of waste materials.

### **Housing**

9. Along with Cllr Terry Stacy, I met with the Chair and Chief Executive of the **National Housing Federation**. We discussed areas where red tape within the Green Deal and ECO can be reduced and agreed to work together to promote a locally led approach. We also agreed to establish a task and finish group to understand the impact of pressures from welfare reform on housing and shared opportunities to increase housing supply.
10. Cllr Ed Turner and I met with Stephen Williams MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 13 January to discuss the **Housing Standards Review**. The minister indicated that the Government is willing to consider a transitional approach for the introduction of any new measures proposed.
11. Cllr Tony Newman attended a **roundtable to discuss the issue of affordable homes** hosted by the Housing Minister, Kris Hopkins MP on 29 January. During the meeting, Cllr Newman highlighted examples of Councils and Housing Associations working collaboratively to mitigate the impacts of welfare reform on tenants. He emphasised the role that Government can play by ensuring that its affordable housing programme is structured to support engagement in advance of bids and ensure that programme bids are aligned with local housing priorities, need and demand.
12. I met **Kris Hopkins MP**, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on 21 January. During the meeting I stressed the inconsistent nature of the decision on the New Homes Bonus which reversed the decision on local pooling of the bonus for all authorities outside London. I also pressed for a simple and quick process to allow local authorities to access the additional £300 million HRA borrowing capacity announced at the Autumn Statement from 2015 and for reforms to the Right to Buy which would enable councils to reinvest the receipts from sales more effectively.

### **Planning**

13. I co-hosted a joint **LGA/British Property Federation networking event** on 22 January. The event brought together senior figures from local government and the development industry with the aim of fostering partnerships that promote growth by

creating an effective and productive route through planning. The event also launched a set of case studies of partnership approaches to positive planning.

14. On 12 February, I co-chaired an event with Local Partnerships and the British Property Federation on **property partnership and assets**. Local authorities and the private sector met to discuss the scope for future partnerships in bringing forward investment and assets to sustain economic recovery.

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