



HILLINGDON
LONDON



Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

Councillors on the Committee

Richard Lewis (Chairman)
Michael White (Vice-Chairman)
Robin Sansarpuri
Raymond Graham
Anita MacDonald
Carol Melvin

Date: WEDNESDAY, 9
FEBRUARY 2011

Time: 7.30 PM

Venue: COMMITTEE ROOM 6 -
CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH
STREET, UXBRIDGE UB8
1UW

**Meeting
Details:** Members of the Public and
Press are welcome to attend
this meeting

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Contact: Khalid Ahmed
Tel: 01895 250833
Fax: 01895 277373
Email: kahmed@hillington.gov.uk

This Agenda is available online at:
<http://modgov.hillingdon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=243&MId=671&Ver=4>

Lloyd White
Head of Democratic Services
London Borough of Hillingdon,
3E/05, Civic Centre, High Street, Uxbridge, UB8 1UW
www.hillingdon.gov.uk



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Policy Overview

About this Committee

This Policy Overview Committee (POC) will undertake reviews in the areas covered by the Deputy Chief Executive's Office and Finance and Resources Directorate and can establish a working party (with another POC if desired) to undertake reviews if, for example, a topic is cross-cutting.

This Policy Overview Committee will consider performance reports and comment on budget and service plan proposals for the Deputy Chief Executive's Office and Finance and Resources Directorate.

The Cabinet Forward Plan is a standing item on the Committee's agenda.

The Committee will not consider call-ins of Executive decisions or investigate individual complaints about the Council's services.

Terms of Reference

The Constitution defines the terms of reference for Policy Overview Committees as:

1. To conduct reviews of policy, services or aspects of service which have either been referred by Cabinet, relate to the Cabinet Forward Plan, or have been chosen by the Committee according to the agreed criteria for selecting such reviews;
2. To monitor the performance of the Council services within their remit (including the management of finances and risk);
3. To comment on the proposed annual service and budget plans for the Council services within their remit before final approval by Cabinet and Council;
4. To consider the Forward Plan and comment as appropriate to the decision-maker on key decisions which relate to services within their remit (before they are taken by the Cabinet);

Policy Overview Committees will not investigate individual complaints.

This Committee performs the Policy Overview role in relation to the following services:

1. human resources and personnel service;
2. e-Government and ICT;
3. democratic services;
4. legal services;
5. the Council's property portfolio, including property and asset acquisition and disposal, and capital programme;
6. corporate finance, including:
 - a. development of a medium term budget strategy;
 - b. scrutiny of the Council's management of its resources;
 - c. reviewing the operation of the Council's financial rules making proposals to the Cabinet and/or Council for their development
7. the Council's overall performance and corporate improvement work particularly in relation to the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Corporate Assessment;
8. economic development and single regeneration budget;
9. the Local Strategic Partnership and Community Strategy;
10. Local Area Agreement;

11. community partnerships and the Council's voluntary sector strategy;
12. corporate aspects of diversity & equalities policy;
13. Best Value;
14. any other cross-cutting portfolios that might be created and any functions not included within the remit of the other Policy Overview Committees.

Agenda

- 1 Apologies
- 2 Declarations of Interest
- 3 Minutes of meeting held on 19 January 2011 (**Pages 1-6**)
- 4 Exclusion of Press and Public
To confirm the items of business marked Part I will be considered in public and that the items marked Part II will be considered in private.
- 5 Budget Proposals 2011/12 - Comments from POCs (**Pages 7-9**)
- 6 Skills and Knowledge Audit (**Pages 11-12**)
- 7 Security Contract
The Facilities Manager will provide Members with an oral update on this item.
- 8 Forward Plan (**Pages 13-18**)
- 9 Work Programme (**Pages 19-45**)

Minutes

**Corporate Services and Partnerships Policy
Overview Committee
Wednesday, 19 January 2011
Meeting held at Committee Room 6 - Civic Centre,
High Street, Uxbridge UB8 1UW**



	<p>Members Present: Councillors Richard Lewis (Chairman), Raymond Graham, Shirley Harper-O'Neill, Anita MacDonald, Robin Sansarpuri and Michael White.</p> <p>Apologies: Councillor Carol Melvin (Councillor Shirley Harper-O'Neill substituting).</p> <p>Officers: Fran Beasley (Deputy Chief Executive), Kevin Byrne (Head of Policy and Performance), Peter Malewicz (Senior Finance Manager – Central Services), Christopher Neale (Director of Finance & Business Services), Paul Whaymand (Head of Accounting) and Khalid Ahmed (Democratic Services Manager).</p>
36.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>None.</p>
37.	<p>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2010</p> <p>Agreed as an accurate record.</p>
38.	<p>EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC</p> <p>It was agreed that all items of business were considered in public.</p>
39.	<p>BUDGET PROPOSALS REPORT FOR CENTRAL SERVICES (DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE (DCEO) AND FINANCE & BUSINESS SERVICES (F & BS)) 2011/12 TO 2014/15</p> <p>The report set out the draft revenue budget and capital programme of Central Services (comprising both Deputy Chief Executive's Office and the Finance & Business Services Directorate) for 2011/12, along with indicative projections for the following three years.</p> <p>Members were informed that the Council was looking to make significant savings of £22m. This saving target included an additional savings target of £2m for Area Based Grant (ABG) funded services which was added following the post election budget when a £3.6m in year cut was imposed by central government, and also included a £3.8m worsening of the estimated formula grant funding for 2011/12 caused by the front loading of savings.</p>

