



Dear Chief Executives,

Delivery and Recovery of Local Authority Regulatory Services

I would like to start by thanking you and your teams again for the efforts made since the winter. In the most challenging of circumstances your efforts have ensured that businesses and communities have stayed informed, safe and supported.

I wrote to you in January 2021 to introduce the role of the Regulatory Task and Finish group, with senior representatives from central and local government working together to coordinate the asks of local teams and propose recommendations to short- and long-term issues. In January, the group shared a prioritisation matrix to help manage the increased responsibilities falling on regulatory services. Over the past six months this group has provided a joined-up approach to addressing regulatory issues, and I am grateful to everyone who has either attended the group or provided essential data and input over this period.

With our sights set on recovery and moving towards business as usual, now is the right time to end the prioritisation outlined on 26 January. Although the formal prioritisation will end, I appreciate and support the ongoing need for you to prioritise activity based on local need and intelligence. To this end, some authorities may wish to keep the prioritisation in place locally and use it to guide their approach to backlogs and recovery (see below). Equally, I recognise that circumstances related to Covid-19 and local authority pressures are still changing at pace, and we will keep this position on the prioritisation open to review.

We are continuing to work across government to share the positive lessons learnt from the Task and Finish group and embed ongoing collaboration into the future. Below are details on two areas of recent focus from the group: a forward look of upcoming regulatory activity for the next year, and information about our approach to recovery and backlogs.

Forward Look

In March we wrote to you with a forward look of upcoming regulatory changes due to come into effect in 2021. This information was provided through a collaboration of government departments and local leaders as part of the Task and Finish Group. Given the positive feedback received on this document we have now updated it to cover the next 12 months looking ahead to July 2022 (see attached).

The document outlines planned changes to regulatory activity and new regulations alongside their expected implementation date (with the caveat that these may change). We hope that this will continue to prove a useful tool and provide information to inform your own forward planning.

Recovery and backlogs

I am aware that the disruption caused by the pandemic has created backlogs in many of your scheduled programmes and prevented you from carrying out other important activities, such as policy reviews and proactive work. The Regulatory Services Task and Finish group has heard evidence on these pressures from many local colleagues across the country, and appreciates that work is already underway to support local areas to recover even as Covid-19 restrictions remain in place.

You have the support of the Task and Finish Group and government departments to address these backlogs in a way that is locally determined and based on an assessment of risk. This is in recognition of the fact that backlogs will vary between different areas, as will your local priorities. As always, I would emphasise that statutory duties will need to continue to be met across all activities.

Throughout this process we have worked closely with government departments to understand their specific priorities for recovery and agree a consistent position. In particular, you will be aware of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) LA Recovery Plan published on 15 June 2021 that provides a framework and expectations for delivery of food control activities until June 2023 and beyond.

I appreciate that supporting a strong recovery will not be the work of a matter of weeks, and that it comes at a time when all of us are feeling the effects of many months of hard work. On that note, if you have any queries on specific backlogs, or would like support with anything else mentioned in this letter, please do not hesitate to contact the team at LGResponse@communities.gov.uk.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julia Sweeney', written in a cursive style.

Julia Sweeney
Director Local Government and Communities