



House of Commons

ODPM: Housing, Planning,
Local Government and the
Regions Committee

Annual Report to the Liaison Committee 2003

Second Report of Session 2003–2004



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Report

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The ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee

The ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and its associated bodies.

Current membership

Mr Andrew Bennett MP (*Labour, Denton and Reddish*) (Chairman) ‡
Sir Paul Beresford MP (*Conservative, Mole Valley*) ‡
Mr Clive Betts MP (*Labour, Sheffield Attercliffe*) ‡
Mr Graham Brady MP (*Conservative, Altrincham & Sale West*) ‡
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Mr Bill O' Brien MP (*Labour, Normanton*) ‡
Mrs Christine Russell MP (*Labour, City of Chester*) ‡
Mr Adrian Sanders (*Liberal Democrat, Torbay*) ‡

‡ Member of the Urban Affairs Sub-Committee

§ Chairman of the Urban Affairs Sub-Committee

The following member was also a member of the committee during the parliament.

Dr John Pugh MP (*Liberal Democrat, Southport*) ‡
Mr John Bercow MP (*Conservative, Buckingham*) ‡
Mr Gary Streeter MP (*Conservative, South West Devon*) ‡

Powers

The committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/welsh_affairs_committee.cfm. A list of Reports of the Committee in the present Parliament is at the back of this volume.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Kate Emms (Clerk), Libby Preston (Second Clerk), Ben Kochan (Committee Specialist), Ian Hook (Committee Assistant) and Emma Carey (Secretary).

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1 The Committee's Work during 2003

Introduction

1. This has been the ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee's first full year since its establishment in July 2002. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) is responsible for a wide range of Government policy. The Committee has sought during the year to cover as much of the Department's remit as possible. The first decision of the Committee when it was established in July 2002 was to establish its Urban Affairs Sub-committee. We have made full use of the Sub-committee during the year.

2. We have had a very busy year. We have undertaken 7 inquiries during 2003 which have led to published reports: in addition, we published three reports relying on evidence taken in 2002, together with our Annual Report 2002. We also published an interim report during our inquiry into the Evening Economy and the Urban Renaissance, in order to respond to issues in the Licensing Bill. We have completed two further inquiries into *The Fire Service* and *Coalfield Communities* which will lead to reports early in 2004. We also held a 'one-off' evidence session with the Electoral Commission and the Boundary Committee for England. Our reports on *Affordable Housing*¹ and *Reducing Regional Disparities in Prosperity*,² were debated in Westminster Hall on 19 June and 16 October. The subjects we have covered are set out in Table 1 below. We would like to take the opportunity in this report to thank all those who have helped us in our work during 2003.

¹ ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, Third Report of Session 2002-03, *Affordable Housing*, HC 75-I

² ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2002-03, *Reducing Regional Disparities in Prosperity*, HC 492-I

Table 1: Inquiries completed during 2003 set against Liaison Committee criteria³

	Government policy proposals	Examination of deficiencies	Departmental actions	Associated public bodies	Major appointments	Implementation of legislation	Draft legislation	Expenditure	Public Service Agreements
The Effectiveness of Government Regeneration Initiatives		√		√		√		√	
Local Government Finance: Formula Grant Distribution			√			√		√	
Departmental Annual Report and Accounts 2002								√	√
Affordable Housing		√				√			
The Licensing Bill [Lords] and the Evening Economy	√						√		
Planning for Sustainable Housing and Communities: Sustainable Communities in the South East	√			√					
Planning, Competitiveness and Productivity		√				√			
Reducing Regional Disparities in Prosperity									√
Living Places: Cleaner, Safer Greener	√								
The Draft Housing Bill				√			√		
The Evening Economy and the Urban Renaissance		√				√			
The Electoral Commission and the Boundary Committee for England				√					
Social Cohesion	√	√	√						
Coalfield Communities		√						√	
The Fire Service	√			√					
ODPM Annual Report and Accounts 2003								√	√
Decent Homes				√		√			√

³ This can be compared against 'Annex A' of our Annual Report 2002. ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, Second Report of Session 2002-03, *Annual Report to the Liaison Committee*, HC 269, p.13

Visits

3. The opportunity to travel both in the UK and abroad as part of our work, and to see examples of good and bad practice is something that we regard as important as a means of gathering information and views – a “reality check”. During 2003 we combined visits to Taunton and Newcastle upon Tyne with public evidence sessions as part of our inquiry into *Reducing Regional Disparities in Prosperity*. The Committee also visited Germany in March as part of the same inquiry. We spent three days in Oldham in September pursuing our ongoing inquiry into *Social Cohesion*, visiting local organisations before taking evidence in public for a day and a half. Our recent visit to the United States was in relation to our inquiries into *Social Cohesion*, and *the Role of Historic Buildings in Urban Regeneration*.

4. During 2003 we also undertook visits to Nottingham and Leicester in relation to our inquiry into *Living Places, Cleaner, Safer Greener*; to Soho as part of our inquiry into *the Evening Economy and the Urban Renaissance*; to Greenwich and Dartford when we were inquiring into *Planning for Sustainable Housing and Communities: Sustainable Housing in the South East*; and most recently to Easington and the Dearne Valley in relation to our inquiry into *Coalfield Communities*.

Core tasks

5. Following a resolution of the House of May 2002,⁴ the Liaison Committee has determined that select committees should be expected to perform a number of ‘core tasks’. These are to carry out inquiries into (a) Government policy proposals, (b) areas seen to require examination because of deficiencies, (c) departmental actions, (d) associated public bodies (of the Department), (e) major appointments, and (f) implementation of legislation and major policy initiatives. The Liaison Committee also proposed that details be given of the examination of any draft legislation, expenditure and performance against Public Service Agreement targets. An analysis of our performance of these core tasks is set out in Table 2 below. Further analysis of our work is contained in an Annex to this report, which sets out selected recommendations of previous reports, together with the Government response.

Table 2: Subjects covered by the ODPM Committee, 2003

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Evidence sessions in 2003</i>	<i>Sub-committee?</i>	<i>Outcome</i>
Local Government Finance: Formula Grant Distribution	-	No	Report, January 2003
Planning, Competitiveness and Productivity	-	No	Report, February 2003
Departmental Annual Report and Accounts 2002	1	No	Report, March 2003

⁴ See *Votes and Proceedings*, 14 May 2002

The Effectiveness of Government Regeneration Initiatives	1	Yes	Report, April 2003
Affordable Housing	-	No	Report, February 2003
The Licensing Bill [Lords] and the Evening Economy	*	Yes	Report, March 2003
Planning for Sustainable Housing and Communities: Sustainable Communities in the South East	5	No	Report, April 2003
Reducing Regional Disparities	6	No	Report, July 2003
The Draft Housing Bill	6	No	Report, July 2003
The Evening Economy and the Urban Renaissance	3	Yes	Report, August 2003
Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener	3	Yes	Report, July 2003
The Electoral Commission and the Boundary Committee for England	1	No	Minutes of Evidence, November 2003
ODPM Annual Report and Accounts 2003	2	No	Report, December 2003
Social Cohesion	3	No	-
The Fire Service	5	No	-
Coalfield Communities	2	Yes	-
Decent Homes	2	No	-

* Drew on 3 evidence sessions held for the Sub-committee's inquiry into 'The Evening Economy and the Urban Renaissance'

Identification of inquiries

Government Policy Proposals

6. Our inquiry into *Planning for Sustainable Housing and Communities in the South East* was in response to the Government's policy, announced in July 2002⁵ to increase house-building in the South East. In February 2003, as part of its Communities Plan,⁶ it revealed further details about funding and announced the creation of new agencies to promote housing development. We considered the potential impact of such a big house-building programme and, in particular whether sustainable communities will be created.

7. Our inquiry into *Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener* responded to the ODPM's publication in October 2002 at the Urban Summit of a Paper with the same title.⁷ At the

⁵ HC Deb, 18 July 2002, Col 438

⁶ *Sustainable communities: Building for the future*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 5 February 2003.

⁷ *Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, October 2002

same time Defra published *Living Places: Powers Rights Responsibilities*,⁸ which put forward plans to give local authorities new powers to manage public spaces, and allocated new funds. This inquiry looked at management issues, mainly of existing spaces, including green spaces, parks and hard spaces such as streets and pavements. In our report, we considered whether management arrangements and resources are adequate to bring them up to a satisfactory condition.

8. We will shortly publish a report on *the Fire Service*, in response to the Government White Paper.⁹

Areas seen by the Committee as requiring examination because of deficiencies

9. This year three of our inquiries were prompted in part by deficiencies in the ODPM or its Agencies. Our inquiry into *Affordable Housing*¹⁰ highlighted the fact that many people in the UK cannot afford to buy or rent a home because of high house prices and the increase in the number of households, largely because of the growth in one person households and international inward migration. At the same time, far fewer subsidised affordable homes are being built than 10 years ago, although the number of new private homes built for sale has remained relatively constant. The effect of a shortage of housing for key workers has had an impact on the economy. The Government has since published its Communities Plan,¹¹ which seeks to address these issues.

10. We undertook an inquiry into *the Evening Economy and the Urban Renaissance*,¹² which contrasted the inclusive evening economy of most European cities where people of all ages participate in a range of activities, with the evening activities of British cities which centre around young people and alcohol, leading to associated problems of crime and disorder, noise and nuisance. Local authorities need the planning and licensing systems to support their management of the evening and late-night economies and to give them the ability to balance evening and late-night uses of town and city centres.

11. In inquiries over the last decade our predecessor Committees had been struck that so little seemed to have been achieved of lasting value by many government regeneration initiatives. Consultants' reports often claimed that output measures (eg. number of jobs created) had been met, but, in fact, large sums of additional money have been spent on the same deprived areas over and over again without bringing about a significant and lasting improvement. This prompted our inquiry into the *Effectiveness of Government Regeneration Initiatives*.¹³ We recommended that when the funding of the current government area-based regeneration initiatives expires no more centrally driven national initiatives should be launched; that local authorities with regeneration needs should be

⁸ *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities*, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, October 2002

⁹ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, *Our Fire and Rescue Service*, Cm 5808, June 2003

¹⁰ HC (2002-03) 75-I

¹¹ *Sustainable communities: Building for the future*, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 5 February 2003.

¹² ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, Twelfth Report of Session 2002-03, *The Evening Economy and the Urban Renaissance*, HC 396

¹³ ODPM: Housing, Planning, local Government and the Regions Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2002-03, *The Effectiveness of Government Regeneration Initiatives*, HC 76

encouraged to develop their own regeneration plans which identify local needs; and that central Government should negotiate additional resources with local authorities to fund the regeneration goals identified in these plans.

Departmental actions

12. The Government announced the provisional local government finance settlement for England for 2003/04 on 5 December 2002.¹⁴ There was a consultation period until 14 January 2003. The settlement for 2003/04 followed a four year review of local government finance and was based on new data and new formulae for calculating the revenue grant to local authorities. Our report into *Local Government Finance: Formula Grant Distribution*,¹⁵ published on 3 January was not intended to be a comprehensive review of the 5 December announcement. Rather it looked at a number of the key issues of process and principle arising from the review and the options chosen by the Government.

Associated public bodies

13. The Department has few associated public bodies. During the year we have taken evidence from a number of them as part of our broader inquiries, including the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), English Partnerships and the Housing Corporation. In 2004 we will undertake an inquiry specifically into the Housing Corporation and we will take further evidence from English Partnerships.

Major appointments

14. The establishment of the ODPM led to changes in Ministers in 2002. In May 2003 there was a Government re-shuffle, which led to further changes in the Ministerial team. We have taken evidence from ODPM Ministers on 10 occasions during the year, and from Ministers from other departments on 14 occasions. We have had problems on several occasions in arranging appointments to take evidence from ODPM Ministers. We were disappointed that Ministers from the Home Office and ODPM declined to come and give evidence to the Committee when we were in Oldham in September inquiring into *Social Cohesion*.

15. We intend to take evidence from the new chairman of the Housing Corporation early in 2004.

Implementation of legislation and major policy initiatives

16. None of our inquiries during 2003 were primarily focussed on the effect of legislation, but our inquiries into the *Effectiveness of Government Regeneration Initiatives*, *Local Government Finance: Formula Grant Distribution*, *Affordable Housing*, and the *Evening Economy and the Urban Renaissance* all embraced an element of review of the legislative framework, and in a number of cases led to conclusions and recommendations which would require changes to the law.

