

Department for Communities and Local Government Board Meeting

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 11 September 2012

Present:

- The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Chair)
- The Right Hon Mark Prisk MP – Minister for Housing
- Nick Boles MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
- Brandon Lewis MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
- Baroness Hanham, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

- Sara Weller, Lead Non Executive Board Member
- Diana Brightmore-Armour, Non Executive Board Member
- Stephen Hay, Non Executive Board Member
- Stewart Gilliland, Non Executive Board Member

- Sir Bob Kerslake, Permanent Secretary
- David Prout, Director General
- Sue Higgins, Director General
- Peter Schofield, Director General
- Elizabeth Whatmore, Director

Also Present:

- Shona Dunn, Director, Planning (Item 2)
- Sir Michael Pitt, Chief Exec of PINS (Item 2)
- Jon Rouse, Croydon Council (Item 2)
- Adrian Penfold, Head of Planning at British Land (Item 2)
- Terrie Alafat, Director, Housing (Item 5)
- Helen Booth, National Audit Office (Observer)

Apologies:

- Louise Casey, CB Director General
- Don Foster MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

Secretariat:

- Ryan Wilkins
- David Hill

Item 1: Introduction and matters arising

1. The Secretary of State (SoS) welcomed everyone to the meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

Item 2: Planning Stocktake

2. SoS asked Peter Schofield (PS) to introduce the planning stocktake paper on the current state of play on planning. He also welcomed the external speakers (Sir Michael Pitt, Jon Rouse and Adrian Penfold) to the Board.

3. In introducing the paper, PS said that the last two years had seen substantial reform of the planning system through the new National Planning Policy Framework and Localism Act.
4. There were promising early signs of the impact of these reforms. Councils were taking forward work to get up-to-date plans in place as soon as possible. Planning application approval rates were at a two-year high, and early decisions under the new Framework provided a strong indication that the presumption in favour of sustainable development was working

Item 3: Arms Length Bodies

5. Sue Higgins introduced the paper updating the progress on closure of Departmental ALBs and the current state of play with both the QE2 conference centre and the Fire Service College.
6. It was noted that all milestones were on track and the Department was on track to realise the predicted savings through this work.

Item 4: Performance Paper

7. Elizabeth Whatmore introduced the Performance paper and updated the Board on progress across Whitehall. She noted that the information was produced on the 31 August and hence did not incorporate the items that were covered by the Housing and Planning packages announced recently. These would be reflected in the next update.
8. Elizabeth updated the Board on the key risks (including those that had been added to the corporate risk register).

Item 5: Housing Statement Update

9. Terrie Alafat presented an oral update to the Board on the current position on the Housing statement focusing on key areas:
 - Ensuring delivery of what the Department had already committed to.
 - Identifying next steps for the policies that have been delivered.
10. It was also noted that it was key to ensure that the right resources and skills sets were in place to deliver on these three key areas.
11. It was noted by the Board that it was vital to ensure work covered both creating supply and stimulating demand throughout this work (New Homes Bonus and First Buy were good examples of this).

AoB and Concluding Remarks

12. The Nov draft agenda was approved, with the emphasis of Local Growth as the item for discussion.
13. The Secretary of State thanked attendees for their contribution to the meeting.