

22 October 2019

Housing Update Paper October 2019

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

An update of the policy and improvement work that has been carried out for the Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board covering housing, planning, homelessness and building safety.

Recommendation

That members note the contents of the report.

Action

Officers to take forward any member comments for future policy work.

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Planning

1. Accelerated planning green paper – LGA officers been engaging with MHCLG officials to help inform the development of the green paper, following on from the letter we wrote to the former Minister of State for Housing earlier in the year. We still expect the green paper to be published later this year which will discuss what improvements can be made to accelerate the end-to-end planning process, including likely proposals for new approaches to meeting the costs of planning services.
2. Compulsory purchase – we are running a technical masterclass for local authorities on understanding compulsory purchase orders and compensation in November. We also undertook a joint LGA/Shelter survey of local authorities earlier in the year to identify challenges around the use of compulsory purchase powers to acquire land for residential development. A report on the findings will be published in the Autumn.
3. Survey of planning departments – the LGA and MHCLG commissioned the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) to carry out a survey of planning departments. 120 councils responded providing a rich picture of how departments of various shapes and sizes view their skills, capacity and longer-term outlook. A high-level overview of the results have been published and more detailed studies have been sent to participating councils.
4. Probity in planning – we have commissioned an update to the 2013 Probity in Planning guide for councillors and officers which will be published in November. This useful resource will support councillors to get involved in discussions on plan making and on applications, on behalf of their communities in a fair, impartial and transparent way.
5. Future Homes Standard consultation – the government has published a consultation which looks at how the government's commitment to reducing emissions can be achieved through new homes building guidance. This is the first of a number of consultations. It focuses on energy efficiency and ventilation. The aim is to bring the Standard in 2025, but there will be revisions to the Part L and F standards proposed to be implemented in 2020. One of the proposals is to remove the ability of local planning authorities to set higher energy efficiency standards than those in the Building Regulations. We will be responding to the consultation.
6. National design guide – the government has published a national design guide which is a high level document that includes examples of best practice design and outlines the considerations that will feed into a proposed National Model Design Code, to be consulted on early in 2020. We will be responding to the consultation.

7. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – new CIL regulations came into force in September 2019 which make a number of changes to the way CIL is implemented by local authorities. In particular, they remove the section 106 pooling restrictions for all councils, something the LGA has been advocating for some time. They also introduce a new requirement for councils to publish an annual statements regarding infrastructure funded through CIL and section 106 planning agreements.
8. Permitted development rights (PDR) – We have continued to raise concerns to MHCLG about the impact of permitted development rights on the ability of councils to shape local areas and the loss of affordable homes. We have also worked with civil servants to influence the specification for the government’s review of permitted development rights for conversion of buildings to residential use in respect of the quality standard of homes delivered.
9. Future Place programme – we are continuing to work with the RTPI, CIH, RIBA, Homes England and now Local Partnerships to provide capacity support to the 5 Future Places that were announced in March 2019. Future Place is a joint programme to unlock local potential for place-shaping.
10. Housing, Planning and Infrastructure Conference – this will be held on 17 March 2020.

Housing

11. Long-term delivery of social and affordable rented housing inquiry - We submitted written evidence to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee inquiry into the long-term provision of social and affordable housing. Our submission outlined the savings that the Government could make nationally by investing properly in social housing at scale. We also called for the scrapping of permitted development rights, the reform of right to buy and for councils to have certainty over rent setting.
12. Joint work with the National Housing Federation – we have worked with the National Housing Federation (NHF) and PlaceShapers to support our members to form partnerships where this can benefit all parties. We have published a series of case studies from across the country to share best practice and information about the types of partnership that can work.
13. Council housing campaign – to mark the 100 years since the Addison Act was passed, which introduced the notion of councils building housing on a large scale, we looked at how councils managed to build over 5.5 million homes over the past century and why council building has declined in more recent years. We also asked partner organisations and leading political figures to get involved and put forward their thoughts on how councils can build on a large scale again. All of this content was showcased to the 1,500 delegates who attended the LGA Conference as a main feature on the LGA’s campaign

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stand. We also held a social media campaign on 31 July 2019, exactly 100 years to the day since the Addison Act was passed and promoted the content once again. This got a resounding response with #CouncilHousing100 trending at number 1 for the majority of the day and over 50 councils getting involved. Through the social media campaign we were able to push our key asks around housing to hundreds of thousands of people, including a number of key stakeholders.

