

Department for Communities and Local Government Board Meeting

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 19 May 2011

Present:

- The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP – Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Chair)
- The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP - Minister for Housing and Local Government

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

- Sir Bob Kerslake, Permanent Secretary
- Richard McCarthy, Director-General
- David Prout, Director-General
- David Rossington, Acting, Director-General
- Andrew Campbell, Director, Strategy and Programme Team

Secretariat:

- David Hill
- Helen Courtis

Apologies:

- Baroness Hanham, CBE– Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

Introduction

1. The Secretary of State welcomed the Non Executive Directors to the Board meeting. He noted apologies from Baroness Hanham who was unwell.

Item 1: Deregulation

2. David Prout introduced the paper which focused on what DCLG needed to do to ensure it remained a top performing deregulatory department, removed unnecessary regulation and only regulated when absolutely necessary.
3. The Secretary of State invited the Board to comment on the paper. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - Delivering deregulation would require a change in culture and attitudes.
 - The Board noted the volume of deregulation activity underway. The Non Executive Directors challenged the Department to prioritise the areas that would have the biggest impact, such as planning.
 - The Board agreed that the Department should approach deregulation on a sector by sector basis.

Item 2: Housing Growth

4. Richard McCarthy introduced the paper, which set out the main barriers to housing growth and the policy measures to address them. Many of the measures were now at the early implementation stage, bringing with them a series of implementation challenges and risks, on which the Board's views were sought.
5. The Secretary of State invited the Board to comment on the paper. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - The Board recognised the limited influence DCLG has on demand side drivers and agreed it should focus its efforts on supply side drivers.
 - The Department's work on planning and the HCA's work on the release of land for development would play a powerful role. The Prime Minister was now interested in the land release initiative and would ask all Departments to contribute to it.
 - The importance of infrastructure in driving housing growth was discussed.

Item 3: Annual Report

6. The Secretary of State invited the Board to comment on the draft Annual Report. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - The Board was supportive of the much reduced length compared to previous years, and the inclusion of weblinks should readers want more information than the report provided.
 - David Rossington explained that a small number of copies would need to be printed in order to meet Parliamentary rules. The Board agreed that these should be produced at the lowest possible cost.

Item 4: Performance Paper

7. Sir Bob Kerslake and Sara Weller introduced the paper on performance which provided progress on the Structural Reform Plan, an updated Policy Pipeline and a joint assessment of key risks facing the Department. Sara explained that the Non Executive Directors were most concerned with the risks that were dependent on other Departments.
8. The Secretary of State invited the Board to comment on the paper. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - The Board agreed that it would be important to ensure it had early sight on risks that were dependent on other Departments.
 - Welcomed the updated Policy Pipeline. The Secretary of State asked for it to be expanded beyond the Structural Reform Plan activities to include other Departmental policies which were important to the delivery of Ministerial priorities.

Item 5: Concluding remarks

9. The Secretary of State thanked attendees for their contribution to the meeting.