	<p>The total savings for DCEO and F & BS was £4.151m. The development of savings proposals concentrated on more efficient delivery methods and the new operating model and focused on cores services. Front line services were not affected and as far as possible there would be no impact on the residents of the Borough.</p> <p>Deputy Chief Executive's Office</p> <p>The key financial issues were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DECO would continue to play a key role in developing a strong and robust core strategic support function for the Council and providing resources to carry out the transformation that would come out of Business Improvement Delivery (BID) reviews • The outcomes of BID reviews in 2010/11 had resulted in the centralisation and unification of a number of common functions such as the HR function, the Policy and Performance function and the addition of the Audit and Enforcement role • Hillingdon Homes had been incorporated back into the Council which had impacted on a number of services within DCEO • A number of significant restructurings had taken place with HR, Legal Services, the combining of the Registration of Electors and Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages Team under one manager, the combining of the Policy and Performance Teams which had resulted in the deletion of one Head of Service post, and the Corporate Communications Service • The reduction in ABG funding has had a major impact and has required a number of significant reviews of service provision in the Policy and Performance teams and the Learning and Development team • The outcome of the review of voluntary sector grants had resulted in savings proposals of £296k <p>Issues raised by Members were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • London Borough Grants Scheme – The current draft Development and Risk Contingency included this item which could generate a saving of £429k, subject to a majority agreement by the London Councils. Hillingdon would receive a share of this • Restructurings – It was re-iterated that as far as possible front line services to residents would be protected and these restructurings had contributed around £2m in savings. Efficiencies had resulted in 	<p>Action By:</p>
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	<p>better print management, the Training budget etc</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Services and Legal Services – The restructurings in these service areas would not mean a reduction in service. In relation to Democratic Services, Electoral Services and Registrars had merged which had resulted in the loss of a manager post. Staff would be multi-skilled in both service area disciplines which would improve efficiencies • BID – It was difficult for Members to understand this as the structure of Teams and their functions was not fully understood by Members • Health and Safety training savings – Officers reported this was about getting the Council the best outcome at the best price for these courses. Courses now took place when full and to those officers who required the training as a statutory requirement of their post • Corporate Communications - The savings of £220k in this area had resulted from an in-depth review of the team which would result in a number of posts being deleted. The services provided would be rationalised and focus would take place on the top priorities of this Council <p>Finance & Business Services Directorate</p> <p>The key financial issues were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • F & BS would continue to play a key role in developing a strong and robust core strategic support function for the Council and providing resources to carry out the transformation that would come out of Business Improvement Delivery (BID) reviews • The main drivers for delivering efficiencies and savings would be through a planned investment in ICT, which would be developed through the Single Development Plan and a full review of all financial systems and processes • The outcomes of a number of BID reviews had resulted in the centralisation and unification of services such as ICT, Debtors and Creditors, the transfer of Business Services into the Directorate, Procurement and P2P teams and transferring out of the Internal Audit function and Business Support Services team • Hillingdon Homes had been incorporated back into the Council which had impacted on services within the Directorate • Restructurings had taken place within ICT, the Revenues services, Debtors and Creditors, the transferring in of Business Services • The Directorate included the Contact Centre where there was a continuing programme of service migration 	<p>Action By:</p>
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	<p>and the development of more effective and efficient technology to manage the contact the Council had with residents</p> <p>Issues raised by Members were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal Audit transfer to DCEO- This was welcomed and the service also included an Enforcement role which included the Housing Benefit Fraud team • Under the proposed changes to the Revenue Budget 2011/12 for the Directorate “Corporate Items” of £530k was as a result of the non-payment of Local Area Agreement award grants • Savings on the cost of External Audit would deliver a saving of £71k – This was the saving for the first year and Members noted the high costs of the Council’s External Auditors • Retendering of the Insurance contract would deliver Directorate savings of £116k – This was being achieved through better management of the Council’s claims by having higher excesses and by putting aside monies for potential claims. • Cessation of Team Bonus fund – Staff at the Staff Road shows agreed that the Team Bonus fund be discontinued as it was felt that it was inappropriate to award staff bonuses when the Council was having to make huge savings • Contact Centre – Members emphasised the importance of this service to all users and officers reported that the direction of travel of the service was to get service levels better. Progress of performance was monitored. <p>The Chairman thanked officers for their attendance and for answering Member’s questions.</p> <p>Members noted that as part of the budget consultation process, this Committee would consider all other Policy Overview Committee comments on their service areas, at a meeting to be held on 9 February 2011, before submitting all Policy Overview comments on the budget to the Cabinet.</p> <p>Resolved –</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That the budget projections put forward by Central Services be noted. 	<p>Action By:</p>
<p>40.</p>	<p>DRAFT FINAL REPORT OF THIS COMMITTEE’S REVIEW ON THE CENSUS 2011</p> <p>Discussion took place on the Draft Final Report of the review into the Census 2011 and how this Council could contribute to</p>	

43.	<p>TOPICS FOR SECOND MAJOR REVIEW</p> <p>Members were asked to email the Democratic Services Manager with potential topics for this Committee's next major review and if possible a briefing paper be submitted to this Committee's next meeting.</p>	Action By:
44.	<p>CABINET FORWARD PLAN</p> <p>Noted.</p>	
45.	<p>WORK PROGRAMME</p> <p>Noted.</p>	
	<p>Meeting closed at 9.10pm Next meeting: 9 February 2011 at 7.30pm.</p>	

These are the minutes of the above meeting. For more information on any of the resolutions please contact Khalid Ahmed on 01895 250833. Circulation of these minutes is to Councillors, Officers, the Press and Members of the Public.

BUDGET PROPOSALS 2011/12 – COMMENTS FROM POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEES

Contact Officer: Khalid Ahmed
Telephone: 01895 250833

REASON FOR ITEM

To consider the full set of Policy Overview Committee comments on Cabinet's budget proposals, their overall implications and to submit those comments to Cabinet.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

That the Committee:

1. Consider the comments from the other Policy Overview Committees;
2. Seek clarification where necessary and;
3. Submit an agreed set of comments forward to the Cabinet for it to consider alongside its budget proposals.

INFORMATION

As part of the Constitution (Budget and Policy Framework Procedure), Policy Overview Committees have a role to review the Cabinet's draft budget proposals, which were set out at Cabinet on 16 December 2010.

At each Policy Overview Committee in January, consideration was given to reports which provided details of budget proposals relating to the remit of each Policy Overview Committee. Their comments are set out as below:-

Residents' & Environmental Services POC – 18 January 2011 (Planning, Environment and Community Services Group)

The Committee noted the budget projections and combined budget proposals put forward by the Planning, Environment & Community Services Group, within the context of the corporate budgetary position. There were no specific comments.

Corporate Services & Partnerships POC – 19 January 2011 (Finance & Business Services and Deputy Chief Executive's Office Groups)

The Committee noted the budget projections put forward by Central Services. There were no specific comments.

Education & Children's Services POC –26 January 2011 (Education & Children's Services Group)

The Committee made the following comments on the Education and Children's Services budget for consideration:-

1. That the wording 'core offer' and 'additional offer' (see below) be clarified to provide a better understanding of what was being provided as part of these services.