14. Parliamentary briefings - we have briefed MPs ahead of the following debates: [British house building industry](#); [Local Housing Allowance \(LHA\) and homelessness](#)
15. Social housing regulation and rents policy- we responded to the Regulator of Social Housing consultation on a proposed new Rent Standard from 2020. In it we reiterated our concerns that applying the Rent Standard to local authorities is a step back from giving them local control over income. We also raised concerns that whilst the Rent Standard describes a process that allows the Regulator to grant an exemption to private registered providers where the Rent Standard would risk their financial viability, there is no mention of exemptions or flexibility for local authority landlords.
16. Right to Buy (RtB) reform – a government response to the RtB consultation which closed last year is still awaited. Whilst we welcomed some of the proposals, including councils being able to recycle greater proportions of RtB receipts, we expressed concern that they did not go far enough and have continued to make the case for 100% per cent receipt retention and ability for councils to set discounts locally.
17. Social Housing Green Paper – an update is still awaited from the Government on the next steps from the Green Paper.

Private Rented Sector

18. Private rented sector improvement project – we have now commissioned a research project which is investigating good practice approaches to improving the quality of private rented housing, and how councils can secure sustainable sources of funding. The final report will be published in February 2020.
19. Government consultations – MHCLG has published two consultations relating to the private rented sector. The first sought views on widening access to a register of rogue landlords and property agents. The second related to implementation of the Government's decision to reform tenancies by removing the option of Section 21 evictions. The LGA has responded to both consultations, and our responses will be published on our website.
20. All-Party Parliamentary Group for Housing in the North – we responded to the APPG's inquiry into property standards in the North's Private Rented Sector (PRS), outlining a

number of approaches that councils are taking to improve quality of the PRS, and making the case for new powers and sustainable funding that would enable them to do more.

Health, care and housing

21. Supported Housing - We continue to seek to influence the Government's reform of supported housing, including work to strengthen the oversight regime. We are making the case for a sustainably funded local oversight regime that enables councils to address issues such as concerns about the quality of some non-commissioned accommodation.

22. Specialist Supported Housing - The LGA, Association of Directors of Adult Social Care (ADASS), NHS England and NHS Improvement, supported by the Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN), have published a joint briefing for clinical commissioning groups (CCG), local authority learning disability commissioners and Directors of Housing in response to the Social Housing Regulator's statements and findings related to a number of specialist housing providers. The regulator is concerned about the long-term financial viability of specialist supported housing (SSH) providers who rely solely or heavily on the lease-based model of housing supply. Following a roundtable in September we will issue further advice on how commissioners approach the situation and what type of solutions and reassurance may be available to them regarding this much needed type of accommodation.

23. Accessible Housing – the Chancellor announced in the Spending Round that MHCLG will consult on mandatory accessible housing standards in building regulations, ensuring new properties are built with good accessibility standards to reflect the needs of older and disabled people. We agree that new homes should be accessible or easily adaptable for people of all ages and needs and it is vital that national rules incentivise the building of accessible homes. We will be responding to the consultation.

Homelessness

24. Homelessness Reduction Act - The LGA continues to work with MHCLG and councils to ensure that councils' concerns around the implementation of the Act are reflected in its review, in particular the concerns that councils have not been sufficiently funded to deliver the new duties. MHCLG published a call for evidence on the Homelessness Reduction Act, which the LGA has subsequently responded to. Our evidence draws on the survey we published in March 2019 on councils' experiences of the Act, as well as initial findings from our Homelessness Prevention Project (below).

25. Homelessness prevention project – We have now received initial findings from our research into how central government can help councils to prevent homelessness, which is led by researchers at Heriot-Watt University's I-SPHERE. A workshop, a survey and a series of interviews provided insights into the enablers and barriers of successful

prevention, and the changes needed to central government policy and funding. The report is due for publication in Autumn this year. In parallel, the LGA's cross-policy analysis of the fragmentation in central government funding is also nearing completion, with final results due in November.

