

## POLICY BRIEFING FOR EMC MEMBERS: 6 JANUARY 2012

### Planning & Transport (Officer Contact: [andrew.pritchard@emcouncils.gov.uk](mailto:andrew.pritchard@emcouncils.gov.uk))

A reminder that EMC will be holding the next **Planning Low Cost CPD** event 'Specialisms in Planning' on the 23 February 2012 in Melton Mowbray. For more information, please contact [moira.hunt@emcouncils.gov.uk](mailto:moira.hunt@emcouncils.gov.uk).

### Housing (Officer Contact: [cathy.jones@emcouncils.gov.uk](mailto:cathy.jones@emcouncils.gov.uk))

The Government is consulting on **new draft statutory guidance on social housing allocations** intended to give local authorities the freedom to manage their own waiting lists, and make it easier for them to move existing social tenants to more suitable accommodation. It also encourages authorities to make use of the existing flexibilities within the allocation legislation to ensure that social homes go to people who need and deserve them the most. Details of the consultation, which is open until 30 March 2012, are available [here](#).

A £420 million **Get Britain Building fund** was announced as part of the Government's [Housing Strategy for England](#). The Programme is open to all private sector organisations which control land and can develop at least 25 homes on a stalled site by December 2014. The deadline for bids is noon on 30 January 2012. Bids will be assessed by the HCA, liaising with local authorities, through February and early March. Details are available [here](#).

DCLG is consulting on how **proposals for Right to Buy (RtB)** will be achieved. The Government's intention to increase the caps on RtB discounts, to encourage more tenants to take up the RtB, was set out in the Government's [Housing Strategy](#), which also sets out a commitment that receipts on every additional home sold under RtB are used to fund, on a one for one basis, a replacement new home for Affordable Rent. The consultation ends on 2 February 2012 and is available [here](#).

Research by the Chartered Institute of Housing has found that **welfare reforms will leave low income families with shortfalls in their rent payments**. This is due to measures that restrict housing benefit payments to rents paid in the cheapest third of lettings and the placing of absolute caps on the amount of housing benefit to be received by a household. All areas are likely to be affected but the changes are likely to have greatest impact in parts of the country where the cost of rented housing is high. Further detail is available [here](#).

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

Defra have launched a £15 million pilot project to support rural businesses. The creation of **Rural Growth Networks** will help rural areas overcome barriers to growth, such as a lack of suitable premises and poor provision of infrastructure. Local Authorities or Local Enterprise Partnerships interested in finding out more information should refer to the Rural Grants and Funding page of the Defra website available [here](#).

**DWP has announced a £200 million outreach service** to be run in conjunction with local authorities and the organisations delivering the Work Programme to help England's most troubled families overcome barriers to employment. Local Authorities will be able to decide which eligible families are referred to the service. Details are available [here](#).

### Public Health (Officer Contact: [cathy.jones@emcouncils.gov.uk](mailto:cathy.jones@emcouncils.gov.uk))

Further details on the establishment of **local HealthWatch bodies**, including a new start date and extra funding, have been set out by Health Minister Andrew Lansley. These are set to replace Local Involvement Networks and will be the local consumer champion for patients, service users and the public. Further details are available [here](#).

The Department of Health and the LGA have jointly published guidance to local areas on **appointing Directors of Public Health** to vacant posts in upper tier and unitary local authority areas, and on transferring those already in post from the NHS. Further details have been sent to local authority HR officers by EMC. For more information contact [sam.maher@emcouncils.gov.uk](mailto:sam.maher@emcouncils.gov.uk).

### Employers' Issues (Officer Contact: [sam.maher@emcouncils.gov.uk](mailto:sam.maher@emcouncils.gov.uk))

The final report of the **National Joint Council for Local Government Services Working Party on the recruitment, retention and career progression of social workers** is [available to download](#). The report contains a comprehensive set of role profiles encompassing the full range of social worker roles.

