

## **Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board - End of Year 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.

### **Achievements**

#### **Housing and Planning**

2. The Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board continued to lobby for the councils' role in building more homes to be fully recognised in government policy by: continuing to influence as it seeks to implement aspects of the White Paper through secondary legislation and changes to guidance; sponsoring improvement work and working with the sector to shape the government's social housing green paper.
3. As a result of our campaigning and that of councils and others the government has reversed its policy on social rent, confirming increases of CPI +1 per cent from 2020 for five years following four years of rent reductions . Our analysis found that this is equivalent to an extra £1.3 billion by 2024/25, when compared to a cash terms rent freeze.
4. Other successful outcomes have included;
  - 4.1. The Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap lifted by £1 billion;
  - 4.2. Confirmation that policy to force the sale of higher value assets will not to go ahead in 2018/19;
  - 4.3. An additional £2.3 billion for the Housing Infrastructure Fund;
  - 4.4. An additional £20 million for the Public Rented Sector access scheme;
  - 4.5. Reduced borrowing restrictions for new local development vehicles.
  - 4.6. The introduction of new powers giving local authorities oversight over New Town Development Corporations.
5. The Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board continued working towards a better funded, proactive planning system delivering homes that communities need. Activity around this included continuing to press government for local determination of planning fees, pursuing mechanisms for capturing uplift in land values for investment in

infrastructure and responding to the government's consultation on the determination of local housing need.

6. The LGA has also worked to influence government policy on the £25 million Planning Delivery Fund.
7. We held two joint seminars with the District Councils' Network and County Councils' Network to inform our response to the draft National Planning Policy Framework consultation.
8. The Board continued to focus on preventing homelessness and improving the way vulnerable people and those in crisis are housed. This included working with government and councils to ensure that the measures in the Homelessness Recognition Act are implemented appropriately and in a way that best meets the need of the homeless. The LGA continues to lobby for additional measures to address homelessness such as adapting welfare reforms by lifting the Local Housing Allowance freeze and re-linking it to rents.
9. Successful outcomes on homelessness included increasing new burdens funding for implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act (from £61 million to £72.7 million) and that the Local Housing Allowance freeze will not be applied to social housing.
10. The Board oversaw the delivery of the housing improvement programme. The 2017/18 Housing Advisers programme, launched in September 2017, was a success with over 40 councils receiving support. We will continue to evaluate progress in these participating councils. The programme is running again in 2018/19 and councils across the country have applied for support.. In addition as part of the improvement programme we have published a guide for councils on planning positively through partnership. We have also commissioned work on unimplemented planning permissions, build out rates, scrutiny of housing functions and HRA innovations.
11. Following the tragedy at Grenfell Tower, the Board along with other LGA committees engaged with the independent review of building regulations and fire safety. The government has agreed to fund the replacement of cladding on council and housing association owned blocks and it is consulting on banning deck top reviews and combustible material on the outside of tall residential buildings and others used to house vulnerable people.

## **Brexit**

12. The Board looked at how the government is working with local government on a new legal framework for services and responsibilities which are currently based on EU law. These include waste, environmental protection and state aid. The Board will continue to inform the broader LGA position and will continue to represent the interests of local government in discussions with Ministers and officials.

## **Waste and recycling**

13. The Board continued to argue that local authorities have the freedom to collect and dispose of waste in the way that is best suited to their residents. Following on from the

Board's review of waste and recycling it has continued to develop and agree an approach to addressing the challenges in the current system, reflecting on the changes that might be possible as a result of Brexit. The Board commissioned Eunomia to look at the efficacy of various waste measures, in advance of the government's publication of its resource and waste strategy. The Board has taken the view that a focus on levels of residual waste, in addition to recycling measures, would lead to more effective waste outcomes.

14. Further successful outcomes included a doubling of maximum litter fines from April 2017, and new powers for councils to fine the owners of vehicles from which litter is thrown.

