

**1. Concessionary fares**

The Department of Transport are introducing a national bus concession scheme from April 2008. This requires the issue of passes to a standard national design. A grant will be paid to local authorities to cover "reasonable new burdens". The first instalment will be paid on August 29, 2007.

**2. Local Authority Business Growth Incentive scheme (LABGI)**

At a recent meeting, CLG officials confirmed that it is still Government's intention to publish a consultation paper on a revised LABGI scheme in the summer.

**3. Planning Fees consultation**

On 21 May DCLG issued a planning white paper planning for a Sustainable Future, at the same time they also published a consultation paper on proposals for changes to planning fees.

- Research conducted to inform the proposals confirm "that the planning service continues to be under-funded, and that, in part, this is owing to insufficient fee coverage to achieve the intended level of cost recovery." Three options are proposed
  - no change to the current fee regime
  - increase overall fees by 40%
  - -increase overall fees by 25%

CLG's deadline for comments is August 17.

**4. Participatory budgeting/community sale of assets**

Hazel Blears, in her first speech, made reference to pilot studies on participatory budgeting and on community sale of assets. Further details can be found in a CLG news release

**5. Housing benefit and council tax benefit administration grant**

On 27 June DWP wrote to Chief Executives to say that the administration grant is likely to be cut by 5% per annum in real terms over the CSR 07 period.

**6. Replacement of Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP)**

LGA has begun discussions with CLG on the possible replacement of MRP with statutory guidance.

**7. Consultation on the Incentives for Recycling by Households**

Defra issued this consultation paper in May which includes proposals for waste charging or financial incentives to recycle and reduce waste. The consultation period closes on 16 August.

**8. Housing**

The July 23<sup>rd</sup> Housing Green Paper "Homes for the future: more affordable more sustainable" suggests that future providers be local authorities.

**9. National Non Domestic Business Rates (NNDR)**

As of 1 April 2008 there will be a change to the period permitted for businesses to have premises 'empty' and without liability to NNDR. The period will reduce to three months in most cases, there are exceptions and guidance has been issued from C&LG. This change may cause a 'blip' in the workload of the Rates team. The advice is to communicate the changes widely to all business.