¹⁴ HC Deb, 5 December 2002, Col 1065

¹⁵ ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, First Report of Session 2002-03, *Local Government Finance: Formula Grant Distribution*, HC 164

Draft legislation

17. We were asked to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny of the *Draft Housing Bill*, which was announced in the Queen's Speech in November 2002.¹⁶ The draft Bill was published on 31 March.¹⁷ We took evidence in June, in time to publish our report on 22 July 2003.¹⁸ In the House on 1 December, The Deputy Prime Minister said "I am grateful to the Select Committee on Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions for its report on the draft Bill. It has once again demonstrated the value of pre-legislative scrutiny—there is no doubt about that, and anyone reading the report can see how it adds to the value of the Bill. I am pleased that the Committee broadly welcomed the Bill's aims. In our response published on 10 November we were able to respond positively to 40 of the Select Committee's recommendations, out of approximately 72, and to its conclusions, including those on houses in multiple occupation, the right to buy and the possible phased introduction of home information packs."¹⁹ The Housing Bill was read a second time on 12 January 2004.²⁰

Expenditure

18. Most of our inquiries during the year have involved examination of expenditure in one way or another. Our inquiry into the *Annual Report and Estimates 2002*²¹ looked at Departmental expenditure, and we have recently completed the same exercise for 2003.²² Our inquiry into the *Effectiveness of Government Regeneration Initiatives* was designed to establish whether money spent on regeneration is used effectively, and we have recently completed an inquiry into *Coalfield Communities* which raised similar issues.

Public Service Agreements

19. Our inquiry into *Reducing Regional Disparities in Prosperity* examined the Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to reduce disparities in economic growth. This is a joint target, shared by ODPM, the Department of Trade and Industry and HM Treasury. The examination of PSAs and their associated targets were also a significant aspect of our inquiries into the *Departmental Report and Estimates 2002*, and *The ODPM Annual Report and Accounts 2003*, and the Decent Homes target is the main focus for our current inquiry.

¹⁶ HC Deb, 13 November 2002, Col 4

¹⁷ *Draft Housing Bill*, Cm 5793, 31 March 2003

¹⁸ ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, Tenth Report of Session 2002-03, *The Draft Housing Bill*, HC 751

¹⁹ HC Deb, 1 December 2003, Col 242

²⁰ HC Deb, 12 January 2004

²¹ ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2002-03, *Departmental Annual Report and Estimates 2002*, HC 78

²² ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, First Report of Session 2003-04, *ODPM Annual Report and Accounts 2003*, HC 102

2 The Committee's work in 2004

20. We anticipate that 2004 will be another busy and demanding year. The Committee will shortly publish reports on *The Fire Service* and *Coalfield Communities*. We have inquiries underway into *The Role of Historic Buildings and Urban Regeneration*, *Social Cohesion* and *Decent Homes*. It is our intention to take evidence from the Housing Corporation and English Partnerships following major appointments in those organisations. We will also inquire into Postal Voting.

21. In the Queen's Speech in November 2003 a draft Regional Assemblies Bill was announced,²³ and we have accepted the Government's invitation to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny. We anticipate that this will take place in September 2004, although it is imperative that the Committee is given time to consider the draft Bill properly and any slippage in the publication of the draft Bill would seriously compromise the process of scrutiny.

²³ HC Deb, 26 November 2003, Col 4

Annex

Follow-up to recommendations made by the ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee in Session 2002-03

We asked the ODPM to provide an update on a number of recommendations that the ODPM: Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee had made in Session 2002-03. We identified a number of recommendations that the Government had accepted and on which it had promised action.

Our questions appear below in italicised text. In some cases, ODPM has simply answered our questions, in other cases, it has also provided a general update on the subject of our inquiries.

Third Report - Affordable Housing (HC 77) (CM 3783)

Recommendation:

(m) Local authority housing needs surveys should consider the need for subsidised housing for sale to workers who provide key local services as well as social rented housing. New guidance is required to ensure that the surveys identify demands for low cost home ownership (paragraph 85).

Government Response:

Guidance on housing strategies highlights the importance of local housing authorities developing a clear understanding of the nature and operation of all sectors of the housing market in their area. We expect the assessments of housing need which underpin local housing strategies and local plan policies to assess the range of needs for different types and sizes of housing across all tenures in their area. This should include affordable housing and housing to help meet the needs of specific groups, including key workers. Research is currently underway to examine approaches to the analysis of housing markets in low, high and balanced demand areas. This will develop a Housing Market Assessment toolkit for use by local authorities and groups of authorities working at the sub-regional level. The research is due to report in Autumn 2003 and will cover housing demand issues across all sectors. As such, the tool is expected to include advice on assessing demand for key worker housing and low cost home ownership. The Government will then consider whether further guidance is needed for authorities on the assessment of the need for housing for key workers and other support for low cost home ownership.

Question

Government is carrying out research to examine approaches to the analysis of housing markets and to develop low demand toolkit. It is supposed to be published in Autumn 2003 – when is it going to be published.

Answer:

The ODPM is currently commissioning guidance on updating the existing Housing Needs Assessment and integrating it with the forthcoming Housing Market Assessment manual, which is due to be published early February 2004. The new guidance will cover all tenures, including the full range of the intermediate housing market such as Low Cost Home Ownership. It will also encompass the housing needs of specific groups, including key workers.

Recommendation:

(s) There is a considerable amount of brownfield land available for development but councils and the RDAs have done too little to bring sites forward for development. The Government's proposals to simplify the use of Compulsory Purchase Orders will help. Councils need to be proactive in assembling sites to take forward the findings of their urban capacity studies. The Government should give RDAs a clear role in ensuring a good supply of sites for housing development to meet the needs of their regional economies. Setting up trusts to assemble and prepare sites would be helpful, but they will require significant start-up funds (paragraph 110).

Government Response:

The Government agrees that local authorities need to take a more proactive approach to facilitating site assembly if the Government's objectives of more efficient use of urban land and the re-use of previously-developed sites are to be achieved. We expect local authorities to work with landowners so that suitable sites identified in urban housing capacity studies are brought forward for development. In some instances, the local authority may need to purchase land to facilitate redevelopment. Wherever possible, this should be done by negotiated agreement but may involve the use of compulsory purchase powers. The new Compulsory Purchase Orders Circular now includes guidance to RDAs and EP on the use of their compulsory purchase powers. There is also revised guidance to local authorities on the use of their planning compulsory purchase powers. Provisions in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill are designed to make this power easier to interpret, so removing a barrier to its use in bringing forward redevelopment schemes. Further work on compulsory purchase procedures and compensation is being undertaken by the Law Commission, to complement the Government's longer-term policy intentions to make the compulsory purchase process quicker, simpler and fairer. English Partnerships (EP) are developing a comprehensive national strategy for brownfield land. This will start from a detailed understanding of what brownfield land is available, making full use of the National Land Use Database, which identifies 66,000 hectares of previously used land capable of redevelopment. The strategy will cover how best to bring sites back into use, especially in growth areas. RDAs have been set challenging targets on reclamation of brownfield land to achieve the

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's PSA target to reclaim at least 1,100 hectares of brownfield land per year by 2004. With 1,086 hectares reclaimed in 2001-02 under the Land and Property Programme they are well on target to meet this. From their mid year forecasts they are also expected to successfully achieve this target in 2002-03.

Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future sets out the key role RDAs will play in tackling the housing problems across England. To date they have played a crucial part in helping to deliver sustainable communities, but their role will now go beyond strategic directions to delivery. RDAs will produce Brownfield Land Action Plans in co-operation with local authorities, and other relevant agencies and statutory bodies, to assist in bringing previously developed land back into use. These plans will develop EP's national strategy.

Question:

The Law Commission is considering how to make the compulsory purchase process quicker, simpler and fairer. When will it publish its recommendations?

Answer:

The Law Commission published its Final Report on a CPO compensation Code on 16 December 2003, and is due to publish a further report on CPO procedures during 2004.

Question:

RDAs are supposed to produce Brownfield Land Action Plans – how many have? What progress has there been on RDAs drawing them up?

Answer:

The Sustainable Communities Plan set out the requirement for RDAs to develop EP's national strategy to produce Brownfield Land Action Plans. In advance of the completion of the national brownfield land strategy, the North West Development Agency (NWDA) has been working with EP and the Housing Corporation, to undertake two pilot studies for the preparation of brownfield land management action plans in part of Greater Manchester, and in East Lancashire.

These pilot studies will link to the emerging National Brownfield Strategy, with the aim of improving the supply of brownfield land for development in these two important areas. Consultants have been appointed to develop the action plans, with the Northwest Regional Assembly, Government Office for the North West, and eleven local authorities in Manchester and East Lancashire also playing a key role.

Lessons learnt from these pilot studies will be applied across the entire Northwest region and throughout the UK.

Recommendation:

(t) Public agencies are having major problems recruiting staff to provide services because of the high house prices. They also have a significant landholding which is surplus or underused. The Government should allow public agencies more flexibility in the disposal of their assets, to encourage the sale for affordable housing not least for their own workforce (paragraph 111).

Government Response:

The Government agrees that value for money rules on public sector land disposals should encourage sensible decisions about the use of land for housing. *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future* indicates that sponsor Departments and/or employers will contribute to the cost of key worker housing programmes from 2004. Such contributions could take the form of public sector land, as well as cash, building on existing successful arrangements to use public sector land and resources to provide affordable housing. Some Departments and Government Agencies are already using their sites for key workers: for example, NHS Estates, in partnership with housing providers, has made good progress towards meeting the NHS Plan commitment of providing 2,000 additional units of accommodation for nurses in London by July 2003. Many of these units are sourced by NHS Trusts from their own assets. The Department for Education and Skills has asked all local education authorities to consider the potential to use their assets in providing teacher accommodation; and local police authorities are pursuing local housing initiatives to support their key workers in areas with a high cost of living. EP will adopt a strategic role for surplus public sector land. Their portfolio already includes 42 strategic sites, many in growth areas. EP will now draw up a register of surplus public sector land across Government. Working in collaboration with the RDAs, EP's involvement will help ensure that wider government objectives, including housing need and regional economic strategies, are factored into disposal decisions.

Question:

EP is drawing up a register of surplus public sector land across Government. When will it be available; how will it be used?

Answer:

Information from the register is now available to government departments through EP. This includes lists of sites by geographical location, which is proving useful for departments wishing to obtain land, as well as those wishing to dispose of it. The register is designed to make the best possible use of surplus public sector land in meeting government targets and objectives, and in particular in relation to key worker and affordable housing.

Recommendation:

(x) We welcome CABE's proposal for a Best Value framework to set standards for the quality of new affordable housing schemes. We look forward to CABE providing more detail.

Government Response:

The Government is seeking to develop a Best Value indicator or set of indicators on the quality of the planning service for introduction in 2004-05. We will seek to incorporate design quality in these indicators, and we will continue to involve CABE in discussions.

Question:

A Best Value indicator for introduction in 2004-2005 on the services provided by planning departments is being drawn up – when is it going to be available?

Answer:

The ODPM has gone out to consultation on the introduction of two new planning quality indicators. The two indicators have been devised after extensive consultation with stakeholders (including CABE).

Fifth Report - Department Annual Report and Estimates 2002 (HC 78) (CM 5841)Recommendation:

(gg) “We are concerned that the Government plans to take funding away from areas of need, on the grounds that they are not spending the money allocated to them. The Government’s own strategies recognise that capacity in these areas is weak, and programmes should be mindful of that – Government should deal with the problem by streamlining its bureaucracy not by penalising local communities.”

Government Response:

The Government is investing substantial resources to help support community involvement and empowerment in the New Deal for Communities and other neighbourhood renewal or regeneration programmes. In the New Deal this has included a longer lead time than usual for preparing and submitting bids, spending on capacity building and active supportive involvement from officials. In most cases this is bearing fruit and good progress is being made.

The Government remains committed to the £2 billion promised over the lifetime of the New Deal for Communities programme and in last year’s spending review has re-profiled this total to reflect the rate of spend proposed in the Delivery Plans that local communities have put in place. While the re-profiled figures form the basis for each NDC partnership’s annual budget, Government Offices have the flexibility to manage resources across the programme in their region each year, giving more to those partnerships who can progress more quickly and less to those where projects have

slipped. This ensures that expenditure each year is managed to meet the overall provision, but allows each NDC partnership the ability to spend at a realistic rate for its stage of development.

