

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

Conferences, meetings and external events

1. I had a very positive second meeting with Therese Coffey MP in February. She was keen to discuss recycling rates in England, particularly the issues urban councils are facing. Prior to the meeting we ran a consultation exercise with both the EEHT and Cities Board which generated a lot of feedback for the DEFRA team. I raised the key points with Therese and then followed the rest up with a letter to her. This led to one of her officers arranging to speak to LGA officers to look at how urban councils can be supported to improve recycling rates. Therese also highlighted that she had recently visited Birmingham and Manchester City Council where she had met with the Environment portfolio holders. She acknowledged that there were issues around managing agents of private blocks. I flagged up concerns councils had raised about this issue and also the need for planning regulations to ensure recycling facilities/space are part of any design plan.
2. In March Lord Porter opened the Building our homes, communities and future national housing conference, which included sessions chaired by Councillor Keith House, and Cllr Ed Turner. The fully booked event included addresses from Rt. Hon. Marcus Jones and a range of partners, including developers, charities and policy-makers. A number of good practice workshops gave delegates an opportunity to learn about how councils had resolved issues locally to, for instance, provide temporary accommodation, house an ageing population, and make use of the One Public Estate programme.
3. On Thursday 30 March, Cllr Keith House (Deputy Chair) spoke at InsideGov's Future of Housing Supply 2017 forum, as a keynote speaker on establishing Local Authority solutions to the UK's housing crisis.
4. I chaired a buses conference for officers and members in February. The conference explored ways in which councils could help increase bus patronage as well as a discussion of the new powers available through the Act. The Act received Royal Assent on 27th April 2017. It gives automatic powers to mayoral combined authorities to introduce London style franchising for buses. The Act also grants similar powers for other local authorities but they will require the approval of the Secretary of State. All areas now have access to enhanced partnership arrangements which will give authorities the ability to enter into extensive partnerships with bus operators more easily. The LGA has called for more flexibility for local authorities to intervene in local bus markets to deliver better results for passengers. We therefore supported the Bill in its passage through Parliament and are glad that the Government has provided a framework for making it a reality. We hope that the Government will now bring forward secondary legislation and guidance to fully implement the act as soon as possible.

British Property Federation

5. Following joint study visits to Southampton and Milton Keynes councils, the LGA and British Property Federation launched a report on [local development, growth and regeneration through](#)

[successful public/private collaboration](#) at an event attended by leaders from local government, the development and investment industries and central government.

Connected and Autonomous Vehicles

6. In May I contributed to a fascinating discussion led by DfT and KPMG on connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs) and implications for wider transport policy. Senior DfT officials and industry experts also took part in the debate which covered issues such as the likely impact be on existing plans for major infrastructure and who might be the losers from a switch to connected and automated vehicles.

Air Quality

7. In June, lead members of the EEHT Board signed off the LGA's [response](#) to Defra's Air Quality Plan (Tackling nitrogen dioxide in our towns and cities). Whilst the LGA welcomes efforts to improve air quality we believe the Government could improve its strategy as a result of consultation and engagement with local authorities. LGA's response stated that air quality is a national responsibility; therefore national government should ensure resources are in place to help ensure compliance. This should mean that local authorities are resourced to deliver and DEFRA are adequately resourced to properly liaise with all affected areas.

Industrial Strategy

8. The Board has led on developing the [LGA's response](#) to the Government's green paper on the Industrial Strategy. The response highlighted the importance of local leaders across the country being able to access appropriate levers of growth, such as on skills and employment, infrastructure and housing in order to raise productivity, achieve inclusive growth and match the economic performance of their global competitors.

Publication of litter strategy

9. DEFRA published its litter strategy in April. The strategy sets out, in detail, how the government will work with different local groups, local authorities, Highways England and businesses to reduce litter between now and 2020. It also discusses how litter levels will be monitored. The aim of the document is to clean up the country, to change attitudes towards littering, and strengthen enforcement powers. This is the first Litter Strategy for England. The LGA has been part of the working group which helped to develop the strategy.

