

Department for Communities and Local Government Board Meeting

Minutes of the Board meeting held on 26 January 2012

Present:

- The Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP – Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Chair)
- Baroness Hanham – Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State

- Sara Weller, Lead Non Executive Board Member
- Stephen Hay, Non Executive Board Member

- Sir Bob Kerslake, Permanent Secretary
- David Prout, Director-General
- Sue Higgins, Director-General
- Andrew Campbell, Acting Director-General

Apologies:

- Diana Brightmore-Armour, Non Executive Board Member
- Stewart Gilliland, Non Executive Board Member

Secretariat:

- David Hill
- Gillie Severin

Item 1: Introduction and matters arising

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

Item 2: Future Priorities

2. Andrew Campbell introduced the paper which set out the work the Department was doing to set out future priorities over the next 5 years.
3. The Secretary of State invited the Board to comment on the paper. In discussion, the following main points were made:
 - In terms of identifying priorities, the Board agreed it would be important to distinguish between factors in the Department's control and where there were external pressures.
 - Neighbourhoods could become an increasingly important building block and focus for delivery of services and funding.

Item 3: Planning

4. Andrew Campbell introduced the item which covered planning reforms. He noted the Department was now in the implementation phase of the Localism Act and was considering the many responses to the consultation on NPPF.

The package of reforms resulting from all the various measures would be significant. In discussion, the following main points were made:

- The role of PINS would be important in helping capacity and managing expectations at the local level.
- There were examples and case studies where the changes to planning were leading to better outcomes for communities. These should be communicated effectively. .

Item 4: Performance

5. The Board discussed the paper on performance which provided progress on the Structural Reform Plan, an updated Policy Pipeline and key delivery challenges for the Department.
6. The Secretary of State invited the Board to comment on the paper. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - The Board noted that overall the Department was doing well on performance. There were six actions left to be completed between now and the end of March. If there were achieved, 100% of the targets in the SRP for 2011/12 would have been met.
 - The Board agreed to pick up the resource allocation discussion at the March Board.

Item 5: Staff Survey

7. Sue Higgins introduced the item and explained that improving staff engagement was a priority for the year ahead. Recent staff workshop sessions held on several sites, suggested staff were increasingly looking ahead to their future in the Department rather than backwards at the restructuring. The Exec Team priority would be to:
 - Provide clearer information about the Department's role and its priorities
 - Focus on staff learning and development.

AoB and concluding remarks

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