The Government is also seeking to streamline bureaucratic processes – for example by establishing a single performance management process for all neighbourhood renewal activities. However, if, after all the efforts of Government and others, the conclusion is reached that a particular delivery vehicle or mechanism is simply not working, the Government will want to find other ways of targeting resources at neighbourhoods, rather than removing resources from them, to ensure that local residents are not penalised just because the delivery vehicle chosen has not done its job.

Question:

The Government is seeking to streamline bureaucratic processes (used by the Government Offices in allocating funds) – for example by establishing a single performance management process for all neighbourhood renewal activities. What progress has there been?

Answer:

A Performance Management Framework has been developed and implemented for Neighbourhood Programmes. This looks at issues such as governance, spending and strategic priorities. After piloting it was fully launched across NDCs earlier this year and as a result each NDC drew up a performance improvement plan. Neighbourhood Management Pathfinders have just completed the process and the results will be moderated shortly. Feedback from programmes suggests the partnerships find the process useful. Furthermore the process seems to be fully 'owned' by the partnerships.

In NDCs the Performance Management Assessment has enabled us to extend delegation to better performing partnerships thus reducing the bureaucratic demands further.

Recommendation:

(z) “We welcome the fact that the ODPM has responded to criticisms of DTLR from our predecessor Committee and others. It is now increasing its internal staff capacity and taking active steps to promote a more consistent and prioritised approach to local government across Government. We will seek to discover the extent to which the Cabinet Sub-Committee concerned is achieving that.”

Government Response:

The Government is developing a more consistent and discriminating approach to managing relations with local government. There is a balance to be struck between the focus of departments on delivery and their need to engage with authorities, particularly where performance requires improvement. The Government view is that to achieve better performance which meets local needs it is necessary to reduce burdens and allow

councils more flexibility to manage their own processes and budgets. The Office is taking the lead in working with departments to this end.

On the issue of the passporting of education provision, the Government have a long standing interest in the increases of schools spending from year to year, which authorities with education responsibilities will want to take into account in setting their budgets. Authorities had the opportunity to discuss with DfES on an individual basis any problems they would have experienced in passporting the increase in education provision. Two authorities submitted draft schools budgets which DfES considered inadequate, but were able to reach agreement with the Department subsequently. The Central Local Partnership has discussed the issue of education funding and agreed to work together to improve the system in 2004/05.

A jointly agreed list of key priorities for central and local government has been drawn up, under the auspices of the Central Local Partnership, to focus improvements in public services. These priorities played an important role in last year's Spending Review and they will increasingly inform the development of the Government's approach to performance management. A new Ministerial Cabinet sub-committee – GL(D) - has been established to help drive performance improvement and to oversee the detailed implementation of the Local Government White Paper. This machinery will also oversee collective arrangements to examine new regulatory requirements or burdens on authorities.

The Office is also developing the role of relationship managers and teams, using greater numbers of people with local government experience, to provide an ongoing relationship with groups of councils across the range of performance issues.

Supplementary Question:

A new ministerial cabinet sub-committee – GL (D) has been established to help drive performance improvement and to oversee the detailed implementation of the Local Government White Paper. How often has it met and what issues has it considered?

Answer:

In July 2003 GL(D) which dealt specifically with the Local Government White Paper, was disbanded. It was replaced by GL(P), which has a wider remit. The Committee meets on a regular basis, but, it has been the practice of successive administrations not to disclose specific details of meetings.

The terms of reference and composition of GL (P) is provided for your information.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

"To consider issues relating to the performance of local government and the development of local Public Service Agreements (PSAs), and to report to GL."

COMPOSITION

**Minister of State, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (Nick Raynsford)
(Chair)**

Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Minister for the Cabinet Office and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster

Minister of State, Home Office (Hazel Blears)

**Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
(Alun Michael)**

Minister for Transport

Minister of State, Department for Culture, Media and Sport (Estelle Morris)

Minister of State, Department for Education and Skills (David Miliband)

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
(Phil Hope)**

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of Health (Stephen
Ladyman)**

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions
(Maria Eagle)**

**Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of Trade and Industry
(Gerry Sutcliffe)**

Recommendation:

(hh) “Any future claims that targets have not been met as a result of the costs of meeting the fire strike, from a department with such strong track record of underspending should be treated with scepticism until they have been reviewed by the National Audit Office.”

Government Response:

This conclusion is noted. As set out in the response to (ff) the Office has introduced measures to reduce underspending. We are unable to calculate the final costs of the fire dispute as it is still unresolved. Any effect on targets will be clearer after the fire dispute has been settled and the final costs are known.

Supplementary Question:

Have the final costs of the fire dispute led to a reduction in funding to other programmes?

Answer:

The costs of the fire dispute have not led to reductions in spending on any of ODPM's other programmes.

Seventh Report - The Effectiveness of Government Regeneration Initiatives (HC 76-I) (Cm 5865)

Recommendation 'd' (paragraph 23):

There would be benefit in the professions concerned with economic and social evaluation in creating a more challenging and persuasive framework for evaluation of regeneration outcomes.

Government Response:

The performance management and evaluation of earlier regeneration programmes, up to and including the Single Regeneration Budget, did rely on information about programme outputs to draw inferences about the extent to which wider social, physical and economic regeneration goals were being achieved. This programme output information was, however, only one part of the evidence against which the achievements of the programme were judged. Additional information – for example from household surveys, and interviews with programme participants and stakeholders – was also important in shaping these judgements. Information on outputs plays an important role in testing the link between programme activity and programme outcomes. Responding to earlier criticisms over the bureaucratic burden of providing output data, work on the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's current area based initiatives has reduced the amount of information being collected about programme outputs. For example, in the New Deal for Communities programme there is no requirement on partnerships that they supply any output data either to the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit or to the Government Offices. However, evidence about outputs is still a useful ingredient in assessing the extent to which New Deal for Communities partnership activity is responsible for changes in outcomes (such as reduced levels of burglary or improved respiratory health) in the partnership area. This work is being undertaken through the national New Deal for Communities evaluation. The plausibility of an apparent effect often rests in part on evidence that there has been delivery of some of the key elements, such as diversionary activities for young people at risk of offending or smoking cessation programmes, in the neighbourhood. A similar approach is being taken in the evaluation of other Neighbourhood Renewal Unit area based initiatives.

Question:

What have these evaluations revealed? Do these evaluations influence the subsequent development of the programme under scrutiny, and can you give examples of where this has taken place?

Answer:

The development of the ODPM's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's programmes has been influenced by the findings of previous research on the lessons learned from earlier regeneration programmes, such as the Urban Development Corporations, City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget.

These indicated that sustainable renewal was more likely with appropriately funded, community-led and long-term programmes focused on tightly defined communities that successfully engaged all local stakeholders in delivering improved outcomes. The design of the New Deal for Communities programme embodies all of these features. Community engagement and participation is key to improving the delivery of services in deprived areas and is supported through a number of NRU programmes, such as the Community Chest, the Community Empowerment Fund.

Recommendation 'e' (paragraph 23):

We recommend that some places be selected for evaluation of outcomes taken as a whole over the 30 and more years of a proactive urban policy, with a view to determining more closely the appropriateness of different categories of scheme for different types of place.

Government Response:

We welcome the Committee's recommendation for long-term evaluation, and this chimes with a wider desire to move, where possible, to studying interventions and their impact over a longer time period. There are, however, difficult methodological issues that a study of the type recommended would need to surmount. Policy interventions have often had overlapping aims, objectives and – as importantly – target areas. Documentation and evidence about older policies is surprisingly sparse and often hard to compare with information about more recent interventions. We have reservations about the feasibility of a study that could helpfully assess the combined and individual impact and appropriateness of interventions, and that will provide useful pointers to future targeting. However, it may be that academic researchers with an interest may be able to think further about some of the Committee's interests here, and we would certainly wish to encourage such independent research. On a related point, we are currently undertaking technical scoping work to assess ways of undertaking a long-term evaluation of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. As part of any such study it would be important to look back at the history of any case study areas as well as to study in real-time the impact of current policies to inform future targeting. We hope that such work illustrates that we share the Committee's interest in encouraging long-term, rigorous and challenging research to understand how we can best intervene in particular areas.

Question:

What was the outcome of the technical scoping work? And what progress has been made in encouraging academics to develop long term evaluation methodology? when will the long-term evaluation commence?

Answer:

The technical scoping study on evaluation of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (NSNR) is now in final draft stage and approaching

finalisation. It will be used, as intended, as a background document for those selected to submit a bid to undertake a full evaluation of the NSNR. The scoping study reports a strong appetite for an evaluation of the NSNR: across government and beyond, and for local as well as regional and national levels audiences. The study proposes that a wide mixture of methods and sources will be useful, and that much existing data and evaluation evidence can and should be drawn upon. A decision about commissioning the full study will be taken by Ministers, and, should they wish to proceed, our hope is that consultants could commence work in Spring of 2004.

ODPM is developing networks with a range of academic and other research communities, and through these networks we hope to improve understanding of our interests and needs within the research communities. As part of this, we are expressing our interest in objective, long-term analysis of trends.

Recommendation 'f' (paragraph 27):

There is no particular merit in ensuring areas are consistent in size, we look to rapid completion of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit's work with the Office of National Statistics in creating a public data set for neighbourhoods which will make it easier for those at every level seeking to minimise the artificiality of areas defined for the purposes of regeneration.

Government Response:

We agree with the Committee's recommendation. Ward boundaries are used as the current geography for deprivation data through lack of an alternative small area geography. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is working closely with the Office for National Statistics to develop a better geographical base for data, which will aim to overcome:

- problems of consistency of size, which is an important issue when current wards vary in size from a few hundred people to tens of thousands
- the fact that ward boundaries experience a high level of change, which makes it difficult to track change over time; and
- to reflect, as far as possible, natural neighbourhoods.

We are also exploring the potential for users of government statistics to define and draw their own boundaries on which to display and collate data. In all this work a key issue is preventing the disclosure of individuals' private circumstances through the display of data. This places some obvious limits on what can be achieved.

Question:

What has been the outcome of the work with the ONS? What is the timescale for tangible progress?

Answer:

The outcome of the work with the ONS is the production of geographical building blocks on which future data can be released. Super Output Areas (SOAs) are a layered geography with areas intermediate in size between 2001 Census Output Areas and local authority districts.

Three layers are proposed, with each layer nesting inside the layer above. SOAs offer a choice of scale for the collection and publication of data that could be disclosive if published for Census OAs. They give an improved basis for comparison across the country, because the units are more similar in size than, for example, electoral wards. SOAs are also intended to be highly stable for significant periods of time. Such stability should enable improved comparison and monitoring of policy over time.

The lower layer and middle layers have now been generated by zone design software.

- Lower Layer: Around 35,000 zones, each comprised of groups of Census OAs: almost all between 1,000 and 2,000 residents in size.**
- Middle layer: Around 7,000 zones, almost all between 5,000 and 10,000 in size.**
- Upper layer: when developed, is expected have about 1500 zones mostly between 25,000 and 50,000 in size.**

A methodology is in place that will complete production of the SOAs - essentially rolling forward the method used for Census OA production. Production of the lower layer SOAs and prototype middle layer SOAs has now been completed, and is being checked.

Recommendation 'g' (paragraph 28):

We recommend that the Community Cohesion Unit follows up its May 2002 guidance with regular reports on implementation, and that it be tasked with reporting publicly on the community cohesion implications of any new regeneration initiatives, including the recently announced Enterprise Areas. The consequences of area-based initiatives upon community cohesion should be covered routinely rather than exceptionally in project, neighbourhood and programme evaluations.

Government Response:

The Guidance on Community Cohesion – a joint initiative by the Local Government Association, the Commission for Racial Equality, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Office – is due to be revised and updated in 2004. This new version will report on implementation, with examples drawn from the Community

Cohesion Pathfinder programme, and those authorities awarded Beacon Council status for their work on community cohesion. Furthermore, the Regional Co-ordination Unit's area based initiative guidance recognises the potential impact of geographically targeted funding streams on community cohesion. The guidance states that: "Departments should demonstrate that they have considered the community cohesion issues raised in the Denham report, by consulting the Community Cohesion Unit. In some cases, they may like to consider allowing flexibility for small additional areas to be included within a scheme, at the discretion of those on the ground, if this would prevent tension arising." Ministerial commitment to comply with this guidance will ensure that community cohesion impact is routinely considered during the design stage of new policy initiatives. The Regional Co-ordination Unit is working closely with the Community Cohesion Unit and the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit to make sure that departments are fully aware of the importance of these issues, and will be issuing joint supplementary guidance and presenting roadshows across Whitehall in the coming months to raise awareness. 4Building Cohesive Communities: A Report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion

We agree that previous evaluations of regeneration initiatives paid insufficient attention to the impact of programmes on communities as opposed to people and places, though there was evidence that some groups were less likely to benefit than others. Achieving community engagement with neighbourhood renewal is now fully recognised as an important element in the design, delivery and sustainability of regeneration programmes on the ground.