"The Education & Children's Services Group has taken the opportunity to completely rethink how it delivers its overall service to Hillingdon's children and young people. It has applied a phased approach to developing a 'core offer' for services deemed essential, backed by an 'additional offer' of services which support the core services, as many of the core services do not, on their own, ensure child safety. Savings proposals have been developed on a service basis."

2. The Committee highlighted the importance of partnership working if the proposals contained within the budget were to work.
3. The Committee requested that it should be made clear in the report that this was the last stage of a long process to develop the budget proposals being put forward to Cabinet.
4. The Committee asked that the "End of Student Award Function" saving proposal be re-worded for clarity (saving no. 2.3)
5. The Committee requested that relation to the Music Service saving proposal that it contains a description advising that the savings figure referred to does not just come from charging for services (saving no. 5.5)
6. Fees & Charges – the Committee asked that consideration be given to different charges being made for services to residents and non residents as is the case in other departments.
7. The Committee recognised that Hillingdon was one of the few councils increasing funding for its capital projects. The Committee requested that officers seek to ensure that this approach continued given the likely pressures faced in primary schools and in due course in secondary schools.
8. Finally, the Committee recognised the considerable difficulty faced by officers in meeting the current financial situation, which has been forced upon them. The Committee agreed with the approach taken in streamlining administration to improve ways of working and avoiding duplication with schools.

Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

9 February 2011

PART 1 – MEMBERS, PUBLIC & PRESS

Social Services, Health & Housing POC – 27 January 2011 (Adult Social Care, Health & Housing Group)

The Committee noted the budget projections put forward by Adult Social Care Health and Housing and made the following comments for Cabinet to note:

- In relation to Carers, the Committee highlighted (The Authority) should be careful not to inadvertently create other budget pressures by decisions taken (in this area).
- With regards to Personalised Budgets, the Committee noted that ICT (Liquid Logic) teething problems were delaying the Department's progress to role out personal budgets.
- With one of the Committee's major review topics focusing on Assistive Technology, the Committee welcomed the speed at which their work on Assistive Technology was being progressed further by the Leader.
- On the benefits of Partnership working with the PCT, the Committee welcomed the expectation of the PCT working closely with the Council on new budget streams but expressed concern about the respite care one and asked Officers to seek to ensure that this is used by the PCT to enhance support for carers within the Borough.
- When the Committee examined Day Services Provision, it expressed concern that changes to community education could bring an influx of these clients, and this had not been taken account of in the budget figures.
- In relation to Day Centre provision, the Committee noted that some carers had expressed concern about the potential variation in Day Centre numbers especially given the numerous benefits which they brought such as social interaction for service users and respite for carers.
- With regards to Residential respite care provision, the Committee endorsed the officer's recommendation for option A (*continue with 28 nights free residential based respite in any financial year and a flat charge thereafter*) as an interim measure.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Relevant minute extracts from the POCs

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Skills and Knowledge Audit

Contact Officer: Khalid Ahmed
Telephone: 01895 250833

REASON FOR ITEM

To provide Members with an update on the progress made in relation to the Skills and Knowledge Audit as recommended by this Committee's Pandemic Review.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

1. Members note the update by the Officer from Strategic HR and request further information if appropriate.

INFORMATION

1. At a meeting of this Committee held on 11 November 2010, consideration was given to a report which provided Members with progress made in implementing recommendations of recent reviews.
2. In relation to this Committee's review into the Impact of a Pandemic in Hillingdon and Effects on Council Services and the recommendation relating to a skills and knowledge audit, Members asked for further information on the skills and knowledge audit which took place as a result of the Pandemic review.
3. The review had asked that a skills and knowledge audit be undertaken of the Council's workforce to build up a computerised database. This information was to include details about staff who have been vaccinated against the swine flu virus, those who have had swine flu, those with children and childcare responsibilities, those staff who were front line staff and those that come into contact with the public.
4. Members were previously informed that Strategic HR had written to all staff to collect information on staff skills which were not reflected in the duties they performed in their day to day jobs, and which could be called upon in an emergency. The skills audit provided a snapshot of the skills currently held by Council staff. The skills information would allow the emergency management team of the Council to quickly identify staff with appropriate skills to backfill front line staff absences. The data collected was held by Business Support Units and the Civil Protection Team and

was securely stored, in line with relevant data protection rules. It was envisaged that over time the skills information would be electronically stored on Resourcelink or something similar, to enable staff to update their information.

5. At this Committee's meeting held on 19 January 2011 an update was provided which informed Members that a Project Initiation Document was being developed for a Single Development Plan for a 'talent management' system which would include skills and competency management.
6. Members noted this information but in view of the recommendations of the Pandemic review being agreed by Cabinet in December 2009, Members asked that an officer from Strategic HR attend the next meeting of this Committee to provide Members with more detail on the implementation of the Skills and Knowledge audit.

Cabinet Forward Plan

Contact Officer: Khalid Ahmed
Telephone: 01895 250833

REASON FOR ITEM

The Committee is required to consider the Forward Plan and provide Cabinet with any comments it wishes to make before the decision is taken.

OPTIONS OPEN TO THE COMMITTEE

1. Decide to comment on any items coming before Cabinet
2. Decide not to comment on any items coming before Cabinet

INFORMATION

1. The Forward Plan is updated on the 15th of each month. An edited version to include only items relevant to the Committee's remit is attached below. The full version can be found on the front page of the 'Members' Desk' under 'Useful Links'.