The next **Environmental Health 5 Pack + 1** low cost CPD seminar 'Public Health' will be held on 8 March 2011 in Melton Mowbray. For further details please contact [moira.hunt@emcouncils.gov.uk](mailto:moira.hunt@emcouncils.gov.uk).

**Local Government Policy: (Officer Contact: [stuart.young@emcouncils.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.young@emcouncils.gov.uk))**

Two Councillors in the region have been recognised in the **New Year Honours list 2012**. **Cllr David Bill**, Hinckley and Bosworth, is awarded an MBE for services to local government and **Cllr Geoff Stevens**, Derbyshire Dales, is awarded an MBE for services to the community in Matlock. Both are EMC nominees to the ERDF Local Management Committee which oversees the ERDF Programme in the region, and Cllr Stevens is also Vice Chair of the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership. EMC would like to offer its congratulations. The full New Year Honours list is available [here](#).

Defra have announced 14 networks to identify and feed back local issues and concerns to Government to make policies more rural-friendly. Three **Rural and Farming networks** will operate in the East Midlands – Rural Network East Midlands (chaired by Cllr Geoff Stevens), Lincolnshire Forum for Agriculture and Horticulture and Derbyshire Economic Partnership Rural Forum. The networks will sit alongside a £165 million package of measures to support rural communities announced in the Rural Economy Growth Review. Further details are available [here](#). EMC is supporting the Rural Network East Midlands' Conference on **Thursday 22 March 2012** at Carriage Court, Welbeck Estates, Worksop, Notts. The event will explore how new Government policies will provide opportunities and challenges for rural communities in the East Midlands. For further details contact Lynn Hage [lhage@rcan.org.uk](mailto:lhage@rcan.org.uk).

DCLG have published figures suggesting that **English local authorities expect to be holding £10.8 billion in reserves** on 31 March 2012 compared to £11 billion at 31 March 2011. **Sir Merrick Cockell**, Chairman of the LGA, said that *“capital reserves can only be spent once and cannot be considered a long-term solution to the unprecedented funding reductions councils are currently facing. The majority of council reserves are already earmarked for specific purposes like paying for future capital investments, making redundancy payments, paying for insurance and meeting other long-term liabilities.”* The full list of council reserves is available [here](#).

The **East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership (EMSMP)** was formed in 2007 to consider the impact of migration on the region by linking with member organisations on economic migration, asylum and refugee issues. The current funding period ends in March 2012 and new funding arrangements will in place for the financial year 2012/13. In order to ensure the EMSMP continues to respond effectively to the changing patterns of migration in the East Midlands we would like you to take ten minutes to respond to a **survey** by clicking [here](#).

A reminder that EMC on behalf of DCLG is holding a meeting on **24th January 2012 at Nottinghamshire County Council on the Future of Local Audit**. The meeting is aimed at Directors of Finance/Treasurers and/or portfolio holders for finance. The meeting follows the announcement of the government's decision to abolish the Audit Commission in August 2010, and its subsequent consultation on its proposals for a new local public audit framework. The historic consultation document can be found [here](#) and the Government's response published on 4 January available [here](#). A summary of the report that FTI Consulting Limited prepared on the future of local public audit is also available [here](#). Invitations to the meeting have gone out to Chief Executives and Directors of Finance or equivalents. Contact [alison.neal@emcouncils.gov.uk](mailto:alison.neal@emcouncils.gov.uk) for further information.

**Other EMC Events**

**Essential Skills for Supervisors - 7 February 2012:** East Midlands Councils is holding a one day training session on Essential Skills for Supervisors. The training includes interactive practical scenarios, group discussions, case studies and practical sessions.

**Presentation Skills - 14 February 2012:** This is a very practical workshop and participants develop a work-related presentation throughout the day - there are opportunities to practice the ideas, with feedback. There is input on planning, structure, visual aids, being memorable, personal presentation and handling an audience.

For further information on these events or to book your place please use this link to [EMC's website](#) or contact [lisa.bushell@emcouncils.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.bushell@emcouncils.gov.uk).

**EMC Management Group**

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