

Draft Legislative Programme – On The Day Briefing

29 June 2009

Gordon Brown today published the government's draft legislative programme alongside a major policy document, *Building Britain's Future*. The main proposals affecting local government are on housing. This note contains a summary of the housing measures and more detail on the key bills in the legislative programme. We will be analysing the policy document further this week to identify any other issues of significance for local authorities.

Summary of Housing Proposals

Further £1.5 billion over the next two years

The government's existing building programme will be supplemented by a further £1.5 billion over the next two years to deliver 20,000 additional energy efficient, affordable homes to rent or buy. The government state the package will enable local authorities to build 3,000 additional council homes over the next two years and 10,000 new homes for private sale on mixed tenure developments.

Reform of the housing finance system

The government will consult on reform to the council housing finance system, allowing local authorities to keep all the proceeds from their own council house sales and council rents.

Changes to the rules for allocating council and other social housing

Local authorities will be able to give more priority to local people and those who have spent a long time on waiting lists when allocating council and other social housing.

Choice Based Lettings will be expanded to help residents move nationwide, and support to tenants who need to move to take up the offer of a new job.

LGA View

Today's four-fold increase in investment for council-led housing development is a major victory for the LGA. Through our *Places You Want to Live* campaign the LGA has lobbied the government hard about the lack of funding available for the building, repair and maintenance of council housing. However, to unlock the full potential of councils to deliver, they must have the same access to mainstream social housing grant funding as housing associations and the private sector.

We are pleased the Government has listened to the LGA's calls for reform of the housing finance system. We have campaigned long and hard for councils to be able to keep all the proceeds from their own council house sales and council rents.

We continue to call for:

- councils to have the financial independence to invest in their housing stock and stimulate the local economy;
- historic 'notional debt' – which councils are currently spending £1.3 billion a year servicing – to be cancelled;
- councils to have the same freedom as other social housing providers to borrow money to invest in new homes; and
- the government to stop setting tenants' rent and allow them to reflect local circumstances.

Contact

For further information please contact Nathan Stower, LGA Public Affairs on 0207 644 3226, Nathan.stower@lga.gov.uk or Kirsty Ivanoski-Nichol, LGA Public Affairs on 0207 644 3120, kirsty.ivanoski-nichol@lga.gov.uk

Summary of Other Proposals

Employment

- From January every young person under 25 who has been unemployed for a year will be required to take up a guaranteed job, work experience or training place, or face benefit sanctions.
- Adults who have been unemployed for six months will get access to jobs supported by recruitment subsidies, help setting up a business, skills training or volunteering opportunities.

Education

- Parents will be 'guaranteed' an education that is individually tailored for their child, including: a personal tutor for every pupil at secondary school and catch up tuition for those who need it, including one to one;
- The best headteachers will be able to work in more than one school to expand federations of schools, Trusts and Academies.

Draft legislative programme

The Government announced details of its draft legislative programme for 2009-10. Eleven bills are proposed for the next session of Parliament. The key bills for local government are likely to be the Flood and water management Bill, Child poverty Bill and the Improving schools and safeguarding children Bill. The Government expects this programme to develop and change over the course of the year as a result both of consultation and as new issues arise. Consultation starts today and will close on 21 September 2009.

Flood and water management Bill

This Bill will implement the recommendations of Sir Michael Pitt's report 'Learning Lessons from the 2007 Floods', including:

- defining the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in flood risk management and giving the lead to local authorities in managing the risk of all local causes of floods;
- placing a duty on all relevant bodies to co-operate and share information in support of flood risk management;
- introducing an improved, risk-based approach to reservoir safety, extending to all reservoirs which could pose a risk to public safety if they were to fail; and
- requiring developers to include sustainable drainage wherever practicable in new housing and business developments.

Child poverty Bill

This Bill will:

- enshrine in law the Government's commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020;
- define success in eradicating child poverty based on four targets; and
- establish an accountability framework to drive progress at national and local level through requiring the Government to publish a child poverty strategy every three years until 2020 as well as an annual report.

Improving schools and safeguarding children Bill

The Bill will implement commitments in the Schools White Paper to be published tomorrow including:

- a set of guarantees to an individually tailored education for each child and their parents, including a personal tutor and catch-up tuition;
- powers to enable head teachers to enforce good behaviour with measures to clarify parents responsibilities to sit alongside their entitlements;
- an accountability framework and school improvement strategies for all schools, underpinned by a new School Report Card;
- powers to give parents a greater say over the range of schools in their local area;
- a clarified role of Ofsted and other inspectorates in inspecting Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) and enable information sharing for LSCB purposes; and
- improving monitoring arrangements for children educated at home.