SUGGESTED COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

1. Members decide whether to examine any of the reports listed on the Forward Plan at a future meeting.

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The Cabinet Forward Plan

Period of Plan: February 2011 to May 2011 onwards

Ref	Report Title	Advance information	Ward(s)	Report to Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Officer Contact	Consultation	Background Documents	NEW ITEM
ASCH&H = Adult Social Care, Health & Housing; DCEO = Deputy Chief Executive's Office; E&CS = Education & Children's Services; F&R = Finance & Resources; PE&CS = Planning, Environment & Community Services									
CABINET - 17 FEBRUARY 2011									
560	London Boroughs Recruitment Partnership Recruitment Advertising Award	The Council currently uses a contract with Penna Communications to secure Recruitment Advertising and Public Notice services across all media, including online and press. The current contract, secured by the London Boroughs Recruitment Partnership (LBRP) will end on 31st March 2011. The report outlines the council's options in procuring future Recruitment Advertising and Public Notices services.	N/A		Cllr Scott Seaman-Digby	DCEO - Mike Talbot	Corporate Teams and London Boroughs Recruitment Partnership		NEW
566	Business Improvement Delivery	A report to Cabinet to make any necessary decisions on the implementation of the Business Improvement Delivery programme. This programme was launched by the Leader and Chief Executive at the 2009 staff road shows and is aimed at transforming the way the council works.	N/A		Cllr Ray Puddifoot & Cllr Douglas Mills	Chief Executive			NEW
551	Off site answering and processing of Council Tax telephone calls	Cabinet will be requested to enter into a further agreement with Liberata plc to provide telephone answering and processing of Council Tax calls.	N/A		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	F&BS - Rob Smith			
542	Responsible Retailers Initiative	Cabinet will be asked to approve a scheme which gives recognition to those retailers who have committed to trading responsibly.	All		Cllr Douglas Mills	PECS - Ed Shaylor / Sue Pollitt			

Ref	Report Title	Advance information	Ward(s)	Report to Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Officer Contact	Consultation	Background Documents	NEW ITEM
<small>ASCH&H = Adult Social Care, Health & Housing; DCEO = Deputy Chief Executive's Office; E&CS = Education & Children's Services; F&R = Finance & Resources; PE&CS = Planning, Environment & Community Services</small>									
539	Procurement of Building Works at Hayes End Library Site	To accept a tender for the demolition of the existing library and the construction of a new library and 15 one and two bedroom residential flats including external works and parking.	Charville		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	PECS - Chris Mafico			
514	The Council's Budget - Medium Term Financial Forecast 2011/12 - 2014/15	Following consultation, this report will set out the Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF), which includes the draft General Fund reserve budget and capital programme for 2011/12 for recommendation to full Council for approval.	All	24-Feb-11	Cllr Jonathan Bianco	F&BS - Paul Whaymand	Public consultation through the Policy Overview Committee in accordance with the Budget and Policy Framework rules and statutory consultation with business ratepayers	Local government finance settlement information on DCLG website	
SI	Reports from Policy Overview Committees	Major Policy Review recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet as and when completed.	TBC		as appropriate	DCEO - Democratic Services			
SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the council's revenue and capital position.	All		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	F&BS - Paul Whaymand			
CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS - FEBRUARY 2010									
522	Mobile Solutions Contract	The Cabinet Member will be asked to decide whether to extend a contract for mobile voice and data solutions for the Council for a period of 1 year from April 2011.	N/A		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	F&CS - Steve Palmer	Internal	Cabinet Report - March 2009	NEW

Ref	Report Title	Advance information	Ward(s)	Report to Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Officer Contact	Consultation	Background Documents	NEW ITEM
<small>ASCH&H = Adult Social Care, Health & Housing; DCEO = Deputy Chief Executive's Office; E&CS = Education & Children's Services; F&R = Finance & Resources; PE&CS = Planning, Environment & Community Services</small>									
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of decisions each month on standard items - details of these standard items are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	DCEO - Democratic Services	Various	Various	
CABINET - 17 MARCH 2011									
SI	Voluntary Sector Leases Report	Regular report on discounted leases to voluntary sector organisations that benefit residents and the wider community	All		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	PECS - Gregory Morrison			
504	Anti-Fraud Strategy	Cabinet will be asked to agree the Council's Anti-Fraud Strategy	N/A		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	DCEO - Helen Taylor			
CABINET - 14 APRIL 2011									
SI	Reports from Policy Overview Committees	Major Policy Review recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet as and when completed.	TBC		as appropriate	DCEO - Democratic Services			
SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the council's revenue and capital position.	All		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	F&BS - Paul Whaymand			
CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS - APRIL 2011									

Ref	Report Title	Advance information	Ward(s)	Report to Full Council	Cabinet Member(s) Responsible	Officer Contact	Consultation	Background Documents	NEW ITEM
<small>ASCH&H = Adult Social Care, Health & Housing; DCEO = Deputy Chief Executive's Office; E&CS = Education & Children's Services; F&R = Finance & Resources; PE&CS = Planning, Environment & Community Services</small>									
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of decisions each month on standard items - details of these standard items are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	DCEO - Democratic Services	Various	Various	
CABINET - 26 May 2011 (date tbc)									
SI	Reports from Policy Overview Committees	Major Policy Review recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet as and when completed.	TBC		as appropriate	DCEO - Democratic Services			
SI	Monthly Council Budget - monitoring report	The Cabinet receives a monthly report setting out in detail the council's revenue and capital position.	All		Cllr Jonathan Bianco	F&BS - Paul Whaymand			
CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS - MAY 2011									
SI	Standard Items taken each month by the Cabinet Member	Cabinet Members make a number of decisions each month on standard items - details of these standard items are listed at the end of the Forward Plan.	Various		All	DCEO - Democratic Services	Various	Various	

Agenda Item 9

WORK PROGRAMME 2010/2011

Contact Officer: Khalid Ahmed
Telephone: 01895 250833

REASON FOR ITEM

This report is to enable the Committee to review meeting dates and forward plans. This is a standard item at the end of the agenda.

OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

1. To confirm dates for meetings
2. To make suggestions for future working practices and/or reviews.

INFORMATION

Second Review Topic - Localism Bill

As part of this report, Members are also asked to give further consideration to a possible topic for a second review for the POC to undertake.

A possible area which the Committee could consider is around the Localism Bill, particularly in relation to new freedoms and flexibilities for local government and new rights and powers for communities and individuals.

For Members information attached as an appendix to this report is a Plain English Guide to the Localism Bill from the Department of Communities and Local Government .

All meetings to start at 7.30pm

Meetings	Room
22 July 2010	CR 5
7 September 2010	CR 6
13 October 2010	CR 6
11 November 2010	CR 6
20 December 2010*	CR3
19 January 2011	CR 6
9 February 2011**	CR 6

Corporate Services & Partnerships POC 9 February 2011

PART 1 – MEMBERS, PUBLIC & PRESS

16 March 2011	CR 5
20 April 2011	CR 6

* Cancelled meeting

** Date change from 22 February 2011

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Appendix A – Plain English Guide to the Localism Bill from the Department of Communities & Local Government.

