

## **Strengthening Local Democracy - Consultation Paper Summary**

### **Introduction**

This consultation is focused on promoting local democratic renewal by strengthening the capacity of local government to serve citizens. This forms part of the wider constitutional reform package and builds upon a number of themes that were presented in Building Britain's Future. It explores whether local government has the powers it needs to meet today's challenges, as part of the Government's drive to renew Britain's democracy and build trust in the political system at all levels.

The duration of the consultation is from 21 July 2009 to 2 October 2009. There are 26 consultation questions for comment and these are included in Appendix 1 of this note.

### **Local authorities tackling climate change**

The potential costs of climate change are huge and mitigating these effects will require decisive international, national and local action. A question for this consultation is whether councils have the right powers and responsibilities to help address climate change. The Government want to see councils increasingly active in reducing carbon, taking a key role in meeting UK carbon targets and adapting to the consequences of climate change.

There is scope for councils working with their partners including the third sector, to build on their existing responsibilities for planning, transport, building control and management of waste. Set out below are the issues which need to be addressed and views are being sought on these via the consultation;

- the role of local authorities in coordinating funding streams to support low carbon activity in local areas.
- supporting authorities who wish to offer innovative financing for energy efficiency and renewable energy, and perhaps even green mortgages.
- empowering authorities to deliver cost effective and publicly supported infrastructure plans.
- encouraging authorities to consider using their new powers under the Business Rates Supplement Act 2009 to raise funds to support emission reductions projects provided the link to economic development can be established.
- encouraging authorities, using existing powers, to ensure minimum energy efficiency standards for housing.
- moving planning authorities forward in their thinking about how to tackle climate change and to encourage more community engagement to develop locally owned low carbon energy solutions.
- helping and challenging local authorities make the contribution we are asking from them in delivering the low carbon transport strategy, including supporting a shift to new technologies and promoting lower carbon transport.

The Government will also examine how a range of possible incentives might be used to reward areas that make progress, and explore the case for developing mechanisms that will allow local authorities wishing to make faster progress than our national plans can do so, with support from less ambitious authorities.

1. Where can local authorities add most value in meeting climate change aims, and what should Government do to help them do so, giving consideration to the proposals set out in this chapter?
2. How do we ensure that national policies reinforce local efforts – for example, around transport, renewable energy, and energy efficiency?

