

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

Press and external events

1. A press release highlighting that the free bus pass scheme is being underfunded by government by an estimated £652 million a year, and for this to be address in the Spending Review, was reported extensively across the national media, including front page in the Mirror. It was also covered by the Sun, i newspaper, Daily Mail, Express, Telegraph, Sky News Online, LBC Online and Huffington Post. The story was further discussed on the BBC News and Sky News paper reviews and across Sky News Radio, Sky News, BBC Radio 2, BBC Radio 5 Live, LBC and TalkRadio news bulletins.
2. Councillor Adele Morris attended a round table meeting with Michael Gove and Defra officials to discuss proposals for a set of new targets to support the Government's 25 year environment strategy. This work is at an early stage and the LGA will continue to engage with Defra.

Transport

Concessionary Fares

3. The LGA put forward Paul Woods, Interim Chief Finance Officer for the North East Combined Authority, to provide oral evidence on 30th January to the Transport Select Committee inquiry on the health of bus markets, and specifically on concessionary fares funding. Paul has undertaken extensive analysis on costs and the funding that councils receive and has concluded that for 2017/18, there was an overall funding gap for concessionary fares of £652 million. The analysis is particularly complex as there have been a number of changes in how the funding has been allocated and in recent years has not been particularly visible in Government figures. Previously, in 2016, the LGA had estimated that the funding gap was at least £200 million.
4. It is intended that the new analysis will inform the LGA's submission to the next spending review. We will continue to highlight the impact that underfunding of the statutory concessionary fares scheme has on other council services, including supported bus travel and discretionary concessions.

Future transport

5. In January the LGA held its future transport conference entitled Clean, Connected and in Control - the future of transport technology. We hosted a diverse range of speakers involved in electrification, autonomous trials and data analysis. The day covered a range of topics from the future of regulation to the emerging commercial opportunities for local authorities. A feature in First magazine is currently being produced to outline some of the

key topics that emerged from the day as well as outlining future LGA work on future transport.

6. From feedback at the conference there was a clear desire from attendees for the LGA to be more active in understanding and communicating best practice on how councils manage data. There are significant opportunities for councils to provide existing services in smarter ways and to gain new insights from transport data. However many authorities feel that they lack sufficient expertise to fully utilise the data they generate from managing their networks and the large amount of data that will be generated from increased vehicle connectivity. This is an area of work the LGA will help develop.
7. The Energy Savings Trust is currently planning to produce a guidance publication for local authorities seeking to increase electric vehicle charging provision in their area. The LGA plans to publish an accompanying guide helping elected members to make the case about how increasing electric charging provision can benefit their authority and the steps they can take to help make it happen.
8. There has been significant interest in cycle hire schemes especially give the rapid expansion and subsequent retrenchment of the dock less industry. The LGA intends to publicise successful case studies highlighting successful schemes from around England to guide authorities who are interested in this area.

Rail review

9. The LGA has responded to the initial stage of the Williams rail review. We have outlined our view of what local authorities should expect from a successfully functioning rail industry. The initial LGA submission identified the following core areas of concern for councils where we would wish the review to focus their efforts:
 - 9.1. Councils role in suburban rail and devolution
 - 9.2. The use and disposal of rail land especially for housing
 - 9.3. Investing in improving stations and the role of stations in wider regeneration projects
 - 9.4. The provision of entirely new stations
 - 9.5. Funding from outside bodies, including local authorities, to fund improvements to rail Infrastructure
 - 9.6. Crossing the railways, especially where it is done via the local highway network
 - 9.7. Community and local authority engagement by the rail industry

10. In all of these areas we have highlighted the need for the industry to work more openly and involve communities within their decision making processes.

Housing

Background

11. A general update of the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board's work on housing can be found on the last [board agenda](#) from the February Board. The update includes detail on:

- 11.1. Letwin review of build out rates
- 11.2. Housing Revenue Account cap
- 11.3. Home England Strategy 2018/23
- 11.4. Hackitt Review

Homelessness

12. In March, the LGA hosted a roundtable with councils to discuss the movement of people between local authority areas by homelessness and children's services ("out of area placements"). Following on from this, the LGA will facilitate a sector-led working group to develop practical and policy solutions to some of the issues facing councils related to out of area placements. This group will report in the coming months.

13. MHCLG have launched a consultation on structures that support partnership working and accountability in homelessness: "Tackling homelessness together". The LGA fed into the scope and detail of the consultation document, and will formally respond prior to the May deadline. Our response will include learning from councils in our homelessness officers' policy network, along with good practice from our upcoming publication on how councils can successfully deliver local homelessness strategies.

Housing Delivery Test Results

14. The Government published the results of the Housing Delivery Test on 18 February 2018. The results mean that over 100 councils will be required to develop action plans and in many cases also identify 20 per cent additional land for development than originally required in the five year land supply.

15. Councils already approve nine in ten planning applications and the LGA has stressed that it is wrong to impose unfair and undeliverable targets which fail to take into account the complexity and unique needs of local areas. This risks leading to a housebuilding free-for-all with councils and residents powerless to ensure the right homes are built in the right places in their communities.

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16. The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has designed a programme of support for councils that assists with the impact and outcomes of this announcement. It is also working with councils to determine what a plan review should look like. For more information Email: pas@local.gov.uk

Environment and waste

17. Fly tipping is a blight on neighbourhoods and a real concern for residents. Lizzie Noel came along to the recent Board meeting to share the findings of her independent review of Waste Crime and discuss areas where central and local government could work together. The legal process was identified as an area of concern for councils due to the high cost to councils and lower than expected fines.
18. Government has published four consultation papers on waste and recycling proposals. These cover proposals for consistent household recycling services, extended producer responsibility for retailers and businesses, a deposit return scheme and a requirement for plastic packaging to include a minimum amount of recycled material. The LGA is holding a consultation event with councils on the proposals on 4 April 2019
<https://lgaevents.local.gov.uk/lga/699/home>

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