

Department for Communities and Local Government Board Meeting

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 14 July 2011

Present:

- The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP – Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Chair)
- The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP – Minister for Decentralisation
- Bob Neill MP – Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

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

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

Secretariat:

- David Hill
- Helen Courtis

Apologies:

- Baroness Hanham – Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
- Stephen Hay, Non Executive Board Member
- David Rossington, Acting Director-General

Item 1: Introduction and matters arising

1. The Board agreed the minutes of the previous meeting and reviewed the status of previous Board actions.

Item 2: Local Government Resource Review

2. David Prout introduced the paper. It set out proposed changes to the local government finance system which would allow local authorities to keep a significant proportion of their business rates.
3. In discussion, the Board made the following points:
 - It would be important to make clear in the consultation document (and surrounding communications) that the business rate supplement was not subject to change.
 - It was noted that the proposed changes would give a new role to local authorities. Local Enterprise Partnerships would play an important role, both in supporting local authorities to take on the new role, and in generating new businesses.

- It would be important for the review to deliver new growth, and avoid causing displacement through only incentivising existing businesses to move location.

Item 3: Welfare Reform

4. Richard McCarthy introduced the paper, which sought to bring the Board up to date on the Welfare Reform agenda and the work underway across the Department.
5. The Secretary of State invited the Board to comment on the paper. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - The Board noted that it was very difficult to quantitatively predict the impact of reforms, although the potential risks were recognised and would need to be monitored.
 - Risks associated with changing direct payments from landlords to tenants were discussed. Other risks noted by the Board related to execution risks.
 - Some local authorities were considering the potential impact of the reforms in their areas.

Item 4: Enterprise Zones Update

6. The Secretary of State invited the Board to comment on the Enterprise Zones update paper. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - It would be important to set clear expectations and to consistently challenge bids which did not meet the agreed standards.

Item 5: 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 key risks facing the Department. Sara explained that 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:
 - Welcomed the updated Policy Pipeline, which now included non-SRP activities important to the delivery of Ministerial priorities.
 - Sir Bob Kerslake noted that the Firecontrol Report had been completed.
 - The updates from the Audit and Risk Committee and the Nominations and Governance Committee were noted.

Item 6: Concluding remarks

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