Current evaluations of Neighbourhood Renewal Unit area based programmes are looking at their impact on all sections of the community in the neighbourhoods covered by the programmes. In addition, the national New Deal for Communities evaluation is assessing the extent to which the New Deal for Communities programme is impacting on wider community cohesion across the district, and at how possible tensions have been identified and managed.

Question:

Has the joint supplementary guidance been published? Have the roadshows taken place? What progress has been made on the Guidance for Community Cohesion? What approach has been taken to ensure community engagement in neighbourhood renewal programmes? How will the Community Cohesion Pathfinder Schemes, introduced by the Home Office, relate to issues considered here?

Answer:

Work was carried out over the summer to see how community engagement could be better integrated into NRU programmes, and how lessons from outside NRU (eg tenant participation) and outside the ODPM (eg Active Communities Directorate, HO) could be brought in. This has been followed up with a NRU-wide forum on community participation with action points to

be taken forward. Research colleagues have built community participation into other evaluations - eg NDC and LSP to ensure that lessons and good practice are being drawn out.

The single Community Programme's focus on supporting community involvement at neighbourhood level in the delivery of Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies is reflected in the LSP Toolkit.

The Cohesion Pathfinder Schemes are based around the priorities and actions as determined by local areas rather than national priorities. However, NRU is involved in the learning coming from the Pathfinder Schemes.

The Cohesion Pathfinder Schemes, jointly funded by the CCU and the NRU, are based around the priorities and actions as determined by local areas rather than national

Recommendation 'j' (paragraph 36):

We recommend that all regeneration partnerships, including Local Strategic Partnerships, engage with local transport providers. Consideration of transport requirements should be a mandatory and fundamental part of all regeneration plans.

Government Response:

Last year we asked local authorities to report in their Annual Progress Reports on what they were doing to link the implementation of their Local Transport Plans to their Community Strategy, for example, through the development of Local Strategic Partnerships. We think it equally important to look at how best we can ensure Local Strategic Partnerships take account of the role of transport, when considering, among other things, ideas for using Neighbourhood Renewal Fund resources.

Question:

What progress has been made on this?

Answer:

The 2003 guidance on Local Transport Plans invited local authorities to report on how the implementation of their plans were contributing towards the delivery of access to jobs and services, particularly for those most in need. This information was not made mandatory and the data has not been yet been analysed. We do encourage Local Strategic Partnerships to use Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to address transport priorities in their Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies, but it is not one of the five key themes of employment, education, health, crime and housing against which spend is analysed at a national level.

Recommendation 'k' (paragraph 38):

Asset-based regeneration provides sustainable benefits. We recommend that Government review the existing structure of rules and regulations, including the fiscal system, to ensure there are no unintentional or perverse obstacles to asset-based regeneration.

Government Response:

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is already actively considering issues relating to asset-based regeneration, working with colleagues across Government, in the context of the New Deal for Communities programme. This includes consideration of whether there are unintentional or perverse obstacles to asset-based regeneration. The Department will take account of the points made by the Committee as part of that programme of work.

Question:

What progress has been made on this?

Answer:

A programme Note providing guidance on the acquisition and management of assets has been issued to NDCs, This deals with the current rules and arrangements.

A Neighbourhood Renewal Adviser is currently carrying out work to inform discussions with Treasury regarding those changes that might both facilitate the acquisition and management of assets by partnerships but also ensure an appropriate level of oversight.

Recommendation 'q' (paragraph 75):

We acknowledge that it is early days, and recognise that several witnesses suggested that Local Strategic Partnerships could in the long-term play a significant role in “defining, implementing and organising the ABIs within their areas.” However we have received no evidence to suggest that Local Strategic Partnerships add value to the regeneration process. Without significant review, and revision of accountability to make Local Strategic Partnerships subject to the same scrutiny processes as local authorities, we fear they will amount to little but ‘talking shops’.

Government Response:

Local Strategic Partnerships are the key forum for co-ordinating delivery of Area Based Initiatives (and mainstream services) at the local level, bringing together the range of accountable bodies in a single forum to ensure coherent planning and delivery. As such, they will often be key stakeholders in ensuring the success of the “single local management centre” approach, driving change and simplifying funding stream management from the bottom up. All Local Strategic Partnerships have now largely developed effective and inclusive structures and working practices, that are encouraging a more strategic and integrated approach to the planning and delivery of services.

Nearly every Local Strategic Partnership in the 88 Neighbourhood Renewal Fund areas has drawn up a Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, and Local Strategic Partnerships are well advanced in developing Community Strategies. These strategies set out each Local Strategic Partnership's proposed actions and targets for tackling deprivation and provide the framework for public sector Local Strategic Partnership members' own plans and programmes. Local Strategic Partnerships are now focusing on the implementation and delivery of their strategies and targets. Many Local Strategic Partnerships in the 88 Neighbourhood Renewal Fund areas are engaged in the development of more detailed neighbourhood action plans in consultation with local communities and other stakeholders. Some Local Strategic Partnerships are already developing new structures, such as neighbourhood management, to support delivery of their plans. Over the summer of 2003, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will issue a toolkit of practical advice and support to help Local Strategic Partnerships make the shift from partnership and strategy development to the delivery of real change on the ground.

Question:

Have the toolkits been well received? What do they consist of? How will they really help deliver change? Has independent evaluation been undertaken into the impact of LSPs on the development of regeneration programmes? If not, is any planned? Have the neighbourhood renewal strategies been subject to independent scrutiny? What difference have LSPs made here?

Answer:

The web based LSP Delivery Toolkit was launched on Tuesday 2 December following an intensive period of consultation. It complements the introduction of a performance management framework which, Local Strategic Partnerships in the 88 Neighbourhood Renewal Fund areas must complete by April 2004 to review how their action plans will deliver the commitments made in their Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies. The toolkit contains a mix of guidance on the priorities for neighbourhood renewal, the role of Local Strategic Partnerships in neighbourhood renewal, constructing and reviewing action plans, and practical case studies highlighting 'what works'. Those LSPs who do not receive Neighbourhood Renewal Fund as also encouraged to use the toolkit.

ODPM has commissioned an independent evaluation of Local Strategic Partnerships, and this will report on the formative stage of LSP development in 2005 before considering impact issues. The NRU plans to commission complementary research on the impact of Local Strategic Partnerships during 2004, as part of the overall evaluation of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal. In addition an independent analysis of Local Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies has been undertaken by academic contractors and the results used to inform development of the toolkit.

Recommendation 'v' (paragraph 90):

We recommend that those in Government designing programmes and the Civil Servants managing them at regional level participate in secondments with local regeneration practitioners to learn about the realities of delivering regeneration and the delivery channels available.

Government Response:

We fully agree with this recommendation. Our approach is set out in Action 12 of The Learning Curve¹⁰, which states: The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit is working with Government Offices for the Regions to ensure that Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, Government Office staff, and civil servants across Whitehall have the skills and knowledge they need to develop and implement neighbourhood renewal policy. The Cabinet Office Interchange Unit is working with the Government Offices on interchange opportunities for civil servants in neighbourhood renewal. Some secondment opportunities have already been taken by civil servants arranged on an individual basis. We are now working with central and regional Government, and local regeneration bodies, to develop a more structured programme of interchange, which can take the form of visits, exchanges, job shadowing and mentoring, in addition to longer-term secondments.

Question:

How many secondments have now taken place? Where to and for how long?

Answer:

As stated in our previous response, a number of secondment opportunities are taking place. This activity includes long term secondments, short term secondments, ad hoc attachments and work placements as well as other forms of learning such as visits, exchanges, job shadowing and mentoring. It is difficult to present an accurate figure because the activity is not managed centrally and is often not formally recorded.

Secondment and other experiential learning is part of a much broader programme of learning support developed by ODPM, often delivered by Government Offices, to improve the delivery of neighbourhood renewal.

Eighth Report - Planning for Sustainable Communities: Sustainable Communities in the South East (HC 77-1) (Cm 5895)

Recommendation:

(j) Employment and enterprise creation are vital to creating sustainable communities, alongside new housing development. There is very little in the Government's plan about how new business and job creation will take place within the Growth Areas. The sub-regional plans for the Growth Areas must include employment and business growth strategies alongside the housing proposals to reduce commuting into central London and to create more economically sustainable communities (paragraph 47).

Government Response:

The Government expects the strategies for the Growth Areas to plan for sustainable communities, in which strategies for employment and business growth are integral to the overall strategy. We agree that the aim should be to ensure sustainable patterns of development, with economic development, housing and infrastructure being planned in an integrated way. We are currently revising guidance for regional planning and for economic development. These will both recognise the need for an integrated approach to sustainable communities.

Question:

The Government say that it is revising guidance for regional planning economic development. What progress has there been?

Answer:

Draft Planning Policy Statement 11: Regional Planning is currently out to consultation.

A new draft Planning Policy Statement 4: Planning for Economic Development is being prepared for publication in spring 2004.

Recommendation:

(r) Rigid highway standards and design guidance are inhibiting the implementation of the aspirations in PPG3 to create well-designed neighbourhoods. New highway standards and guidance are urgently required which are more flexible to allow architects and planners to draw up designs to fit a particular locality (paragraph 86).

Government Response:

The Government expects well-designed new development. This is why its policies in Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (PPG3) expect local planning authorities to adopt policies which "focus on the quality of the places and living environments being created and give priority to the needs of pedestrians rather than the movement and parking of vehicles". PPG3 is supported by good practice guidance, *Better Places to Live: by Design*. We have commissioned research on barriers to residential developments designed to

reflect PPG3's emphasis on quality and sustainability. The work has examined the technical, legal and institutional context and thrown light on impediments which prevent the achievement of better quality and more innovative residential layouts. The research, led by WSP in partnership with David Lock Associates and Transport Research Laboratory, has found that much of the technical framework in place is not geared to the delivery of better quality streets. The research team's report is being finalised for publication and we will give careful consideration to the issues it raises.

Question:

The Government says it has commissioned work by WSP and others on impediments to good housing design – when will it be published?

Answer:

The Government published this report, *Better Streets, Better Places* on 17 July 2003, to accompany its Parliamentary Statement on Planning for Housing. This report thoroughly examined the difficulties of integrating well-designed higher density housing with local highway requirements; and it concluded that the technical, legal and institutional framework in place are not sufficiently well geared to delivering the better quality and more innovative residential layouts expected by PPG3.

ODPM and DfT aim to publish an action plan to take forward the recommendations in *Better Streets, Better Places* early in the New Year.

Recommendation:

(w) The first Millennium Village at Greenwich has demonstrated the benefits of incorporating environmental features within a new housing development. However, overall the Millennium Communities programme has failed to achieve significant results. English Partnerships needs to review the programme to identify the reasons for the delays and produce a revised programme which includes clear deadlines and criteria against which the success of these developments can be assessed (paragraph 91).

Government Response:

The Millennium Communities programme has achieved significant results in demonstrating the benefits of incorporating environmental features within a new housing development. At Greenwich Millennium Community 346 homes have been developed, of which 41 are affordable. A formal evaluation of the first 300 homes against the benchmarks and targets is being completed. The results will be published within the next few months, and interim indications show that good progress against the targets has been made. The Millennium Community programme was planned to be a long term programme, and the final three locations were announced in July 2002. Each of the seven sites is therefore at a different point in the development process, and providing results against objectives relevant to that stage of development. For example, increasing social inclusion and participation is an important objective and many of the sites are currently undertaking an intensive community consultation process with positive

results. It is a measure of the success of the programme that targets that were considered to be at the cutting edge in 1997 are now perceived as more routine since the programme has demonstrated that these issues are achievable. Thus the Government does accept, in light of the recent launch of the Sustainable Communities Plan, that the Millennium Communities programme should be reviewed to take into account current thinking and objectives which have emerged since the launch of the programme. The Department and English Partnerships will be working closely together to undertake a review over the next 6 months.