Corporate Services & Partnerships POC 9 February 2011

PART 1 – MEMBERS, PUBLIC & PRESS

Corporate Services & Partnerships Policy Overview Committee

2010/11 DRAFT Work Programme

Meeting Date	Item
8 June 2010	Draft Final Report – The Impact of Public Funded Business Support and the Success of New Business Start Up within Hillingdon and Reviewing how the Council could Improve Business to Business Support with the Borough’s Industrial Estates
	Discussion on work programme for 20010/11
	Cabinet Forward Plan

22 July 2010	Performance: Final Updates for 2009/10
	The Year Ahead and Key Performance Indicators linked to Group Plans
	Budget Outturn and Context for 20010/11
	Major Review in 2010/11 - Scoping Report
	Work Programme
	Cabinet Forward Plan

7 September 2010	Major Review in 2010/11 – First Review - Census 2011 – To look at how this Council can contribute to improving the population data for the Borough
	Witness Session 1
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

13 October 2010	Major Reviews in 2010/11 – First Review - Census 2011 – To look at how this Council can contribute to improving the population data for the Borough
	Witness Session 2
	Cabinet Forward Plan

Corporate Services & Partnerships POC 9 February 2011

PART 1 – MEMBERS, PUBLIC & PRESS

	Work Programme
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11 November 2010	Major Reviews in 2010/11 – First Review - Census 2011 – To look at how this Council can contribute to improving the population data for the Borough
	Witness Session 3
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Progress on the implementation of recommendations made by this POC on recent reviews
	Work Programme

19 January 2011	Major Reviews in 2010/11 – First Review - Census 2011 – To look at how this Council can contribute to improving the population data for the Borough - Draft Final Report
	Budget Proposals Report for Deputy Chief Executive's Office and Finance & Business Services Directorate
	Report back on Skills and Knowledge Audit
	Briefing on the Council's Security Contract
	Major Reviews in 2010/11 – Second Review - Possible Topics
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

9 February 2011	Skills and Knowledge Audit
	Security Contract
	Consideration of all POC comments on Budget Proposals for submission to Cabinet
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme – consideration of second review topic

Corporate Services & Partnerships POC 9 February 2011

PART 1 – MEMBERS, PUBLIC & PRESS

16 March 2011	Major Reviews in 2010/11 – Second Review
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

20 April 2011	Major Reviews in 2010/11 – Second Review
	Cabinet Forward Plan
	Work Programme

Corporate Services & Partnerships POC 9 February 2011

PART 1 – MEMBERS, PUBLIC & PRESS

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A plain English guide to the Localism Bill



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Department for Communities and Local Government

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Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at

Communities and Local Government
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU
Telephone: 030 3444 0000

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Foreword

“The time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today.”

The Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, Coalition Agreement, May 2010

For too long, central government has hoarded and concentrated power. Trying to improve people’s lives by imposing decisions, setting targets, and demanding inspections from Whitehall simply doesn’t work. It creates bureaucracy. It leaves no room for adaptation to reflect local circumstances or innovation to deliver services more effectively and at lower cost. And it leaves people feeling “done to” and imposed upon – the very opposite of the sense of participation and involvement on which a healthy democracy thrives.

I have long believed there is a better way of doing things. Eight years ago I wrote a book called *Total Politics* which set out the case for a huge shift in power – from central Whitehall, to local public servants, and from bureaucrats to communities and individuals.

Today, I am proud to be part of a Government putting this vision into practice. We think that the best means of strengthening society is not for central government to try and seize all the power and responsibility for itself. It is to help people and their locally elected representatives to achieve their own ambitions. This is the essence of the Big Society.

We have already begun to pass power back to where it belongs. We are cutting central targets on councils, easing the burden of inspection, and reducing red tape. We are breaking down the barriers that stop councils, local charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups getting things done for themselves.

But we can go a lot further by changing the law. The Localism Bill was published in December 2010. It sets out a series of proposals with the potential to achieve a substantial and lasting shift in power away from central government and towards local people. They include: new freedoms and flexibilities for local government; new rights and powers for communities and individuals; reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective, and reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally.

This document summarises each of the main ideas proposed in the Bill, and explains the overall difference that they could make. I am looking forward to a great debate about them in parliament over the coming months.

I also hope to see a debate in the wider country – among councils, community groups, volunteers, social activists and many more people – about how they can seize the opportunities this historic Bill represents, and use the rights and freedoms it offers to make a difference in their community.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Minister of State for Decentralisation

About this Guide

This document describes the main measures of the Localism Bill under four headings:

- new freedoms and flexibilities for local government
- new rights and powers for communities and individuals
- reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective
- reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally

The proposals described in this document are subject to parliamentary debate. They can only be put into practice when parliament agrees to them. The will be discussed at length by both the House of Commons and the House of Lords. You can read more about how a Bill becomes law on the parliament website

<http://www.parliament.uk/about/how/guides/factsheets/legislation/l1/>

Members of parliament can suggest changes to the Bill. This document describes what the Bill looked like when it was first published in December 2010: it does not reflect any changes that may be made later on.

This document is designed to give an overview only. You can read the Bill and its explanatory notes in full, and follow its progress through parliament, on the parliament website:

<http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2010-11/localism.html>

The document *Decentralisation and the Localism Bill: an essential guide* also gives further background. It explains how the principles that underpin the Localism Bill also inform other government policies:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/decentralisationguide>

New freedoms and flexibility for local government

Local government plays a crucial role in the life of the nation. It is directly responsible for important public services, from street lighting, to social care, to libraries and leisure centres. It makes sure that other services work together effectively for the good of the community. And with councillors elected by and accountable to local people, local government provides democratic leadership.

The Government is committed to passing new powers and freedoms to town halls. We think that power should be exercised at the lowest practical level – close to the people who are affected by decisions, rather than distant from them. Local authorities can do their job best when they have genuine freedom to respond to what local people want, not what they are told to do by central government. In challenging financial times, this freedom is more important than ever, enabling local authorities to innovate and deliver better value for taxpayers' money.

The Localism Bill contains a number of proposals to give local authorities new freedoms and flexibility.

General power of competence

Local authorities' powers and responsibilities are defined by legislation. In simple terms, they can only do what the law says they can. Sometimes councils are wary of doing something new – even if they think it might be a good idea – because they are not sure whether they are allowed to in law, and are concerned about the possibility of being challenged in the courts.

The Government thinks that we need to turn this assumption upside down. Instead of being able to act only where the law says they can, local authorities should be free to do anything – provided they do not break other laws.