26. Out of area placements – The LGA is nearing completion of its protocol, outlining the actions to be taken by councils when moving households from one council area to another. This work was carried out by a steering group, comprised of local housing authorities and children's services, to develop an approach whereby the LGA could add value in supporting positive working between councils in a way that best supports families and services. A full update has been provided in a separate paper.
27. Working together with housing associations – Following a series of regional events held with the National Housing Federation, the LGA and NHF have jointly published a report, "Housing associations and local authorities working together to end homelessness", which highlights good practice in joint working around housing delivery and homelessness prevention. This report is now available on our website.
28. Working well with the voluntary sector – the LGA has commenced work with Homeless Link to publish a short joint guidance note on how voluntary sector organisations can seek to work strategically with councils to tackle local homelessness issues. We will be holding a consultation event with both organisations' members in the Autumn, and will publish the guidance towards the end of this year.
29. Local Homelessness Strategies – our guidance for local authorities on formulating, delivering and governing local homelessness strategies has now been completed, and is due for publication in the Autumn. This is intended to support local authorities, as well as inform Government work to reform the structures that support partnership working and accountabilities in homelessness.
30. Leadership essentials – the LGA has launched a leadership essentials programme focusing on homelessness. It is aimed at leaders, deputy leaders, and relevant portfolio holders, and is designed to support political leadership in reducing the risks and levels of homelessness in local areas. The session will take place in December 2019.

Building safety

31. Hackitt Review – the LGA responded to MHCLG's consultation on the new building safety regulatory framework, entitled "Building a Safer Future"; our response is published on our website, and outlines views on the scope of the new regime, new building owner responsibilities, residents' voice, a new building safety regulator, and strengthened enforcement and sanctions. We continue to work with the National Fire Chiefs Council,

Local Authority Building Control, and the Health and Safety Executive to advise Government on detailed proposals, as part of our role in the Joint Regulators Group.

32. Remediation work – work of the Joint Inspection Team commenced in August and is ongoing. This is the LGA-hosted, MHCLG-funded multi-disciplinary taskforce which is supporting councils to enforce the removal of ACM cladding. The Government has also published the application guidance for the additional funding for private sector building owners to remove Aluminium Composite Material cladding (ACM), which it made available in May 2019 following successful lobbying by the LGA. We continue to work with the Ministry, the National Housing Federation, councils, and the fire doors industry to shape the remediation plan for fire doors. We are supporting the Ministry to host a Large Panel System buildings best practice forum in November 2019. This will allow local authority officers to discuss issues relating to the identification and remediation of issues in these buildings.

Housing Improvement

33. Housing Adviser Programme (HAP) update – We launched the 2019/20 programme in July and are now funding 14 successful projects, supporting more than 70 councils to meet their local housing need via direct grant funding through which councils can secure specialist expertise. The projects are diverse and wide ranging, covering our key themes of housing supply, housing strategy, homelessness and planning. We also ran an event for councils to embed and share learning from projects funded in 2018/19.
34. Housing Springboard programme – We will soon be launching a programme of masterclass events, developed and delivered by the Housing & Finance Institute to investigate the different options available to them in order to enable housebuilding. It brings councils together with industry experts to provide business, technical and leadership support relevant to their needs.
35. Leadership essentials – the LGA has launched a leadership essentials programme focusing on housing. It is aimed at leaders, deputy leaders, and relevant portfolio holders, and is designed to help participants develop their leading role in shaping the local housing market to meet the needs of people and places. The session will take place in January 2020 and is now fully booked.

Press releases and statements

36. We have issued a number of proactive press releases generating substantial national and trade media coverage: housing crisis – spending on B&Bs for homeless rockets since 2010; [boom in barns converted into homes fuels rural fears](#); [right to buy rules undermining council efforts to boost housebuilding](#); [a primary school's worth of children face becoming homeless this summer](#)

37. We have also made public statements on the following: [responding to Public Works Loans Board rate rise](#); [responding to latest house building statistics](#); [responding to ONS figures on the number of deaths of homeless people](#); [responding to government planning announcement](#); [responding to launch of No Homeless Veterans Campaign](#); [responding to NHF 'State of the nation' housing crisis report](#); [responding to New Economics Foundation research on affordable homes](#); [responding to Homes for Later Living report](#); [responding to latest homelessness statistics](#); [responding to Crisis' Cover the Cost campaign to prevent homelessness](#); [responding to new planning rules showing how developers' cash is spent on communities](#); [responding to Children's Commissioner report on homeless children](#); [responding to the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System \(HHSRS\) review](#); [responding to HCLG Committee report on modern methods of construction](#); [responding to government planning proposals](#); [responding to PAC report on planning and housing market](#); [responding to Prime Minister's housing announcement](#); [responding to calls to repeal Vagrancy Act](#); [responding to local government homelessness commission report](#); [responding to Habinteq's accessible homes report](#); [responding to affordability report by Affordable Housing Commission](#).