Questions:

- 1. The Government says that the evaluation of Greenwich Millennium Community development is being completed – when will it be published?*
- 2. ODPM and EP are working on a review of the Millennium Communities Programme – what is its brief and timetable for publication?*

Answers:

- 1. A formal evaluation of the first 300 homes against the benchmarks and targets is being completed. The results will be made available to ODPM by end of January 2004, and interim indications show that good progress against the targets has been made.**
- 2. The Review has commenced and the Department and English Partnerships will be working closely together to complete this over the next 4 -5 months. We are aiming to announce results in spring 2004. The steering group looking at the review has its first meeting on 17th December. The brief will be finalised then.**

Recommendation:

(y) The costs of providing the infrastructure for the house-building programme in the South East are likely to be very high but as yet there has not been a full assessment. We look forward to the preparation of a whole scale plan for the provision of all the infrastructure when the new house-building targets have been prepared (paragraph 100).

Government Response:

The Government is working to develop a better understanding and assessment of the costs of supporting infrastructure for the 30 year programme set out in the Sustainable Communities Plan. This is clearly essential to ensure delivery of this ambitious programme. ODPM is working with other Departments and local partners on the infrastructure required and will have a more thorough assessment of potential costs once this is complete. But we do not intend to prepare a plan of investment over the 30 year period covered by the Communities Plan. It would clearly be unrealistic and inappropriate for the Government to make commitments to infrastructure provision

over a 30 year period. However, the Government intends to provide more details of ODPM's spending plans over the next three years. In addition, DfT will be making announcements on the outstanding Multi Modal Studies shortly which will be relevant to the growth areas. DfT will also take account of the Growth Area agenda in their future investment decisions. By the time the house building targets are incorporated in RPG, we will have a very thorough understanding of the infrastructure costs for each area.

Question:

The new housebuilding targets for the Growth Areas are being integrated into RPGs. What progress is there in assessing the overall infrastructure costs?

Answer:

The actual number of new dwellings in each of the growth areas, and their location, is subject to the review of relevant regional plans and to the completion of more detailed local studies which include assessment of infrastructure needs. For example an initial view by regional partners of some of these needs is included in the draft RPG for Milton Keynes/South Midlands published for consultation in July.

Government is working with regional and local partners to assess what is required and a summary of its initial commitments is included in the first stage report on "Creating Sustainable Communities: Making it Happen - Thames Gateway and the Growth Areas". In addition work is in hand across Government to look at issues such as the responsiveness of health and education services to areas of rapid growth.

Recommendation:

(kk) The ODPM and DEFRA need to develop a joint programme of flood protection which identifies areas where development can be allowed and where the habitat should be protected and improved (paragraph 126).

Government Response:

The ODPM and DEFRA already work very closely together (and with the Environment Agency, English Nature and others) on strategies and policy on development and flood risk. The Government is obliged and committed to protecting internationally important conservation areas. In pursuit of this objective, we have launched the Coastal Habitat Management Plan (CHaMP) initiative to identify the flood and coastal defence requirements for such sites. In addition, DEFRA has made it clear that any flood management works that are necessary for maintaining the integrity of these internationally important sites will receive funding. The question of where development can be allowed and where habitats should be protected is, however, a matter for local determination in the light of Government strategy and policy. The Government's strategy for flood and coastal defence was published 10 years ago and it is now being reviewed. This will involve all departments with an interest, together with local

government and external stakeholders. The Environment Agency is seeking to work closely with development partnerships to identify sustainable defence solutions that take sufficient account of the need to protect and create habitats. The whole of the coastline of England and Wales is already covered by Shoreline Management Plans developed by the coastal groups (primarily the maritime Councils and the Environment Agency) that set out sustainable coastal defence policies for the coast. The second generation of shoreline management plans is now being developed and will involve close co-operation between those responsible for the planning of development and flood management. Inland, DEFRA and the Environment Agency have piloted a similar approach to the management of river flooding through Catchment Flood Management Plans. The roll-out of this programme will enable a more holistic appreciation of flood risk to be incorporated in spatial development planning to identify areas for development and for protection and improvement of habitats.

Question:

The Government strategy for flood and coastal defence published 10 years ago is being reviewed – what is the timetable for the review and when will the final strategy be published?

Answer:

The current timetable foresees a public consultation period over summer 2004 and the publication of a new strategy towards the end of 2004.

Ninth Report – Reducing Regional Disparities in Prosperity (HC 492-I) (Cm 5958)

Recommendation:

5. Gross Value Added per head is not an adequate indicator for this Public Service Agreement target. We recommend that regional prosperity should instead be measured by a basket of indicators. This would explicitly take account of the range of factors that determine regional prosperity, using different indicators for each – productivity, disposable income, employment and unemployment. Quality of life should also be taken into account. The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry's proposal of a balanced scorecard approach should be taken forward. Using a basket of indicators, each derived from a different source, also reduces the risk of relying on a single source of poor quality data. We recommend that ODPM, DTI and the Treasury consider the regional performance indicators to measure quality of life set out in *Regional Quality of Life Counts* as a potential basis for improving the measurement of performance against this target. (Paragraph 36).

Government Response:

GVA is an internationally accepted method of measuring economic output. It encapsulates a very diverse range of outputs including the activity of employees and the self-employed, and the profits of companies, in addition to the activity of central and local government and households. Due to the time lag in obtaining GVA data, a basket

of more timely supporting indicators, namely business surveys, employment statistics, unemployment rates, earnings growth and VAT registrations (plus any other relevant indicators which become available at the regional level) will be used to provide interim assessments of performance at six-monthly intervals. The Government has a range of PSA targets which aim to improve the quality of life for people in England. For example ODPM's target to bring all social housing into decent condition by 2010; Defra's target to promote sustainable management and prudent use of natural resources domestically and internationally; and the Home Office target to reduce crime and the fear of crime, tackle youth crime and violent, sexual and drug-related crime, anti-social behaviour and disorder, increasing safety in the home and public spaces. These will have their own monitoring arrangements.

Question:

The Government is intending to publish data on regional prices and inflation to provide cost-effective estimates of real GVA. When will the first data be published and how frequently will it be updated?

Answer

The ONS published (on its website) a study showing relative regional price levels on 13 November. A News release was also published referring to the article.

These comparisons are based on a one-off exercise in 2000 which produced approximate comparisons of price levels for the nine English regions, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland which has been partially updated in 2003 to provide more up-to-date results. The 2000 exercise involved a special analysis of RPI data: this has been repeated. It also involved a special price collection survey for goods and services where RPI data were not suitable for price level comparisons: the results on regional price level differentials from this survey have been carried forward to the 2003 analysis.

Prices have also being collected for those categories of expenditure where price level comparisons were not produced in 2000 (in particular, insurance, mortgage interest payments, house depreciation and council tax).

It needs to be noted that the figures should not be used:

- for the calculation of regional inflation rates since 2000. The figures reflect changes in the basket between 2000 and 2003 and also have a broader coverage including the inclusion of owner-occupier housing costs
- as estimates of differences in the cost-of-living. For example, no attempt has been made to price different items in different regions to reflect differences in the individual items purchased within each category of expenditure.

The ONS plan to update the survey during 2004, providing estimates in relative regional price levels on a consistent basis. These will be published in Autumn of 2004.

Longer term plans for the calculation of price level comparisons will be formulated after the publication of the Allsopp review into the needs for regional economic data.

Regional Inflation rates

The ONS plans for regional inflation rates will take into account the outcome of the first report from the Allsopp Review which was published on 10 December. There are a number of reasons why the Government do not currently produce regional inflation figures:

Data limitations:

- RPI data are not suitable for the compilation of reliable regional inflation indices: sample sizes for locally collected prices would need to increase substantially; source data for the weights may have to be significantly enhanced to ensure that detailed regional expenditure categories are weighted appropriately
- many of the centrally compiled indices (e.g. housing, cars, personal computers) are designed as national indices. It could be difficult to decompose such data into appropriate regions.
 - the majority of product descriptions used for the items priced in the RPI are not sufficiently well-defined for price level comparisons where very detailed descriptions are required to ensure like for like comparisons.

Computing issues

- The ONS computer systems are not sufficiently flexible to produce regional indices. ONS plan to develop a new computer system but this is at the very early stage and speed of progress will depend on further funding.

The Government would need to ensure the need justified the cost before embarking on the compilation of regional inflation rates.

Recommendation:

Census 2001

8. There is an urgent need to improve the alignment between different sources of population data. We recommend that in the small number of authorities where there remains a problem between the Council and ONS about the size of the population, following the 2001 Census, a data matching exercise should be undertaken by an

independent third party. This should be completed in time to feed in to next year's Local Government Finance settlement and ONS should be bound by the result. (Paragraph 44).

Government Response:

ONS are currently carrying out matching exercises to compare Census results with administrative datasets in Westminster and Manchester. These are key research projects which will inform future developments. ONS aim to publish a first report of the preliminary results of these exercises in late 2003. ONS are also concluding other studies to increase the understanding of the gap between the final 2001 census based population estimates, and the earlier estimates based on the census of 1991. If the evidence suggests that significant inaccuracies have occurred in the 2001 Census, this would contribute to the ONS reassessment of the population estimates that have already been published. One key finding from the quality assurance studies carried out to validate the 2001 population census was the great variability in the association between administrative counts and census estimates at local authority level. The experiences of the past two years led to the conclusion that the design of statistical sources (including the 2001 census), has placed insufficient emphasis on enabling differences between sources to be understood. The National Statistician's report on demographic statistics (*A demographic statistics service for the 21st century*) announced a series of measures to improve the quality, timeliness and relevance of population statistics to meet the needs of local, regional and national users.

Question:

The ONS is carrying out matching exercises to compare Census results with datasets in Westminster and Manchester. The first results were expected to be published in 'late 2003'. When are they to be published?

Answer:

Provisional results of the Census Matching Project for Manchester were released on 4th November and are available on the National Statistics website:-

http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_population/InterimReport_CensusMatching.pdf

These results necessitated a revision to the mid-year population estimate for Manchester for 2001, and this revised estimate was also released at this time. There is a requirement for further investigation of some issues surrounding the Manchester results before the exercise is completed. This additional work will include an element of fieldwork, and will be completed by Spring 2004.

The Westminster exercise has also identified a number of issues which require further analysis. ONS are establishing a programme of work to resolve these issues, which will also include an element of fieldwork, and the results of the exercise will be published once this work has been completed.

Recommendation:

16. Disappointingly, the Government could not provide a regional breakdown of expenditure on programmes targeted at regions. (Paragraph 57).

Government Response:

The policies mentioned in *A Modern Regional Policy for the United Kingdom* are not a definitive or comprehensive list of policies that support regional economic development. As the Government said (ODPM, RRD07 (c)), detailed regional breakdowns of public expenditure are not currently available for 2002-03. Regional analysis of the England Rural Development Programme (ERDP) 1 will be available in 2005 when a new programme management system, currently under development, is planned to be introduced. The budgets listed are managed or otherwise influenced on behalf of Government by the Government Offices for the Regions (except ERDP and RSA), together with other Government programmes which total about £7 billion.

As part of the next spending review, Treasury will be asking Departments to produce a regional breakdown of their spending plans. The work by Professor McLean (see recommendation 21) provides a thorough analysis of methodologies for producing regional breakdowns of outturn expenditure information. The lessons of that work can be used to inform the way that Departments produce regional analysis of their spending plans.

Recommendation:

22. The Government should publish Professor McLean's study on the flow of public expenditure to the regions by the end of July 2003. (Paragraph 69).

Government Response:

The study was published on 5 September.

Question:

How is the work of Professor McLean on the flow of public expenditure to the regions being reflected in producing regional breakdowns of spending and revising the proportion of funds distributed to each region?

Answer:

Professor McLean's study was focused on improving the quality of regional spending data. It will help to inform estimates of regional spending published in future Public Expenditure Statistical Analyses (PESA).

Recommendation:

27. We welcome the Government's announcement of reviews of the links between universities, industry and the RDAs and look forward to practical measures being implemented as a result, targeted at the less prosperous regions. (Paragraph 85).

Government Response:

The Lambert Review has been asked to consider a range of issues around university business collaboration. They published a *Summary of Consultation responses and Emerging Issues* paper on 14 July 2003. In it they identified several issues relating to the regional agenda and the potential for RDAs to promote business-university collaboration. The Lambert Review will be considering these issues further and making recommendations in its final report in October.

Question:

The Lambert Review on university-business collaboration was supposed to be published in October– when will it be published?

Answer:

The outcome of the review was published on 4 December.

