

POLICY BRIEFING FOR EMC MEMBERS: 17 FEBRUARY 2012

Planning & Transport (Officer Contact: andrew.pritchard@emcouncils.gov.uk)

High speed rail - East Midlands Councils hosted a Department for Transport event about current high speed rail proposals (HS2) and implications for the East Midlands. The information presented at the event by the Department of Transport and EMC at the event are available from [EMC's website](#).

National Planning Casework Unit - DCLG has published [a letter](#) for local authorities about the National Planning Casework Unit, updating them on changes to the arrangements for handling planning casework following the closure of the Regional Government Offices.

The LGA's Planning Advisory Service (PAS) is running a series of **free events** which will explore what the new **duty to co-operate** will mean for councils and other public bodies, and highlight existing and emerging examples of best practice from around England. The series includes a free event for elected members in London on **9 March 2012**. For details click [here](#).

Housing (Officer Contact: cathy.jones@emcouncils.gov.uk)

Empty homes in the private sector - Recent TV series "The Great British Property Scandal!" and "Phil's Empty Homes Giveaway" focused attention on empty homes. The HCA's [Empty Homes Toolkit](#) has practical advice about bringing empty homes back into use, alongside a [GIS Mapping Toolkit](#) providing data on the numbers and spread of empty homes to inform local responses. EMC has teamed up with the Chartered Institute of Housing to offer a **one-day course** providing delegates with the skills, knowledge and techniques for managing empty properties, which can then be progressed through from advice and support to enforcement and outcomes. Click [here](#) for details or to book a place.

Economic Development, Skills & Education (Officer Contact: peter.williams@emcouncils.gov.uk)

Free conference - The Big Lottery Fund's **Village SOS national conference** (27th February in Birmingham) will focus on rural communities and community enterprise. It will feature specialist workshops on topics like business planning and accessing finance, and debates on issues facing rural communities and how they can be overcome. For more details of this free-to-attend event click [here](#).

East Midlands Director of the Year Awards - The Institute of Directors (IoD) is seeking nominations for its East Midlands Director of the Year Awards. Applications for the awards, which will be announced at a special regional event in April, should be made to the IoD East Midlands Regional Office by 29 February. Seven categories of award are on offer this year including Public/Third Sector Director of the Year. Please click [here](#) to download an application form.

Public Health (Officer Contact: cathy.jones@emcouncils.gov.uk)

Building a Public Health England People Transition Policy – This Department of Health policy is a first step in setting out how the principles of the HR Transition Framework (which provides the guiding standards relating to employee movement) from 'sender' organisations to 'receiver' organisations will be used to transfer and appoint staff to Public Health England. The policy is available [here](#)

Employers' Issues (Officer Contact: sam.maher@emcouncils.gov.uk)

Consultation on Introduction of Fees for Using Employment Tribunals - As part of its employment law reforms, the Government has already announced its intention to introduce fees for using the employment tribunal system. To support this intention the Ministry of Justice has launched a consultation on the proposed fee charging system. The LGA will be submitting a response to the key proposals, and welcomes local authorities' views on four key questions, which can then feed into its response. Responses should be sent to eru@local.gov.uk by 21 February 2012. If authorities wish to respond direct to the Ministry of Justice, details of how to do so are in the [consultation document](#) and are required by 6 March 2012.

Government to reduce rehabilitation periods – The Government intends to reduce rehabilitation periods for ex-

offenders as set out in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which provides that criminal convictions become "spent" after a defined period of time (the "rehabilitation period"). The Government intends to reduce the rehabilitation periods in the Act and has tabled an amendment to the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Bill which is progressing through Parliament. Job applicants will continue to have to declare previous spent and unspent convictions for certain roles, for example those involving work with vulnerable people.

Member development - EMC and South East Employers are developing an online tool to help councillors identify their skills and development needs. The tool supports good practice guidelines for member development and will help local authorities to achieve Charter and Charter Plus status. To help develop this product, staff responsible for member development have been asked to complete an on-line survey which is also available [here](#).

East Midlands Jobs - As East Midlands Jobs approaches its first anniversary the website is making new strides, having advertised around 1800 jobs. This enables local authorities to work more efficiently and reduce costs. Jobseekers, meanwhile, feel that the site cuts down the amount of time needed to search different websites for vacancies and helps them concentrate on applying for appropriate positions. Click [here](#) to view the site.

Climate Change & Sustainable Development (Officer Contact: mike.peverill@emcouncils.gov.uk)

Too much, too little - drought is back in the headlines, following increasing concern about the lack of rain in recent months. Parts of the East Midlands are among the affected areas, with Northamptonshire having had the driest 16 months since records began, according to the [Environment Agency](#). This follows news from the insurance industry which published a [list](#) of areas which could be most affected by rising insurance premiums in flood risk areas – with several in the East Midlands. Both stories echo the key messages of last month's UK Climate Change Risk Assessment. Climate East Midlands continues to support councils in responding to the challenge and will host a concluding event for the **Planning for Adaptation** programme (21st February, Nottingham) for Members and senior officers. Contact mike.peverill@emcouncils.gov.uk for details or to book a place.

Local Government Policy: (Officer Contact: stuart.young@emcouncils.gov.uk)

Police and Crime Commissioners - The Home Office has published a timeline showing key stages in the schedule for Police and Crime Commissioners to be elected, to take office, and to develop a police and crime plan. More detail is available [here](#).

Council tax for 2012-13 - DCLG has published a [letter](#) from Local Government Minister Bob Neill to council leaders of English local authorities regarding council tax for 2012-13.

Other EMC Events: Officer contact lisa.bushell@emcouncils.gov.uk

Staying Brilliant 28 Feb 2012

This workshop aims to build on the excellent habits from 'The Art of Being Brilliant', reviewing progress to date and taking the messages one step further. The aim is to stop the slide back into bad habits and instil permanent change.

Report Writing - 28 March 2012

East Midlands Councils is holding a one day report writing skills seminar taking place on 28 March 2012 at our offices in Melton Mowbray.

EMC Management Group

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