The Localism Bill includes a “general power of competence.” It will give local authorities the legal capacity to do anything that an individual can do that is not specifically banned by other laws: they will not, for example, be able to impose new taxes, as other laws make clear they cannot.

The new general power will give councils more freedom to work with others in new ways to drive down costs. It will give them increased confidence to do creative, innovative things to meet local people's needs. Councils have asked for this power because it will help them get on with the job.

Abolition of the Standards Board

Councillors play a crucial role in local life. The people who elect them have the right to expect the highest standards of behaviour. The Government thinks it is important to have safeguards to prevent the abuse of power and misuse

of public money. Currently, all local authorities must, by law, have a standards committee to oversee the behaviour of their councillors and receive complaints. A central body, the Standards Board for England, regulates each of these committees.

In practice, however, this system of safeguards is ineffective. It is too easy for people to put forward ill-founded complaints about councillors' conduct. Lengthy debates about petty complaints or deliberately harmful accusations can undermine people's faith in local democracy and put them off standing for public office.

In the Localism Bill, the Government will abolish the Standards Board regime. Instead, it will become a criminal offence for councillors to deliberately withhold or misrepresent a personal interest. This means that councils will not be obliged to spend time and money investigating trivial complaints, while councillors involved in corruption and misconduct will face appropriately serious sanctions. This will provide a more effective safeguard against unacceptable behaviour.

Clarifying the rules on predetermination

In parallel with the abolition of the Standards Board, the Government intends to use the Localism Bill to clarify the rules on "predetermination." These rules were developed to ensure that councillors came to council discussions – on, for example, planning applications – with an open mind. In practice, however, these rules have been interpreted in such a way as to reduce the quality of local debate and stifle valid discussion. In some cases councillors have been warned off doing such things as campaigning, talking with constituents, or publicly expressing views on local issues, for fear of being accused of bias or facing legal challenge.

The Localism Bill will make it clear that it is proper for councillors to play an active part in local discussions, and that they should not be liable to legal challenge as a result. This will help them better represent their constituents and enrich local democratic debate. People can elect their councillor confident in the knowledge that they will be able to act on the issues they care about and have campaigned on.

Directly elected mayors

Almost every major city in the world has a powerful executive mayor. Evidence suggests that mayors can provide visible local leadership, strengthen economic growth, and boost democratic engagement. There are currently only 12 elected mayors in England. The Government thinks that a new generation of elected mayors with wide-ranging responsibilities and powers could raise the profile of English cities and strengthen local democracy.

The Localism Bill will give more cities the opportunity to decide whether they want a mayor. After the Bill has been passed, the Government intends to make the council leaders in 12 cities "shadow mayors." This will give local people an insight into what it is like to be governed by a mayor. Each city will

then hold a referendum on local Election Day in May 2012 to decide whether to have an elected mayor for the long term. For areas that vote in favour, mayoral elections will then be held at the same time as local elections in May 2013. People in other areas of the country will be able to use existing laws to call for their own referendum on whether to have an elected mayor.

London

The Localism Bill will pass greater powers over housing and regeneration to local democratically elected representatives in London. It will empower the democratically elected Mayor to carry on housing investment activities currently carried out by the Homes and Communities Agency, and the economic development work done by the London Development Agency.

New rights and powers for communities

Greater freedom and flexibilities for local government are vital for achieving the shift in power the Government wants to see. But, on their own, these measures will not be enough. Government alone does not make great places to live, people do: people who look out for their neighbours, who take pride in their street and get involved – from the retired teacher who volunteers in the village shop once a month, to the social entrepreneur who runs the nursery full time.

Until now, however, many people have found that their good ideas have been overlooked and they have little opportunity to get on and tackle problems in the way they want. Voluntary and community groups often find that their potential contribution is neglected, when, in fact, they carry out some of the most innovative and effective work in public services and we should be encouraging them to get more involved.

We want to pass significant new rights direct to communities and individuals, making it easier for them to get things done and achieve their ambitions for the place where they live.

Community right to challenge

The Government thinks that innovation in public services can offer greater value for taxpayers' money and better results for local communities. The best councils are constantly on the look out for new and better ways to design and deliver services. Many recognise the potential of social enterprises and community groups to provide high-quality services at good value, and deliver services with and through them.

In some places, however, voluntary and community groups who have bright ideas find that they do not get a proper hearing. The Localism Bill will give these groups the right to express an interest in taking over the running of a local service. The local authority must consider and respond to this challenge. This will make it easier for local groups with good ideas to put them forward and drive improvement in local services.

Community right to bid

Every town, village or neighbourhood is home to buildings or businesses that play a vital role in local life. They might include meeting rooms, swimming pools, village shops, markets or pubs. Local life would not be the same without them, and if they are closed or sold into private use, it can be a real loss to the community.

In many places across the country, when local amenities have been threatened with sale or closure, community groups have taken them over. In some cases, however, community groups who have attempted to take assets over have faced significant challenges. They often need more time to

organise a bid and raise money than the private enterprises bidding against them.

Proposals in the Localism Bill will require local authorities to maintain a list of assets of community value. Communities will have the opportunity to nominate for possible inclusion the assets that are most important to them. When listed assets come up for sale or change of ownership, community groups will have time to develop a bid and raise the money to buy the asset when it comes on the open market. This will help local communities keep much-loved sites in public use and part of local life.

Local referendums

In many other countries around the world, communities have the right to put any local issue to a local vote. The ability to trigger a referendum can enliven local democratic debate and give people a way of making their voice heard on the issues that are close to their heart. Currently, in this country, communities can only trigger a local referendum in limited circumstances, and on a very limited range of questions. The Localism Bill will give local people the right to suggest votes on any local issue that they think is important. Local authorities and other public bodies will be required to take the outcome into account as they make their decisions.

Right to veto excessive Council Tax rises

Local authorities derive a significant proportion of their revenue from Council Tax. The money raised through Council Tax is spent on supporting vital local services. But it is also important that Council Tax be set at a reasonable and affordable rate, and that it be managed very carefully to avoid waste.

Currently, central government has the power to “cap” Council Tax rises. If Ministers think that local authorities are proposing to raise taxes at a rate that goes beyond what is reasonable or affordable, they can stop them doing so. But we think that local people are in a better position than Ministers to say what is fair.