Recommendation:

31. We recommend that the UK Government should adopt the approach used by the German Federal Government where a proportion of the transport budget is allocated on regional development grounds, rather than by the usual criteria (Paragraph 97).

Government Response:

The Government takes into account a wide range of factors in reaching decisions on transport investment. Decisions on the allocation of transport resources necessarily reflect the Government's key transport priorities set out in the Ten Year Plan for Transport – to improve public transport, tackle road congestion, reduce road casualties and reduce the impact of transport on the environment. They also reflect transport's contribution to other Government priorities, including economic growth. The process for making transport decisions – the New Approach to Transport Appraisal – is designed to ensure that economic and regeneration benefits are taken into account alongside other criteria such as safety, environmental impact, accessibility and integration. This ensures full consideration is given to addressing regional economic growth in taking decisions on transport issues, and the economic benefits to regions of major transport schemes has been one of the key factors when making decisions to invest in particular schemes.

Question:

The DfT's "New Approach to Transport Appraisal" is designed to ensure that economic and regeneration benefits are taken into alongside other criteria such as safety and environmental impact. Does the ODPM have any evidence that the regional balance of funding now reflects this new approach?

Answer:

The Economic Impact Report was published in September 2003. It provides improved advice as to how employment effects should be taken into account in regeneration areas, which will be used by central government and local authorities on a scheme by scheme basis. The report does not aim to influence funding allocations at a higher level. It is too early to take a view on the effect the report has had.

Recommendation:

34. We welcome the Government's commitment to review the number of civil servants based in London. This will however only contribute to a reduction in the gap between regions if they move to the least prosperous parts of the country. The Government may find it very hard to persuade relatively low paid public sector workers to move out of London if it abolishes national pay scales at the same time. (Paragraph 103).

Government Response:

As the Committee has noted, part of the remit of the Independent Review of Public Sector Relocation ("the Lyons Review") is to consider the relocation of civil service and other public sector workers in the light of the need to improve the regional balance of economic activity. The Committee suggests that the review will only contribute to the reduction in the gap between regions if they move to the least prosperous parts of the country. The economic impact of relocation on specific regions is not easy to quantify, and the Relocation Team has commissioned consultants to consider this. The choice of location is for Departments, depending on their business needs, and individual business cases, but the Review Team will be looking for evidence of benefits to regions or specific locations when assessing the proposals Departments make. As many of the country's severely deprived areas (i.e. in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding) are urban conurbations where there is already a significant government presence, it is not anticipated that this will represent a particular difficulty. The Committee also suggests that regional pay policies may make it more difficult to persuade post-holders to move. Pay arrangements will however be only one part of relocation packages which will be for discussion once this review has concluded.

Questions:

a) The Lyons Review has produced initial ideas. When do you expect the final report to be published? How many civil servants do you expected to be relocated out of London as a result of Sir Michael Lyons' recommendations?

Answer:

Sir Michael is planning to publish his final report in March 2004. We will move 20,000 civil service jobs out of London and the South East for the benefit of the regions and nations of the UK.

b) What progress has the DTI made in its business support review? When does it expect to publish the results?

Answer:

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, Patricia Hewitt, announced to the House of Commons on 17 July 2003 (column 504W) the progress of Business Services information which the DTI is implementing following the outcome of the Review. The progress made on business support is as follows:

- **The DTI is close to completing its business support transformation Programme**
- **Four new DTI Business Support Products are up and running. The four products (launched in 2003) are:**
 - **Grant for investigating an innovative idea**
 - **Grant for Research and Development**
 - **Knowledge Transfer Partnerships**
 - **Small Firms Loan Guarantee**
- **DTI have also launched the new Business Support directory, covering DTI, RDA and OGD business support**
- **Since November 2002, we have closed 39 old schemes to new business**
- **A new Investment Committee is up and running, and has made recommendations to the SOS on the new set of products**
- **DTI have transformed the way the department works to make the process of running the new products much more efficient**
- **DTI have implemented a new tool to analyse data on the efficacy of the new products**

Further work to be done:

- **DTI are planning to launch the six remaining DTI products next April.**
- **Two of the innovation products will be used to launch the nanotechnology initiative slightly earlier, in February, with other technology initiatives coming on line between October 2004 and April 2005.**
- **Between now and April 2004, are working on the marketing; monitoring and evaluation; delivery; and training of delivery and access channels.**
- **The products that will be launched in 2004 are as follows (names are indicative only):**

- Support for Investment in Assisted Areas
- Support for Knowledge Transfer Networks
- Support for collaborative research and development
- Support to disseminate new and existing best practice to businesses
- Support for business to implement best practice activities
- DTI are also currently consulting on a possible sixth product i.e. Small Business Investment Companies (SBICs). These will help to plug the funding gap between business angel and venture capital investment for high growth business proposals.

c) How has the Government strengthened the links between Government Offices and other institutions to ensure better links between regional strategies and funding and local neighbourhood initiatives?

Answer

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU), Regional Co-ordination Unit (RCU) and Government Offices (GOs) are currently developing a new GO performance management system for neighbourhood renewal. This new system will help clarify the roles and responsibilities of the NRU and GOs in delivering neighbourhood renewal and ensure that performance is monitored and reviewed in a more systematic and evidence based way. If successful, this approach will be rolled out to local neighbourhood renewal partnerships (LSPs, NDCs and CENs) to take account of their own performance management arrangements

In fulfilling the Area Based Initiative (ABI) Gateway role, the RCU works with Departments and NDPBs to ensure that initiatives are carefully designed to achieve their goals. By drawing on the expertise of the GOs, the RCU offers advice on effective funding arrangements, appropriate targeting, ways to minimise bureaucracy, mainstreaming opportunities, links to other initiatives, and many other issues.

As a result of the ABI review, the Regional Co-ordination Unit and Government Offices have encouraged the setting up of Single Local Management Centres (SLMCs) in each of the GO regions. The SLMCs aim to harmonize systems, simplify processes, join up funds and, where relevant explore creating a single application, monitoring, appraisal and evaluation system using a 'bottom-up' approach. Whilst the reduction of burdensome bureaucracy has clearly been the main objective, partnership working is also improving in some locations.

There are a number of other ongoing and future interdepartmental pieces of work which are key to the RCU and GO network's strategy of cohering a place

based approach to the range of government programmes such as the Skills Strategy and the Children's Green Paper, where regional roles and responsibilities are being worked up.

Eleventh Report - Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener (HC 673-I) (Cm 5989)

Recommendation:

(d) Councils need a clear responsibility to ensure that the public spaces are maintained to a high standard. The Committee accepts that much can be achieved without legislation to improve the management of public spaces. At the very least a simplified framework highlighting the different responsibilities, roles and powers is required. To simplify the framework, it will be necessary to revise some of the existing contradictory legislation. A simple guide is required setting out what local authorities can and should do in managing public spaces and what they can require others to do and listing the sanctions if they are not done. (Paragraph 26)

Government Response:

Guidance setting out the different powers, roles and responsibilities relevant to the quality of public spaces, is currently being developed by the Government, in partnership with the Improvement and Development Agency (I&DeA). Defra are leading this process, working with the I&DeA, and intend to launch a "strategic web site" providing the simplified framework that is needed by the end of this year. This will take forward option 'C1' in Defra's Living Places -Powers, Rights, Responsibilities²⁴ consultation document, which suggested that a single, 'strategic' document (web based resource) should be prepared that would provide an audit of the relevant legislation, codes, guidance and good practice examples for local authorities and other public bodies. The Home Office is also planning a strategic web site to provide information and advice on what works when tackling anti-social behaviour. Over time, these strategic web sites may be widened to include further information and guidance, building on areas of new legislation and further experience of what works in practice. CABE Space will provide direct support to local authorities to help them develop green space strategies and work towards much higher standards of management and maintenance. ODPM's new £89 million 'liveability fund' (see recommendation cc below), will also provide valuable information on how authorities can improve and monitor their liveability services through an action learning process.

Question:

New guidance setting out powers, roles and responsibilities relevant to the quality public spaces is supposed to be published by the end of the year. What progress has been made in preparing the guidance?

²⁴ Available on the Defra web site, see www.defra.gov.uk/environment/consult/pubspace/pdf/living-places.pdf

Answer:

Defra has worked with the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) to prepare the strategic website as proposed under option C1 in *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities*. The website was tested by a small group of practitioners and experts on 5 December 2003, to provide feedback on its content and structure. Comments from the group are now being addressed and the website should be ready for public use from 16 December 2003. Further work will continue throughout 2004 in order to continually improve and update the site.

The website will form part of the IDeA Knowledge site. This site's mission is "to be the first port of call for local government in terms of information on performance, practice and innovation" and it currently has around 40,000 registered users. The new strategic website resource will be widely promoted to its users by IDeA Knowledge in early January, and through other organisations and agencies (including Defra, ODPM, Home Office, LGA and ENCAMS) both on launch in December and again in the new year.

Initial feedback indicates that this will become a much-valued resource by local authorities and other organisations with an interest in local environmental quality issues. Links will be made to the site under development by the Home Office, which provides similar guidance on Anti-Social Behaviour issues.

Recommendation:

*(e) The Government must publish an action programme setting out proposed implementation as soon as possible. The Committee was disappointed that the Government was not able to give a target date for the publication of its evaluation of the responses to its consultation document *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities*, which closed in February 2003. (Paragraph 27)*

Government Response:

*A summary of responses to the *Living Places: Powers, Rights, Responsibilities* consultation paper was published in July.²⁵ This provides an evaluation and synopsis of the 254 responses received. The Government is considering the responses in more detail and intends to consult further on specific options which might be brought forward in the future, should suitable legislative opportunities arise. The Government hopes to set out a plan for taking forward the options set out in *Powers, Rights, Responsibilities* before the end of this year.*

*Good progress has already been made on implementation. We have taken opportunities presented by the *Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Bill*, led by the Home Office, to take forward a number of the recommendations into new legislation. The *ASB Bill* includes a number of*

²⁵ Available on the Defra web site, see www.defra.gov.uk/environment/consult/pubspace/index.htm

measures to restrict the sale of spray paints and extend local authority powers to deal with environmental problems, including fly tipping, graffiti and fly posting.

In addition, the Government also supported the Private Members Bill, tabled by Bill Tynan MP, that led to the Fireworks Act 2003. This will take forward options in our consultation paper to restrict the use of fireworks.

Question:

Government expects to set out a plan for taking forward the options set out in Powers, Rights and Responsibilities before the end of the year – what progress?

Answer:

We have evaluated the responses from the Powers, Rights, Responsibilities workshop. A number of proposals were recommended following the publication of responses in July 2003. Defra Ministers are now considering the course of action to take these proposals further.

The Home Office published its Action Plan to tackle anti-social behaviour on 14 October 2003 and launched the ‘together’ campaign. The Action Plan sets out the priority areas for action for reducing anti-social behaviour over the next 2 to 3 years. Key areas for intervention include: Nuisance neighbours, environmental crime and begging. 10 areas of the country have been chosen as Trailblazers to develop best practice in these areas.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (ASBU) will also fund and support every Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) across the country, to improve performance nationally, in addition to free training for practitioners and the ‘together’ Action Line, offering free instant advice on all anti-social behaviour related matters will also be launched.

Recommendation:

Utility Companies

(l) We support the Transport Committee's recommendation to give local authorities additional powers to reclaim the costs of long term damage to streets caused by utility companies. We also recommend that new incentives are introduced to ensure that the utility companies reinstate pavements. This could involve requiring the companies to pay local authorities to carry out the reinstatement work on their behalf or lodging a bond with the council, which would be retained if the work was not carried out satisfactorily. (Paragraph 56)

Government Response:

DfT will be responding to the report of the Transport Committee later this autumn and will set out its formal response to the Committee's recommendations at that time. Under

section 71 of the New Roads and Street Works Act utilities must comply with prescribed requirements for the reinstatement of streets, pavements and footways. However, we share the Committee's concern that there are several areas where the existing legislative framework can be improved in order to reduce the disruption and other problems caused by utility street works and other activities in the street. In particular, we are looking at possible changes to legislation, which would, amongst other things, improve the quality of reinstatement work and the enforcement regime where utilities fail to reinstate properly. We are currently finalising a package of proposals, which could be introduced via a future Bill should a suitable opportunity arise.

Recommendation:

(m) The Committee welcomes the Government's plans to increase local authority powers over the utility companies through new legislation. The proposed Bill should be given priority in the Government's legislative programme. (Paragraph 57)

Government Response:

As yet, no final decisions have been taken either on the exact contents or the likely timing of any Bill. However, we aim to have draft legislation ready as soon as possible in order to take advantage of any legislative slot that becomes available.