Establishment on LGA Waste and Recycling Sounding Board

10. To help us with policy development around waste and recycling we have established an officer sounding board. Senior Environmental officers from every council represented at EEHT Board have been invited to join the sounding board. The sounding board met for the first time in June to discuss the impact of leaving the EU. This was a well-attended session. The output has been used to help support the work of the EEHT Board.

Transport Investment Strategy

11. The Government has acknowledged the LGA's call that local roads have been underfunded especially compared to the Strategic Roads Network. For example, the LGA have drawn

attention to the fact that the Government had planned to spend 40 times more per mile on maintaining Highways England roads compared to local roads. As part of the Transport Investment Strategy, the Secretary of State for Transport has announced that a proportion of the National Roads Fund, which is sourced from Vehicle Excise Duty, will be spent on a Major Roads Network of economically important local government managed roads. The LGA welcomes the focus on rebalancing the economy as well as the new investment. We will be working with the DfT to ensure that councils have maximum flexibility over this resource for the benefit of local people, businesses and tax-payers.

12. On 5 July we published a report [Housing Our Homeless Households](#) responding to rising concern amongst local authorities about the increasing homelessness pressures being faced across the country.

LGA Annual Conference

13. Industrial Strategy – the Local Response, was the title of a lively session I chaired at this year's LGA conference. The panellists consisted of speakers from a broad range of interests and experiences: Tim Bowles, the new metro mayor of West of England spoke about the regional response to economic growth and the importance of partnership with central Government; Sir Richard Leese launched 'Work Local' – LGA's proposed solution to fixing our fragmented skills and employment provision; Melanie Leech, from the British Property Federation spoke about the importance of public/private collaboration for growth and Cllr Claire Coghill, Leader of Waltham Forest provide both a local and personal perspective on local growth.
14. Road conditions and a new Major Roads Network were two key areas of local transport that the new transport minister, Jesse Norman MP, spoke about at his keynote address at the LGA Conference which I chaired. The Minister offered a positive dialogue with local authorities to help improve local roads and transport. He explored the Government's thinking behind the proposal to direct a share of the National Roads Fund for economically significant local authority roads – a significant win for the LGA – and also an offer to work together on finding better ways to deliver well maintained roads. I am following up on both of these important offers.
15. Cllr Judith Blake (Vice-Chair) chaired a plenary session looking at how councils can help build homes, communities and lives. Delegates heard from Terrie Alafat, Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing, on the housing challenges facing the country and lower-income households in particular. They also heard from Nick Walkley, Chief Executive of Homes England, about the opportunities for councils to engage with Homes England in delivering more homes and better places, and from Angus Michie, Chairman of Berkley Homes, on how councils can work with developers to enable delivery.

Submissions

16. In March we submitted a response to the Environmental Audit Select Committee inquiry into disposable packaging (coffee cups and plastic bottles). Our response focussed on plastic bottles and called on the government to seek greater producer responsibility for dealing with the

increase in littered plastic bottles. We also called for more support for the infrastructure needed to reprocess plastics.

17. In June we responded to the DEFRA consultation on fixed penalties for environmental offences and introduction of civil penalties for littering from vehicles. We supported the extension of enforcement powers which already existed in London to the rest of the country. However, we called for local flexibility around the cost of the fines and flagged up that enforcement was not the only solution to littering problems.

Press Releases and Statements

18. I have recently made public statements on the [DfT local road funding announcement](#), the [decline of public bus passenger journeys](#) and [the draft tenancies bill](#).
19. Cllr Judith Blake has also made public statements on the [shortage of affordable housing](#), a response [to pavement parking concerns](#), [chewing gum clear-up costs](#) and [calling on government to close a legal loophole which allows landlords to convert properties into multiple tiny "units"](#).

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