

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport - End of Year Board Report

Background

1. The Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board provides strategic oversight of the LGA's policy, regulatory and improvement activity in relation to the economy and environment, including transport, economic development and business support, housing, planning, waste and climate change, in line with the LGA priorities and any specific regulatory and LGA European lobbying priorities as they relate to this activity.
2. The first year of the Conservative government has brought a very busy legislative programme and the Board has led some very significant activity working with government and stakeholders to shape the legislation and mitigate the impacts on councils and their communities. The Board has also actively engaged with parliament's scrutiny of policy and practice.
3. The Board has focused its activity on key themes within its scope. The work programme is attached as appendix A. This report looks at activity undertaken under each of the work programme themes. It is a combination of lobbying, forward looking policy development and direct work with councils. At times the work has been complex and intense and the Board can point to a number of successes.

Housing

1. **The Housing and Planning Bill** received Royal Assent on the 12th May. As you will be aware a lot of time has been spent working with Ministers, Members of Parliament and the House of Lords to improve the Bill. Following our work with Peers, we were able to secure a number of amendments, including giving councils the ability to grant secure tenancies to families with children, restrictions around the resale of starter homes so that owners cannot 'cash in' on the discount only a few years after, changes to the taper rate for pay to stay and time limited pilots on competition in processing planning applications. While the LGA has helped improve the Housing and Planning Act, it will have a range of implications and consequences affecting councils and local housing markets that the LGA will work with councils to mitigate against.
4. **The Housing Commission**, is focusing on four themes around which the LGA can provide additional value: council's role in housebuilding, place-making and growth, employment and housing, and housing an ageing population. Further information on the areas of focus is available on the Housing Commission webpage. The Housing Commission has received 90 submissions and held four targeted evidence sessions around the country engaging over 100 different partners, and visited six councils. The Housing Commission will report at the LGA's annual conference.

Environment

5. **21st United Nations Conference on Climate Change (COP21)**. UK councillors attending included Cllr Richard Kemp CBE (Liverpool City Council) as the UK representative on the World Council and Executive of United Cities & Local Government (UCLG) and Cllr Sian

21 July 2016

Reid (Cambridge) who is the spokesperson on climate change for CEMR, the 'European LGA'. The Climate Summit for Local Leaders culminated with the 'Paris City Hall Declaration' where local and regional governments expressed their commitment to continue working in mitigation and adaptation and requested world leaders to reach a far reaching agreement.

6. **Flooding.** Our work has focused on highlighting the continued work of councils and councillors working with partners to protect people and property and helping councils deal with their immediate challenges. We circulated LGA guidance on communicating with residents during extreme weather and ran regional workshops on managing severe weather outbreaks and other emergencies in February. We also worked with DCLG to put together a protocol on how LGA mutual aid arrangements can be actioned following future emergencies. Further, LGA lobbying has meant that capital funding has been made available to repair roads and bridges and a more streamlined recovery package for residents and businesses has been introduced. We pushed for a firm commitment from government that councils will be reimbursed for flood recovery funding schemes and worked with councils to ascertain the total costs of repair to infrastructure. The Board has subsequently engaged with the review of the national resilience to flooding which is led by Oliver Letwin MP.
7. **The Climate Local Annual Conference** was held in London on Tuesday 22 March 2016. This event brought together councils, partners and Government representatives to debate issues, hear details of pioneering council led projects to reduce carbon emissions and increase resilience to a changing climate.
8. **Air Quality.** The LGA presented both written and oral evidence to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee enquiry into air pollution. The enquiry is looking into Defra's role for reducing emissions of key pollutants, including NO₂, and whether they go far enough and fast enough to meet EU standards; and whether Government departments should intervene further to reduce emissions. The LGA believes that Defra has insufficient input into policies implemented by other government departments, notably Department for Transport and that Government should do more nationally to address air quality, such as making industry-wide changes to influence a switch from petrol and diesel vehicles to ultra-low emission vehicles and other alternative modes of transport. This should be further supported by giving local authorities the powers and funding to manage traffic and provide alternatives to the car.

Transport and Growth

9. **The Buses Services Bill.** The Queen's Speech introduced the Bus Services Bill which will allow local authorities the power to improve bus services for the people who use them. Mayoral combined authorities will be given automatic London-style powers to franchise local services. Other areas will need to apply to the Secretary of State to pursue franchising powers and all areas can benefit from enhanced partnership arrangements. Data about routes, fares and times would be made available across the country to developers of apps to give passengers better information about how to make the most of local bus services. The LGA has long called for greater control and influence of local bus provision and so the Bill marks a significant step for councils and their ambition for greater devolution of powers.

21 July 2016

10. **Transport and local growth**, was the theme of an LGA conference that took place in March. The event reflected many of the issues of concerns to EEHT Board members. Issues ranged from: devolution, collaboration on transport plans, making the most of Highways England and Network Rail investment, and national policy, including the Buses Bill, to local issues such as the role of parking and bus services to support growth and healthy high streets. The Board met with Lord Adonis the chairman of the National Infrastructure Commission and pressed the case for greater investment in local infrastructure to accompany national schemes. The Board also responded to national plans to tackle air quality problems.
11. **Unlocking growth**. The British Property Federation and the LGA undertook a joint visit of Southampton City Council to explore how the public and private sector can work together to unlock growth. The purpose of this work was to revisit previous joint work from 2012 and to reflect on changes to the policy landscape and councils' resources.
12. **Cycling and walking**. In recognition of councils' ambition for promoting cycling and walking the Chair of the EEHT Board wrote to the Transport Minister, Andrew Jones MP, to propose a number of measures that would be of zero-cost to the Government that would help local areas with active travel strategies. This included: civil enforcement of moving traffic offences, stable and long-term funding, and Government support for further roll out of workplace parking levy schemes

The coming year

13. The approach to the work programme taken by the Board in 2015/16 has been to focus on doing a few things well. A draft work programme for 2016/17 will be presented at the Board's October meeting. In proposing the programme a number of factors will need to be taken into account including:
 - 13.1. The government's new legislative programme.
 - 13.2. Support to councils and follow-up to the housing commission work and the implementation of the Housing and Planning Act.
 - 13.3. Proposed changes to waste policy at a European and national level as well as policy development on air quality and the effects of climate change, including the increased incidence of flooding.
 - 13.4. Growth and future national and local policy on transport and infrastructure.