Question:

Government is supposed to be considering a new bill to reduce the disruption and other problems caused by utility street works and other activities in the street, particularly to improve the quality of reinstatement. What progress?

Answer:

The Traffic Management Bill was announced in the Queen's Speech in November 2003. It contains elements to improve the operation of utility street works.

Recommendation:

(n) Local councils should encourage the individual members of friends groups, many of whom are retired people but are still fit, to carry out some of the maintenance in the parks so that they become part of the local community. (Paragraph 61)

Government Response:

We recognise the important contribution made to enhancing and sustaining parks and public spaces by voluntary and community groups, especially friends groups. It is important, however, for such arrangements to be voluntary and not compulsory in any way and that local agencies work in partnership and support the engagement of local

people. We support Groundwork to work with local communities in transforming local places and the lives of local people. Each Groundwork Trust works in partnership between public, private and voluntary sectors to build sustainable communities through joint environmental action. They do this through getting residents, businesses and local organisations involved in delivering thousands of practical projects each year. We have increased our support to Groundwork to enable them to reach more communities than ever before. We have also have asked CABE Space to undertake a campaign in 2004 to encourage local voluntary action and community involvement in local parks and green spaces. In addition, they will carry out research into the role of friends and other community groups in the management and maintenance of parks and green spaces (as announced in Living Places) in response to the recommendation made by the Urban Green Space Taskforce.

Question:

CABE Space is supposed to be carrying out research into the role of friends and other community groups in the management and maintenance of parks and green spaces. When will it be published?

Answer:

CABE Space will be commissioning work in 2004 on alternative management models, including friends and other community groups and open space trusts. The work will explore the range of mechanisms available to give communities a greater sense of ownership and responsibility for the upkeep and quality of local green spaces.

Recommendation:

(t) Streets and public spaces should be designed to attract pedestrians and are enjoyable. A coherent design and management framework is required for both roads and formal public spaces which should be part of the new Local Development Documents. (Paragraph 81)

Government Response:

The Government agrees that public spaces need to serve the needs of whole range of users, including pedestrians, and be enjoyable places to be - not just places to pass through. Existing Government policy on Planning for Housing (PPG3) already affirms our commitment to high quality housing through encouraging local planning authorities to adopt policies which "create places and spaces with the needs of people in mind, which are attractive, have their own distinctive identity but respect and enhance local character".

On 30 June DfT issued, On the move: by foot,²⁶ a discussion paper on new guidance to encourage more walking journeys and improve conditions for pedestrians. It seeks views

²⁶ See www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft-control/documents/contentservertemplate/dft-index.hcst?n=8294&l=2

on how to overcome the current physical, psychological and institutional barriers that work against people walking more. The consultation period ended on 26 September.

Responses will help to inform a strategic action plan of measures and initiatives to encourage more journeys on foot and identify any related guidance required.

In July, ODPM and DfT published a joint research report entitled Better Streets, Better Places,²⁷ which set out recommendations on tackling barriers to sustainable residential environments caused by local highways considerations. Both Departments are carefully considering the recommendations, and are working up a programme of action for tackling the issues raised. The report's main recommendation was for revised technical guidance, i.e. a new Manual for Streets covering all aspects of street design for new residential roads.

The Government will also re-examine how authorities can improve people's experience of public spaces through their Local Transport Plans. Guidance for the first round of plans asked authorities to produce a local walking strategy to identify gaps in the local infrastructure and improvements needed in footway networks. We intend to consult local authorities and stakeholders in due course on how to build on this approach in the second round. We plan to issue draft, revised Local Transport Planning guidance in the Spring of 2004 and publish the final guidance in July 2004.

Local Development Frameworks will provide a flexible approach for planning streets and spaces. Appropriate policies can be put in Local Development Documents. These documents will be spatial, rather than limited to land use, and will therefore be able to integrate development and infrastructure issues more effectively than in the past.

Question:

The Government says that it is preparing a strategic action plan of measures and initiatives to encourage journeys on foot and identify related guidance required. When will it be published?

Answer:

DfT is working with ODPM, DEFRA, DH, DCMS, HO and the Countryside Agency to produce an action plan aimed at increasing levels of walking and cycling. We intend to publish this in spring 2004.

Recommendation:

Skills

(y) Pedestrian areas need careful design. They should not be the areas left over after the roads have been built and sight lines determined. Councils should not rely solely on highways engineers to design and manage streetscapes. We recommend that they should be encouraged to set up multidisciplinary teams which can consider how the needs of

²⁷ See www.odpm.gov.uk/stellent/groups/odpm-planning/documents/page/odpm-plan-023006.hcsp

different users, and particularly pedestrians can be incorporated into the design and management of streets. (Paragraph 98)

Government Response:

The Government does not intend to impose statutory structures on local authorities, with respect to how they organise their services, as solutions have to be tailored to local circumstances. Government work already outlined above will aim to reinforce to authorities the need to adopt joined-up and multi-disciplinary approaches. For example, the joint ODPM/DfT Better Streets, Better Places research report (see recommendation t above) states that many local authorities have adopted the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges or Design Bulletin 32 verbatim as their local highway standards, without due consideration of local needs. The problem of the inappropriate use of existing design manuals is an issue that the ODPM and DfT are determined to address and will examine this issue further as part of their action plan to take forward the recommendations. CABE and CABE Space will be undertaking a skills programme to improve the standards within the relevant professions responsible for the provision, design and maintenance of public space. Specifically, CABE are undertaking a targeted training programme for highways engineers to develop wider skills necessary to provide and maintain good quality public space.

The Deputy Prime Minister has asked Sir John Egan to conduct a review of the skills and training that built - environment professionals require to deliver sustainable communities. In particular, the Review will focus on the skills and training required by professionals, planning authorities and developers so that they can co-operate in achieving measurable improvements to the communities they serve. Sir John has established a Task Group of 15 key individuals to assist him with this work and is consulting widely to seek views before making a formal report to the Deputy Prime Minister at the end of the year. The issue of design of pedestrian areas for disabled people has also been addressed through DfT's recent publication Inclusive Mobility²⁸ which provides a guide to best practice on access to pedestrian and transport infrastructure. In outlining the needs of disabled people and providing advice on design, it also offers advice that would be helpful to other different users, such as older people. The document has a dedicated chapter on consultation and emphasises the need for consultation with, and involvement of, local groups and all appropriate users at an early stage of design and development.

Question:

The Government says that it is determined to address the problem of inappropriate use of existing design manuals “and will examine this issue further as part of their action plan to take forward the recommendations (in Better Streets, Better Places).” When will the action plan be published?

²⁸ See www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft-mobility/documents/page/dft-mobility-503282-16.hcsp

Answer:

We aim to publish the action plan early in the New Year.

Recommendation:**Local Authority Funds**

(dd) The increase in funds to local authorities is welcome. However, it will make a very limited impact on the long term backlog in funding for parks and public spaces. A long term funding programme is required which reflects the poor state of public spaces and the importance which the public puts on them. The £500 million estimated by the Urban Green Spaces Taskforce is a starting point but is an arbitrary figure and a more extensive assessment is required of the funding needed. (Paragraph 116)

Government Response:

We welcome and acknowledge the Committee's recognition that better evidence and information is needed on funding requirements. The Government is working with a variety of key partners to improve national data across the range of green spaces, building on the work of the Public Parks Assessment. ODPM are supporting the Urban Parks Forum (now 'GreenSpace'²⁹) on updating the Public Parks Assessment, advising Sport England in collecting data on playing fields and sponsoring surveys of allotments, community gardens and city farms. The Home Office is also leading on the collection of data on cemeteries and burial grounds. We will also be revisiting the Trees in Towns survey of 1993 to provide up-to-date information on the composition and condition of urban trees and woodlands. This will be expanded to provide insight into the resources and processes that local authorities use in managing urban trees. Work is well underway to ensure that all of the data collected is compatible to allow it to be assimilated, mapped and disseminated to give a nationwide picture of the quantity and quality of our urban green spaces. ODPM is currently exploring the use of OS Master Map and other web-based tools to support in this process.

At the local level the revised Planning Policy Guidance on Open Space, Sport and Recreation (PPG17) will help to improve the evidence base for activity and spend by local authorities. It requires them to make an assessment of the quantity and quality of their open spaces and encourages a strategic approach in their provision and management. Additionally, we have asked CABE Space to research the funding needs of local authorities, alternative management arrangements for green spaces, and their economic, social and environmental value. In undertaking this work they will need to take account of the outcomes that will be achieved and value for money from investment. All this information will be taken into consideration when assessing the case for resources in future, based on a better understanding of requirements and evidence of need.

²⁹ See www.green-space.org.uk

Question:

CABE Space is supposed to be researching the funding needs of local authorities, alternative management arrangements for green spaces and their economic, social and environmental value. When will it be published?

Answer:

The first CABE Space research report will be published in March 2004, drawing together existing research to highlight the value of high quality green space across a range of key liveability themes from crime prevention to healthier communities. It will provide a useful resource for all those considering the value of urban green space.

CABE Space have also commissioned original research to address these issues.

- The first investigates the tangible and measurable economic effects, both positive and negative, of urban green space on the surrounding area. The aim is to consider the investment potential of green space and the outcome providing an asset of higher amenity value. The report is anticipated for publication around Easter 2004.
- The second piece will identify and compare international good practice in the management and maintenance of parks and urban green spaces. It aims to assess the transferability of these lessons to English practice and will be published in early summer 2004.
- A further study aims to define and understand the relationship between local authority spending decisions and priorities and the consequent physical condition i.e. quality and perceived value to users of parks and urban green spaces. It will identify the potential ways of optimising existing resources to deliver high quality green spaces. The study will be commissioned shortly and is due to be published in autumn 2004.

Twelfth Report - The Evening Economy and the Urban Renaissance - (HC 396-I)
(Cm 5971)

Recommendation 3 (Paragraph 30):

The findings of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Special Grant Programme funded Civic Trust pilot studies into the evening and late-night economies to identify best practice be taken account of in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's forthcoming review of Planning Policy Guidance 6.

Government Response:

The Civic Trust have been awarded funding over a 3-year period (2003–2006) under the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister's Special Grant Programme to develop good practice in this field through a set of national case studies. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister will wish to consider the research results and recommendations, as they become available so that lessons can be disseminated to a wide audience. The research will contribute to the proposed good practice guidance on managing the evening economy.

Question:

Have you disseminated any information based on the Civic Trust's research yet?

Answer:

The conclusions of the national survey of the evening and night time economies, which is underway will form the first of a series of good practice bulletins, and will be published as follows:-

- **Bulletin No.1 March 2004**
- **Bulletin No.2 March 2005**
- **Bulletin No.3 December 2005**

These bulletins which will provide an overall conclusion to date, will be published on the Civic Trust Website and will also be made available in paper version. The bulletins will build up towards a 'Good Practice Manual', which will be issued by the Civic Trust in March 2006

Recommendation 4 (Paragraph 36):

In its forthcoming review of Planning Policy Guidance 6, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister promote the spreading of evening and late-night economy activity throughout town and city centres thereby encouraging genuine mixed-use areas, rather than its concentration in one or more zones.

Government Response:

In producing the new Planning Policy Statement 6 on town centres, the Government will stress the need to plan positively for the future growth of town centres. In extending them it will encourage the development of mixed-use areas. It will, however, be for each local planning authority to develop an appropriate strategy for the development of its town centres in consultation with businesses, the local community and other stakeholders, including how best to plan the development of the evening economy. In some town and city centres the concept of leisure quarters may be appropriate, whereas in many places a more even spacing of attractions will be more appropriate to reduce the impact of the evening economy of town or city centre residents. The Government agrees that stronger guidance is needed on creating and managing leisure quarters or zones designated for entertainment and leisure. Zoning can have the effect of disadvantaging residents who live in these areas, whilst spreading the evening and late night economy geographically may help to ease the pressures on town and city centres.

Question:

What stronger guidance has been provided?

Answer:

The Government will be publishing draft PPS6 for consultation shortly. There is little to add to the Government Response. We propose to commission good practice guidance on managing the evening economy and expect that, based on the experience of case study authorities, including those in the Civic Trust study. This guidance will provide lessons for the more effective use of planning powers to manage the extent and impact of leisure uses on the town centre, the amenity of residents and the management of the environment.

