

Subject: Localism in London

Report to: Planning Committee

Report of: Executive Director of Secretariat

Date: 22 January 2015

This report will be considered in public

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report seeks formal agreement for the Committee's report that updates the position in terms of the implementation of the Localism agenda in London.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Committee agrees its report *Localism in London: What's the Story?* as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

3. Background

- 3.1 In May 2010, the Government announced "the time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today."¹ The subsequent Localism Act 2011 introduced a series of measures that were designed to shift power away from central government towards local people. Localism is an attempt to devolve power by:
- Giving new freedoms and flexibilities for local government
 - Establishing new rights and powers for communities and individuals
 - Reforming the planning system to make it more democratic and more effective
 - Ensuring that decisions about housing are taken locally
- 3.2 Reforms stemming from the Localism Act include new rights and powers for communities and individuals to shape their neighbourhoods and changes to the planning system designed to make it more democratic.
- 3.3 Since 2012 the Planning Committee has been monitoring the progress of two aspects of localism – neighbourhood planning and the community right to bid – to see how they have been adopted in London. The Committee's first review of community involvement in planning culminated with the publication of a report on the role of neighbourhood plans in February 2012.² The Committee followed this up in October 2013 with a review of the progress in London towards establishing

¹ Coalition Agreement, May 2010

² http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/NBH%20Planning_v3%20AB.pdf

neighbourhood planning³ and how provisions in the Localism Act that allow the listing of community assets are being used.⁴

4. Issues for Consideration

4.1 On 20 November 2014 the Committee published a short draft report monitoring the progress made in the 12 months since the Committee's last meeting on the issue. It contains a number of questions for the wider stakeholder community designed to assess how Localism can be progressed in London. The Committee is recommended to formally agree the report *Localism in London: What's the story?* as set out at Appendix 1.

4.2 Key findings of the report include:

- Progress in London seems to be disappointingly slow. Fewer than 80 of London's 1,200 neighbourhoods have expressed any interest in the process.
- Only one neighbourhood plan has been adopted and is now influencing the development of a local area.
- The evidence suggests that the legislation was designed for smaller, more homogenous areas than London.
- London's complex network of mixed communities with diverse interests seems to make even defining neighbourhood areas a difficult and time consuming process
- Neighbourhood forums need clear legitimacy, access to the right resources (financial and human) and need adequate support and advice.
- Where these obstacles are not so significant, in areas such as Westminster and Camden, neighbourhood planning is much further advanced.
- In terms of the community right to bid – the right for communities to take over buildings and facilities of local community value – the picture is a little more encouraging.
- There are now more than 100 listed assets of community value, and the numbers are growing quickly.
- Approaches to listing these assets by boroughs to be inconsistent and the necessary skills required by local communities difficult to bring together.
- The analysis indicates that there is some way to go before the Government can back up its claim that "neighbourhood planning is proving to be one of the Government's most popular reforms".

4.3 The report includes a number of questions directed to stakeholders designed to understand how these aspects of the Localism agenda can be taken forward in London.

4.4 Responses to these questions will be reported back to the Committee at a future meeting.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The Committee has the power to do what is recommended in this report.

³ <http://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s29408/13-10-10-Neighbourhood-Planning.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.london.gov.uk/moderngov/documents/s29409/13-10-10%20Community%20Assets%20Report.pdf>

6. Financial Implications

6.1 There are no direct financial implications to the GLA arising from this report.

List of appendices to this report:

Appendix 1 – Localism update report – *Localism in London: What's the Story?*

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985	
List of Background Papers:	
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