

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board – report from Cllr Martin Tett (Chairman)

Conferences, meetings and external events

1. The LGA's Annual Housing, Planning and Infrastructure Conference took place on 13 March 2019 with a keynote address from Kit Malthouse MP, Minister for Housing. The winners of the Future Place programme were also announced at the event. Future Place is a joint programme from the LGA, RTPI, CIH, RIBA and now Homes England to unlock local potential for place-shaping.
2. In April, Cllr Adele Morris gave evidence to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee on the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 in a one-off parliamentary session. Our evidence was informed by a recent survey on the impact of the Act on councils, which found that the Act's success is limited by a continued shortage of affordable housing.
3. Following a request from the Board, a study visit of Woking and Bracknell town centres took place on the 24 April. The visit allowed members to explore and discuss contrasting approaches to town centre redevelopment. Bracknell has undergone major transformation and has used its leadership role, strategic investments, land contributions and planning powers to influence the mostly private sector-led redevelopment to change the town centre to a high quality retail-based offer with significant improvements to the public realm. Woking is still in the process of transforming its town centre. Its approach has included significant direct local authority investment, using the facilities provided by the Public Works Loans Board (PWLB), with the Council significantly involved as a developer itself. Some of their investment is through a joint public/private partnership and they have invested in housing and the public realm, including local roads, where they have taken on highways authority responsibilities from the county council.
4. The day provided very useful insights into the approaches taken by councils facing their own unique town centre challenges and the key decisions that were required to deliver much needed regeneration and investment into their town centres. A further visit to different part of the country will be considered for later in the year.
5. Prior to this, the LGA continued supporting member councils on the high streets agenda with two packed events. On 17 January we held the second masterclass on 'Creating Better Towns' where we drew in experts from retail, public realm and commercial property to provide focused discussion and learning for lead officers and elected members. This was followed by a conference, 'Taking Control of your town centres', on 14 February, attended by over 100 delegates, which included case studies of councils who had demonstrated strong leadership in taking key decisions in support of their town centres, including ownership of commercial assets, as well as tackling difficult issues such as anti-social behaviour.

Publications and correspondence

6. The LGA submitted responses to the Government's set of consultations papers on the future of waste and recycling. The LGA also submitted evidence to an MHCLG select committee looking at the implications of the Resource and Waste Strategy for local government.
7. The LGA has responded to the Government consultation on "structures that support partnership working and accountabilities in homelessness". The consultation seeks to introduce a new duty on councils to form local homelessness reduction boards, which would be responsible for bringing together a coalition of relevant public bodies to deliver reductions in homelessness.

Press releases and statements

8. The results of the LGA survey of stock-owning councils have been published. Headlines were featured in a [press release](#), including a headline figure that 94 per cent of respondents will use the new powers to accelerate or increase their building programmes, as well as a statement for Cllr Judith Blake, Vice-Chair of the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board.
9. We have also made public statements on [responding to the extension to permitted development rules](#), [responding to new homelessness figures published in May](#), [responding to a Transport Select Committee report on bus services in England outside London](#), [the need for courts to hand out tougher punishments to defer fly-tippers](#), [responding to MHCLG Discounted Homes Funding](#), [responding to Government announcement on landlord evictions](#), [responding to Hamptons International Housing Report](#), [responding to an announcement of £201 million in government funding for pothole repairs and research into new road surface materials](#), [responding to Campaign to Protect Rural England report on building new homes](#), [responding to annual road maintenance survey](#), [warning of the rise in temporary accommodation use since Homelessness Reduction Act](#), [responding to latest bus travel statistics](#), and [responding to the air quality intervention report](#).

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