Recommendation 6 (Paragraph 42):

That the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister place 'super-pubs' and night-clubs in a new, separate division of the 'D' use class category; and consider using capacity as well as surface area to determine categorisation as a 'super-pub'.

Government Response:

As indicated in response to Recommendation 5 above, the Government has already announced its intention to change the Use Classes Order to place pubs and bars in a separate Use Class, so that any proposal to establish a new pub of whatever size would be subject to planning consent. As part of the review of the Use Classes Order that the Government has been undertaking it also consulted on a number of alternative proposals concerning the placement of night-clubs within the Use Classes Order. One of these proposed putting night-clubs over a specified square footage in the same use class as pubs and bars; another proposed putting them into a Use Class of their own. We hope to announce the full conclusions of the review of the Use Classes Order shortly.

Question:

What progress has been made on this?

Answer:

The outcome of the Use Classes Order review was announced by a Ministerial Written Statement on 27 November.

The current A3 Use Class includes cafes, restaurants, pubs, bars, and takeaways. The consultation revealed that there is widespread concern that such a broad classification, which allows change of use from restaurants to pubs without the need for planning permission, contributes to the increase in the number of licensed premises. On 4 March this year, the Hon. Member for Harrow East, Tony McNulty made a statement to the House announcing the Government had considered these representations carefully and proposed to

put pubs and bars into a separate Use Class. Pubs and bars will be classified under a new Use Class A4. A4 Use Classes will be permitted a change of use to A1(shops), A2 (financial and professional services) or A3 (restaurant and cafes) classification. Any other proposed changes of use will require planning permission.

We also propose to make a change to the current D Use Class, an additional Use Class D3: Late Night Leisure. Most existing late night uses are already covered by existing classes, however nightclubs do not have a clear classification within the current Use Classes Order, and the impact on amenity of nightclubs is distinct and different from other uses. We will, therefore introduce a new Use Class D3 will be the classification for nightclubs. Planning permission will be required for any change of use from or to a D3 classification.

A statutory instrument giving effect to these changes will be made in due course. The order will be made under section 55(2)(f) of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 and it is therefore not subject to the Parliamentary procedures set out in section 333 of the Act.

Recommendation 9 (Paragraph 45):

That the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister introduce a requirement for areas immediately surrounding late-night premises to be cleansed and maintained by operators.

Government Response:

Local authorities already have the power to deal with the problem identified by the Committee under Section 93 of the Environmental Protection Act (1990). The Act states that “a Principal Litter Authority may, with a view to the prevention of accumulations of litter or refuse in and around any street or open land adjacent to any street, issue notices (‘Street Litter Control Notices’) imposing requirements on occupiers of premises in relation to such litter or refuse, in accordance with this section of the Act and Section 94.” Such a notice shall identify the premise and state the grounds on which it is being issued. It will specify an area of open land, which adjoins or is in the vicinity of the frontage of the premises on the street. The notice will require the owner/occupier of the premises to take steps to clear their area of litter and keep it clear. But, whether a local authority uses this power or not is a matter of choice. However, all local authorities have a statutory duty to deal with litter and refuse in line with the requirements of the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse which sets standards of cleanliness and times when cleansing should take place. This code is currently under review. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, as part of the night-time economy assessment, are looking to assess whether the 24/7 economy will have a knock on effect in terms of local authorities’ statutory duties in respect of litter and refuse. Within the

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) pilots are also being monitored to assess whether businesses that stand to benefit most from an expanded evening economy would be prepared to help pay, through a BID scheme, to alleviate the negative side effects. BIDs are intended to provide services over and above those provided by the local authorities and they could potentially offer a way of tackling this problem.

Question:

What has been revealed through the monitoring of BID pilots? And what has DEFRA's research revealed?

Answer:

The BID pilots are currently consulting on their work programmes. It is too early to say what aspects of the evening economy, if any, the pilots will actually address.

The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs review of the code of practice on litter and refuse is in its very early stages. The night time economy may lead to an impact on local authority cleansing services, which may need to be reflected in a revised code of practice, but this is one of the things that will be considered during the review.

Recommendation 11 (Paragraph 49):

That the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister promote the pilot use of Business Improvement Districts in the management of the evening and late-night economies.

Government Response:

The Government is keen to promote Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) as one way to manage the effects of an expanding evening economy, and is taking a close interest in the various BID-style schemes which have already been set up. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister is part-funding a BID pilots scheme run by the Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM). Twenty-three locations of different sizes and types are being guided through the process of setting up BIDs. Although the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister cannot influence what schemes the pilots choose (this is for local businesses, in consultation with their local authorities, to decide) ATCM is monitoring their progress closely and keeping the Department informed of issues which arise. The Department has asked ATCM, through the pilots project, to look at the role BIDs might play in managing the evening economy, in particular the increase in demand for local services to tackle noise, litter, and low-level crime, and what BIDs might provide over and above what the local council provides. We are keen to know whether those businesses that benefit most from the evening economy and the Licensing Bill would be prepared to help fund solutions to potential problems. The Department has also asked ATCM to consider whether BIDs could have a role in helping to diversify the evening

economy, including helping to prevent the development of 'no-go' areas in town and city centres.

Question:

How many pilot BIDs have been focussed on issues arising from the evening and night time economies? What have they addressed and what have been the outcomes?

Answer:

The BID pilots are currently consulting on their work programmes. At this stage the Bedford, Birmingham, Blackpool and Coventry BIDs propose to focus some of their effort on evening economy issues, subject to their consultees' views. It is too early to say what aspects, if any, of the evening economy the pilot BIDs will actually address.

Recommendation 12 (Paragraph 51):

The Department for Transport should ensure police forces, local authorities, transport providers and evening and late-night economy operators work together to provide safe and secure late-night transport.

Government Response:

Department of Transport guidance for the first round of Local Transport Plans emphasised the need for local authorities to work in partnership with all appropriate bodies to deliver effective local transport strategies. Effective strategies will of course include provision of night-time and evening services, where this is appropriate to the local situation. It is for local authorities to identify where and how to take action. The Department is aware that many people are concerned about waiting for and using public transport, especially at night. Ministers are very concerned about the protection of passengers and bus and coach staff against assaults. Criminal and anti-social behaviour against them is quite unacceptable; it also acts as a barrier to the public's desire to travel on public transport.

The Government is determined to reduce crime and the fear of crime wherever it occurs on the public transport system, particularly at bus stops and in bus and coach stations. Last year the Department for Transport issued guidance to local authorities and bus operators on improving personal security for passengers and staff. This covers all parts of the journey, including stations, stops and shelters, as well as on vehicles. We have also formed an official-level group called Safer Travel on Buses and Coaches Panel (STOP) to look at ways to combat assaults, anti-social behaviour and vandalism at stops and stations and on vehicles and property. The panel will work to bring together those involved in dealing with the issue of safety and security. It is charged with the important task of facilitating the exchange of ideas and spreading best practice. A booklet about the protection of bus and coach crews is being updated and will be re-issued shortly. The

panel will also commission regular data collection. It has held discussions and will issue relevant advice to operators.

Question:

What evidence have you received that local authorities are making provision for the late night economy in their local transport plans?

Answer:

The Government encourages local authorities to use their Local Transport Plan allocations for capital projects to address the transport issues they have identified as local priorities. We require authorities to provide evidence of projects in their annual progress reports, which we use to assess their performance in meeting local objectives. For example, Manchester report that in 2002/3 they used Government funding to provide a range of schemes related to the night-time economy including safer subways, improved street lighting, an extension of their nightbus network, more wardens and more cameras in taxis.

Recommendation 15 (Paragraph 54):

That the Department for Transport work with enforcement authorities and take a much more proactive policy to reduce the number of unlicensed minicabs operating. We recommend a review of penalties for operating an unlicensed minicab to ensure they are a sufficient deterrent. We are concerned that there is insufficient publicity highlighting the dangers of illegal minicabs. We therefore recommend that the Department of Transport launch a high-profile media campaign equating the use of an unlicensed minicab with accepting a lift from a drunk driver.

Government Response:

The role of the Secretary of State for Transport is to provide a regulatory framework for taxis and PHVs throughout England and Wales. With the current exception of London where PHVs should be licensed by the licensing authority, TfL, during 2004, the law does require that all PHVs should be licensed and includes offences for operating or driving PHVs without the appropriate licences. Enforcement of the licensing laws is a matter for local licensing authorities and the police; it is for them to decide what priority to give this. We agree that the level of penalty for operating an unlicensed minicab (currently a maximum fine of £1,000) should be reviewed but since any change would require primary legislation we consider that this should be when Parliamentary time is available. Enforcement of the touting offence (maximum fine £2,500), and priority for it, is also a matter for the police. That said, at TfL's request, we have given our support to making the touting offence recordable and this is being taken forward by Home Office colleagues. The effect of this would be to allow the police to take DNA samples, fingerprints and photographs, thereby helping to track persistent offenders, identifying those unlawfully at large, improving opportunities to detect perpetrators of sexual

offences, and building up offender history to inform licence decision-making. We will consider how best to publicise nationally the dangers of illegal minicabs, taking into account the considerable amount of publicity already undertaken for London by TfL.

Question:

What progress has been made on these issues?

Answer:

The Government response referred to an initiative to make taxi touting a recordable offence. The regulations to effect this change have now been made by the Home Office; they came into force on 1 December.

Recommendation 17 (Paragraph 71):

We are pleased that the Government is providing tools for police authorities to clamp down on anti-social behaviour. We welcome measures such as fixed penalty fines, however the payment of fines must be enforced.

The Government Response:

The Government welcomes the Committee's positive response to the introduction of fixed penalties for offences of disorder. Piloting of these penalty notices has recently been completed and the Home Secretary announced in May that the scheme would be rolled out nationally. Work is now in hand to achieve this. In order to be able to operate the system, police forces and the magistrates' courts need adaptations to their computer systems to allow the tickets issued to be processed. When a penalty notice is issued the recipient may choose either to pay the penalty or to have his case heard by a court. Very few people are choosing the latter option. If neither option is chosen and the recipient effectively ignores the notice, a fine of one and a half times the amount of the penalty is registered against him. This is enforced by the magistrates' courts in the same way as any other fine. The Government recognises that more recipients of notices should be encouraged to respond in either of the available ways, and that fines need to be more effectively enforced.

The Government is tackling the response rates to penalty notices in two ways. Firstly, two of the pilot police forces are trialling the use of reminder letters sent part way through the time allowed for payment. Secondly, the courts are being encouraged to broaden the available methods of paying the penalty, such as the provision of dedicated phone lines, so that those wishing to pay are not deterred from doing so by practical difficulties. The success of these innovations will be evaluated and the need for any further action assessed in the light of the outcome. Improvements to fine enforcement are being pursued through provisions in the Courts Bill, which is currently before Parliament. The Courts Bill contains a number of provisions to improve the system for enforcing financial penalties. Among them are a 'suspended' attachment of earnings/deductions from benefit order as a first step in enforcing a fine; automatic imposition of such orders where the offender has a track record of non-payment, and a

new offence of failing to provide means information and/or the financial details necessary to allow an attachment order to be made. In addition, the Bill will give an individual court officer the overall responsibility and management of the enforcement of any fine, therefore saving court time. For those offenders from whom a fine cannot be collected by any of the normal means, there are provisions allowing for the discharge of fines by unpaid work. The new provisions are to be piloted and the most successful in achieving the discharge of fines will be implemented. The Government is confident that encouraging recipients of penalty notices to respond to their notices, and ensuring that the fines registered against those who still fail to do so are enforced will promote confidence in the scheme as a whole and lead to its extension to new offences.

Question:

What progress has been made on these issues?

Answer:

The Courts Bill is now the Courts Act 2003. Pilots of the enforcement provisions are due to begin in early 2004. The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 provides for penalty notices for disorder (PNDs) to be extended to juveniles. PNDs for 16 and 17 year olds are to be piloted early in 2004. Home Office Research Findings summarising the interim evaluation report of the adult PND pilots are to be published in the New Year.

Formal minutes

Tuesday 13 January 2004

Members present:

Mr Andrew Bennett, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts

Mr Chris Mole

Mr Graham Brady

Mr Bill O'Brien

Mr David Clelland

Mrs Christine Russell

Mr John Cummings

Mr Adrian Sanders

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report (Annual Report to the Liaison Committee 2003), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Annex agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Second Report of the Committee to the House.

[Adjourned till Monday 26 January at 4.00pm]