### **Transport & Growth**

15. Following the Board's seminar on future transport in December 2017, the LGA published "Clean, connected and in-control – what tomorrow's transport technology could mean for councils" on 14 May. It summarises the main trends in transport technology and challenges members to think about the implications that this technology could have on their areas. The publication includes contributions from the experts that presented at the seminar. It concludes with a call for evidence for councils to contribute their experience of trialling these new technologies and also how they have coped with technological change and integrated it into service delivery.
16. There was a further event on this subject at the LGA conference at which the ideas in the publication were debated. The outcomes from this event and the submissions from councils will in turn inform the proposed work for next year. Members have stated they want the LGA to take a leadership role within this area and it has been proposed that more specific projects focussed on the deployment of technologies form part of next year's work programme. Officers will bring proposals for possible topics to the next Board meeting.
17. The LGA is surveying members on their approach to modal shift and what barriers they face to doing more. The results of the survey will form the basis of a report we will be publishing on the current policy regime for modal shift, what councils are doing in this area and what we would like the Government to do. We will also be highlighting best practice in encouraging modal shift through case studies. The final report will be published at the beginning of the summer.
18. The Government has announced that it intends to allow any highways authority to make use of lane rental powers. The LGA has long called for these powers to be available to all highways authorities. The powers allow councils to charge for every day that its busiest roads are occupied by roadworks and give utilities providers an incentive to finish their work as quickly as possible. We expect guidance for how to design a scheme to be published this autumn.

19. Last year the LGA published a report identifying ways in which we help combat congestion. One of our key asks was the need for additional funding for this area. We are pleased that the Government has this year announced a £1.7 billion fund for tackling intra urban congestion. The mayoral combined authority areas will receive a direct formula based allocation, which accounts for half of the fund. This is a positive step forward to allow those authorities to get on with tackling the problem. We will continue to call for the other allocations to be made on a formula basis rather than through competitions which can waste time and resources.
20. The Government has published an air quality strategy and a specific strategy to deal with nitrogen dioxide. The clean air strategy includes a commitment to a new statutory framework for air quality which we will respond to. The government has now lost three court cases on its plan to reduce nitrogen dioxide levels. As a result over 70 local authorities now have to take action and we have called for the government to ensure that local authorities can determine what action is needed and that there are sufficient resources available. DEFRA have listened to us and made £255 million available for the implementation of measures and a further £250 million clean air fund to pay to improve air quality whilst ensuring that any measures do not penalise those least able to make the necessary changes.
21. The Government announced a new Major Road Network which will incorporate the most strategically important local roads across the country. It will mean new funding for important local A roads as the LGA has been calling for over a number of years. The final shape of the network is still to be announced but it will involve significant extra funding for local authorities for major improvements and renewals through the a new national roads fund which will be a ringfenced fund amassed through the income from the Vehicle Excise Duty. The fund currently contains approximately £1.5 billion headroom and we've strongly argued that all this money should be available for local authorities.
22. Town centres around the country continue to undergo rapid change in fortunes as a response to changing consumer habits, the growth of online shopping and global trends. In addition, each town will also have its own set of unique issues, such as car parking and access, anti-social behaviour and clustering. Councils are looking to maintain vibrant town centres and high streets and the LGA have developed a support programme and activities to help member councils. This includes: a handbook for town centre leadership for councils accompanied by an online toolkit; events for practitioners and elected members - including a national conference; participation with the Government's Future High Streets Forum and a submission to the MHCLG's High Streets and Town Centres in 2030 inquiry.
23. We have worked with the People and Places and City Regions Boards in engaging Government on the industrial strategy throughout the year, responding to consultations, developing an alliance with Local Enterprise Partnerships and promoting the importance of local partnerships in delivering the ambitions for place, in the context of local industrial

strategies. We have also responded to the Government's review of LEPs. Martin Tett chaired an industrial strategy plenary session at the LGA conference.

### **Flooding**

24. The board continued to seek: greater local flexibility of how flood risk management funding is spent, to better reflect local needs ;full cost-recovery of statutory duties through local fee setting; and the ability for areas to use precepts to provide additional funding, where there is local agreement.
25. DEFRA has announced a review of flood defence funding post 2021 and the LGA is engaging with this.
26. The Board held a session on flooding at which the EA and Leeds City Council presented on partnership approaches.
27. We are engaged at officer level with the Environment Agency's revision of the national flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) strategy in 2019. Our involvement is focused on the challenge of protecting – and funding – the nations' resilience as climate change increases the risks we face.

### **Programme of work and priorities 2018/19**

28. In 2018/19 the Board will continue to progress its work across its key themes. It will develop its work programme over the summer and this will be agreed at the Board's first meeting in the new cycle.

### **Financial Implications**

29. All work programmes are met from existing budgets and resources.