

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

Conferences, Meetings and External Events

1. On Tuesday 25 October I met with Lord Gardiner of Kimble, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity, to discuss common priorities between the LGA and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. We discussed concerns around connectivity, especially the last 5% of people who don't have access to broadband. I raised the possibility of looking at planning law so that broadband services are automatically included in any new build planning applications, as well as using both cellular and fixed line services to deliver an overall increase in coverage. Concerning litter, I stressed the budgetary pressures around litter and both sides agreed to try and work more closely on this issue. This meeting also included animal welfare, where both parties were keen to ensure that reforms to the animal licensing system reflects council priorities. Officers at the LGA are currently in the process of arranging a subsequent meeting.
2. On Wednesday 2 November I met with the Rt Hon Gavin Barwell MP, Minister for Housing and Planning, to discuss mutual commitments between the Department for Communities and Local Government and the LGA. These included the importance of resourcing planning departments, supporting local authorities to build homes outside their Housing Revenue Accounts, diversifying the types of developers engaged in construction, kick-starting development of those sites which have already received planning permission, developing an accelerated construction plan especially regarding provision of land, as well as the importance of delivering housing for a range of different needs locally. We agreed to continue working together on priority areas, including regular future meetings.
3. On Wednesday 2 November I also met with Bob Gallienne and Jane Smith, respectively the CEO and Head of Public Affairs of the National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG), the UK Trade Association which represents utilities and their contractors on streetworks issues. I emphasised the importance councils place on minimising the disruption caused by street works. NJUG wishes to work closely with the LGA to highlight and encourage best practice. I made it clear that I feel the LGA's relationship is that of a critical friend. We share the utilities providers desire to minimise the amount of times that streets are dug up whilst acknowledging that this will be a key challenge given the growth in house building the UK is forecast to see. We must work in more intelligent and more collaborative ways in order to ensure that our roads are not gridlocked by constant streetworks nor our road surfaces destroyed by repeated reopening and reinstatement. It is also incumbent on the utilities sector to ensure that their works reach the right standard first time. There is significant overlap between what councils want to see and what utilities and contractors want. We should work on this common ground in order to ensure that street works are minimised.
4. On Saturday 19 November, Cllr Keith House (Deputy Chair) attended the Politicians In Planning Association Annual Conference in Manchester, where he discussed the impact of the Housing and Planning Act in England.
5. On Tuesday 22 November I met with the Rt Hon Therese Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Life Opportunities. We discussed areas of mutual interest including the environment, rural issues, flooding, air

quality and waste management. It was a positive first meeting and officers at the LGA are currently in the process of arranging a subsequent meeting.

6. On Monday 12 December the LGA hosted 'Homelessness in London: achieving sustainable temporary accommodation solutions', attended by colleagues from local government and the private sector the event sought to facilitate innovation in providing temporary accommodation.

Publication of the LGA Housing Commission

7. The Board has launched the final copy of the [LGA Housing Commission](#) on Thursday 22 December in advance of the Housing White Paper. Following extensive engagement with over 100 partners the final report makes 37 recommendations for how local and national government can work together to: build more of the right homes in the right places; create prosperous and well-functioning economies; help more people into work and to increase their earnings, and; better meet the housing needs of our ageing population.

European Capital of Culture

8. On Thursday 1 December, Cllr Ian Stephens (Chairman of the LGA Culture, Tourism & Sport Board) and I sent a joint letter to the Rt Hon Karen Bradley MP, Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport. This letter sought clarity on the continuing eligibility of UK cities for European Capital of Culture funding. The Secretary of State has subsequently announced that a nationwide competition to find the 2023 European Capital of Culture has been launched.

Responses to select committees and other consultations

9. The Board has engaged with a range of select committees and other consultations, including:
 - 9.1. Responding to a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs consultation on the implementation of Clean Air Zones in England. This included LGA officers meeting on the 9 November with officials representing the 5 cities and 3 other places that may consider a CAZ on a voluntary basis. This was used to help inform the LGA's response to Defra's consultation.
 - 9.2. The EEHT Board has submitted written evidence to the Transport Select Committee's inquiry on urban congestion. We made the case that councils should have the power to manage street works, introduce the workplace parking levy and enact full implementation of part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004.
10. The Board has also provided briefings on a range of Bills passing through Parliament, including:
 - 10.1. **Bus Services Bill** - the Bus Services Bill has now passed through the Lords and has had its first reading in the Commons. The LGA has briefed on the bill throughout its passage through the Lord's and the EEHT Board is in ongoing discussion with the DfT about the guidance and secondary legislation that will enable the bill.

- 10.2. **Homelessness Reduction Bill** - the Homelessness Reduction Bill will likely gain Royal Assent, placing further duties on local government. We have worked hard to remove some elements of the original Bill that would have been unworkable for many councils to deliver. The EEHT Board will continue to push for adequate resources to deliver new duties, and for wider housing and welfare reforms that will be crucial to delivering ambitions to reduce homelessness.
- 10.3. **Neighbourhood Planning Bill** - the EEHT Board has briefed MPs in advance of debates on the Neighbourhood Planning Bill as it has worked its way through the House of Commons. We have stressed that the Bill could do more to help the Government achieve its ambitions on speeding up the delivery of new homes and to enable local authorities to deliver responsive planning services through adequate resourcing. The LGA has been quoted widely by MPs in their discussions, including our concerns about the proposed reforms to the use of planning conditions, local development plans and our research on office to residential permitted development rights. Cllr Tony Newman gave evidence at the Public Bill Committee which focused on the provisions of the Bill which restrict the use of pre-commencement planning conditions. He highlighted the LGA's view that the reforms are unnecessary and in addition raised the LGA's call for locally set planning fees. We will continue to work with Parliamentarians to shape the Bill as it works its way through the House of Lords early in 2017.

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