The Localism Bill will give local communities a greater say. The Secretary of State and the House of Commons will agree on a “ceiling” for Council Tax rises. If a local authority proposes to raise taxes faster than this rate, local people will have the right to approve or to veto the rise in a referendum. This means that local authorities will need to convince local voters of the case for significant rises in local taxes.

Reform to make the planning system clearer, more democratic and more effective

The planning system helps decide who can build what, where and how. It makes sure that buildings and structures that the country needs (including homes, offices, schools, hospitals, roads, train lines, power stations, water pipes, reservoirs and more) get built in the right place and to the right standards. A good planning system is essential for the economy, environment and society.

There are, however, some significant flaws in the planning system as it stands. Planning does not give members of the public enough influence over decisions that make a big difference to their lives. Too often, power is exercised by people who are not directly affected by the decisions they are making. This means, understandably, that people often resent what they see as decisions and plans being forced on them. The result is a confrontational system where many applications end up being fought over.

The Localism Bill contains proposals to make the planning system clearer, more democratic, and more effective.

Abolition of regional strategies

“Regional strategies” were first required by law in 2004. These strategies set out where new development needs to take place in each part of the country. They include housing targets for different areas, set by central government. Local communities had relatively limited opportunities to influence the strategies.

The Government thinks that this centrally-driven approach to development is bureaucratic and undemocratic. Rather than helping get new houses built, it has had the effect of making people feel put upon and less likely to welcome new development.

The Secretary of State has already written to local authorities to tell them that the Government intends to abolish regional strategies. The Localism Bill will fulfil this intention, and get rid of the law that requires regional strategies.

Neighbourhood planning

Instead of local people being told what to do, the Government thinks that local communities should have genuine opportunities to influence the future of the places where they live. The Bill will introduce a new right for communities to draw up a “neighbourhood development plan.”

Neighbourhood planning will allow people to come together through a local parish council or neighbourhood forum and say where they think new houses,

businesses and shops should go – and what they should look like. These neighbourhood development plans could be very simple, or go into considerable detail where people want. Local communities would also be able to grant full or outline planning permission in areas where they most want to see new homes and businesses, making it easier and quicker for development to go ahead.

Provided a neighbourhood development plan is in line with national planning policy, with the strategic vision for the wider area set by the local authority, and with other legal requirements, local people will be able to vote on it in a referendum. If the plan is approved by a majority, then the local authority will bring it into force.

Local planning authorities will be required to provide technical advice and support as neighbourhoods draw up their plans. The Government will also fund sources of help and advice for communities. This will help people take advantage of the opportunity to exercise influence over decisions that make a big difference to their lives.

Community right to build

As part of neighbourhood planning, the Bill will give groups of local people the ability to bring forward small developments. These might include new homes, businesses and shops. The benefits of the development, for example, profits made from letting the homes, will stay within the community.

Requirement to consult communities before submitting very large planning applications

To further strengthen the role of local communities in planning, the Bill will introduce a new requirement for developers to consult local communities before submitting planning applications for very large developments. This will give local people a chance to comment when there is still genuine scope to make changes to proposals.

Strengthening enforcement rules

For people to have a real sense that the planning system is working for them, they need to know that the rules they draw up will be respected. The Localism Bill will strengthen planning authorities' powers to tackle abuses of the planning system, such as making deliberately misleading planning applications.

Reforming the community infrastructure levy

As well as being able to influence planning decisions, local people should be able to feel the benefits of new development in their neighbourhood. Local authorities are allowed to ask developers to pay a levy (charge) when they build new houses, businesses or shops. The money raised must go to support new infrastructure – such as roads and schools. This is called the community infrastructure levy.

The Localism Bill proposes changes to the levy to make it more flexible. It will allow the money raised to be spent on maintaining infrastructure, as well as

building new infrastructure. It will give local authorities greater freedom in setting the rate that developers should pay in different areas. And crucially, the Bill will give the Government the power to require that some of the money raised goes directly to the neighbourhoods where development takes place. This will help ensure that the people who say “yes” to new development feel the benefit of that decision.

Reform the way local plans are made

Local planning authorities play a crucial role in local life, setting a vision, in consultation with local people, about what their area should look like in the future. The plans that local authorities draw up set out where new buildings, shops, businesses and infrastructure need to go, and what they should look like.

The Government thinks it is important to give local planning authorities greater freedom to get on with this important job without undue interference from central government. The Localism Bill will limit the discretion of planning inspectors to insert their own wording into local plans. It will also ensure that rather than focusing on reporting plans’ progress to central government, authorities focus on reporting progress to local communities.

Duty to cooperate

Not all planning decisions can, or should, be made at a neighbourhood or local level. In many cases there are very strong reasons for neighbouring local authorities, or groups of authorities, to work together on planning issues in the interests of all their local residents. This might include working together on environmental issues (like flooding), public transport networks (such as trams), or major new retail parks.

In the past, regional strategies formed an unaccountable bureaucratic layer on top of local government. Instead, the Government thinks that local authorities and other public bodies should work together on planning issues in ways that reflect genuine shared interests and opportunities to make common cause. The duty will require local authorities and other public bodies to work together on planning issues.

Nationally significant infrastructure projects

Some planning decisions are so important to our overall economy and society that they can only be taken at a national level. These include decisions on nationally significant infrastructure projects such as major train lines and power stations. Currently, these decisions lie in the hands of an unelected public body, called the Infrastructure Planning Commission. It is not directly accountable to the public. The Government thinks that these important decisions should be taken by Government Ministers, who are democratically accountable to the public. The Localism Bill will abolish the Infrastructure Planning Commission and restore its responsibility for taking decisions to Government Ministers. It will also ensure the National Policy Statements, which will be used to guide decisions by Ministers, can be voted on by parliament. Ministers intend to make sure that major planning decisions are

made under the new arrangements at least as quickly as under the present system.

Reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally

Social housing provides eight million people in England with a decent home at an affordable rent. It can make an immense difference to their health, happiness and quality of life, and have significant wider consequences for their families, neighbours and employers.

But the current social housing system has some fundamental flaws. The rules are too rigidly set by central government, so that councils find it hard to adapt and meet local needs. Social landlords don't have enough discretion over how they manage their housing in the best interest of their local community. And in some cases social housing rules actually trap people in difficult circumstances – making it hard to move for work, for example – with the result that the system fails the very people it is designed to help.

