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LGA Selector Panel  
Sustainable Communities Act

Liberal Democrat Group Rooms  
Guildhall  
Kingston Upon Thames  
Surrey  
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30 July 2009

### **Sustainable Communities Act**

Please find attached proposals from the residents of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames for consideration under the Sustainable Communities Act by the LGA Selector Panel.

In the past few months, the Royal Borough has contacted 250 local community groups and stakeholders, and consulted residents through its neighbourhood committees; 37 proposals were received. 23 of the proposals were considered unlikely to meet the selection criteria, principally on the grounds that they did not require a change in the law, and were therefore put aside.

The remaining 14 proposals were considered by a specially constituted and representative panel of local people, facilitated by Ipsos MORI. They were ranked in order of importance to the local community. The Council's Executive Committee met in early July and identified 3 proposals which we present with this letter.

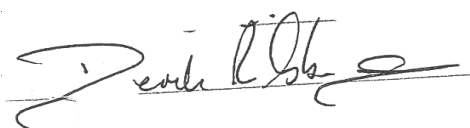
1. Protect school places for local children: amend the Greenwich Judgement.
2. Local access to a greater proportion of business rates:
  - for identified local community priorities;
  - to set up local environmental groups and
  - for green investments.
3. Controls on pet shops to further limit the importing of animals.

Kingston Council is committed to empowering local people, and there is cross-party support in the borough for making the Sustainable Communities Act work effectively. Public expectations have been raised by the local implementation of the Act and it is important that the Government delivers on selected proposals. We therefore urge the LGA to make representations to Government to ensure that the current initiative is developed further and repeated as a planned programme in future years.

We feel that there were elements of the consultation and selection process in this first year which should be improved in later years. For example, there was a clear commitment to provide local spending reports, containing information about all public expenditure in a given area. This data did not materialise: the selection criteria was vague and appeared late in the consultation process, which means that it is still not clear in many cases how proposals will be evaluated. We therefore urge the LGA to make representations to Government to sharpen selection criteria and guidance and to provide spending reports as promised.

In addition, the Council considers that Sir Michael Bichard's Operational Efficiency Programme work on Local Incentives and Empowerment has a direct bearing on the issues of local empowerment processes set up under the Sustainable Communities Act. The 13 pilot areas identified by HM Treasury for the Total Place initiative occupies very similar territory, and there is an obvious connection to the Total Place initiative which looks at how a 'whole' area approach to public services in a locality can lead to better services at less cost. So the 13 pilot areas will be exploring very similar territory by looking at the totality of public spending in specific areas and how services can be reconfigured to improve outcomes and efficiency. We ask therefore, that the LGA monitors the progress of these pilots with a view to taking on board lessons that can be learned in order to refine the generation and selection of local proposals under the Sustainable Communities Act in the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Derek Osbourne', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Cllr Derek Osbourne  
Leader of Kingston Council