The Localism Bill proposes reforms that will mean more decisions about housing are taken locally, and make the system fairer and more effective.

Social housing tenure reform

Currently, social landlords are normally only able to grant lifetime tenancies. Sometimes this can mean that people acquire a social home at a moment of crisis in their life, and continue to live there long after their need for it has gone. Meanwhile there are people waiting for a social home who face much more difficult circumstances. This is unfair, and represents a poor use of valuable public resources.

The Government has made clear that all current social tenants will keep their current tenancy arrangements. Anyone who has a lifetime tenancy today will keep that lifetime tenancy. However, proposals in the Localism Bill will allow for more flexible arrangements for people entering social housing in the future. Social landlords will be able to grant tenancies for a fixed length of time. The minimum length of tenancy will be two years, and there is no upper limit on the length of tenancy. Councils will continue to be able to offer lifetime tenancies if they wish. More flexible tenancies will allow social landlords to manage their social homes more effectively and fairly, and deliver better results for local communities.

Social housing allocations reform

At the moment almost anyone can apply to live in social housing, whether they need it or not. As social housing is in great demand and priority is rightly given to those most in need, many applicants have no realistic prospect of ever receiving a social home. The current arrangements encourage false expectations and large waiting lists.

The Bill will give local authorities greater freedom to set their own policies about who should qualify to go on the waiting list for social housing in their area. This means that they will be able, if they wish, to prevent people who

have no need of social housing from joining the waiting list. Authorities will continue to be obliged to ensure that social homes go to the most vulnerable in society and those who need it most.

Reform of homelessness legislation

People who experience a homelessness crisis need somewhere suitable to live. Councils have a duty to house people who are eligible, in priority need and unintentionally homeless and this duty will remain in place. Central government will also continue to fund support and advice to prevent homelessness and rough sleeping.

However, under the current rules, people who become homeless are able to refuse offers of accommodation in the private rented sector, and insist that they should be housed in expensive temporary accommodation until a long-term social home becomes available. This can mean that in some circumstances people in acute but short-term housing need acquire a social home for life, although they may not need one, while other people who do need a social home in the longer term are left waiting.

The Localism Bill will let local authorities meet their homelessness duty by providing good quality private rented homes. This option could provide an appropriate solution for people experiencing a homelessness crisis, at the same time as freeing up social homes for people in real need on the waiting list.

Reform of council housing finance

The Localism Bill will change the way social housing is funded to pass more power to a local level. Currently, local authorities collect rent from their social tenants then send the money to central government. Central government collects all the money raised this way into a single pot. Local authorities are then paid a sum out of the pot each year for the upkeep, renovation and repair of social homes.

In the future, instead of having to send the money raised by rent to central government and wait to see each year what share they get allocated back, councils will be able to keep the rent and use it locally to maintain their social homes. This will give them a more predictable and stable basis to plan for the long term.

National Homeswap Scheme

There are lots of reasons why people move house: to take up a new job, to be nearer to family members who need care, to give a young family more space to grow or to find a smaller, more manageable home in later life. Evidence suggests, however, that it is less straightforward for people who live in social housing to move than for other people. Fewer than one in 20 households move within the social housing sector each year, for example, compared to almost one in four private renters.

The Localism Bill will pave the way for a national home swap scheme. This would enable people who would like to swap their social home to access

details of all other tenants who may be a suitable match. This has the potential to enable social tenants to find a home that better meets their needs and to exercise greater control over their lives.

Reform of social housing regulation

The Bill will reform the way that social housing is regulated. The Bill will provide social tenants with stronger tools to hold their landlords to account. Landlords will be expected to support tenant panels – or equivalent bodies – in order to give tenants the opportunity to carefully examine the services being offered. The Bill will also abolish the Tenant Services Authority and transfer its remaining functions to the Homes and Communities Agency.

The Bill will also change the way that complaints about social landlords are handled. Currently, there are two separate ombudsmen (the Local Government Ombudsman and the Independent Housing Ombudsman) handling social tenants' complaints about their landlord. In the future, a single watchdog (the Independent Housing Ombudsman) specialising in complaints about social housing will ensure greater consistency across the sector.

The overall effect of the Bill

Taken together, the measures in the Bill mean:

New freedoms and flexibilities for local government. The Bill will:

- give local authorities everywhere the formal legal ability and greater confidence to get on with the job of responding to what local people want
- cut red tape to enable councillors everywhere to play a full and active part in local life without fear of legal challenge
- encourage a new generation of powerful leaders with the potential to raise the profile of English cities, strengthen local democracy and boost economic growth
- reform the governance of London so that more power lies in the hands of elected representatives who are democratically accountable to London's citizens

New rights and powers for local communities. The Bill will:

- make it easier for local people to take over the amenities they love and keep them part of local life
- ensure that local social enterprises, volunteers and community groups with a bright idea for improving local services get a chance to change how things are done
- give people a new way to voice their opinions on any local issue close to their heart
- enable local residents to call local authorities to account for the careful management of taxpayers' money

Reform to make the planning system clearer, more democratic and more effective. The Bill will:

- place significantly more influence in the hands of local people over issues that make a big difference to their lives
- provide appropriate support and recognition to communities who welcome new development
- reduce red tape, making it easier for authorities to get on with the job of working with local people to draw up a vision for their area's future
- reinforce the democratic nature of the planning system – passing power from bodies not directly answerable to the public, to democratically accountable Ministers

Reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally. The Bill will:

- enable local authorities to make their own decisions to adapt housing provision to local needs, and make the system fairer and more effective
- give local authorities more control over the funding of social housing, helping them to plan for the long term
- give people who live in social housing new ways of holding their landlords to account, and make it easier for them to move

This is, in sum, a Bill with the potential to effect a significant change in national life, passing power to a local level, creating space for local authorities to lead and innovate, and giving people the opportunity to take control of decisions that matter to them.

The Government has already begun consultation on how it might use some of the powers and provisions contained in the Bill – so that when the Bill is approved by parliament, it will be possible to make the most of the opportunity it presents to achieve widespread, swift and lasting change.

Together with other, wider Government reforms, putting the Bill into practice will represent a major milestone towards the transfer of power and control set out in the coalition agreement.

You can find updates about various consultations about the use of the powers in the Localism Bill, and about the Department for Communities and Local Government's wider work on the Department's website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/whatsnew>

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