

18 December 2019

Housing Update Paper

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 since the last Board.

Recommendation

That Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board members note the contents of the report.

Action

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

Contact officer: Jo Allchurch
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 07900 931045
Email: jo.allchurch@local.gov.uk

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Planning

1. Permitted development rights (PDR) – We are engaging with a number of national stakeholders who continue to raise concerns about the impact of permitted development rights to plan post-election activity and how we can work together to maximise our influence. A review of permitted development rights for conversion of buildings to residential use in respect of the quality standard of homes delivered is underway.
2. Probity in planning – we have now received a final draft of this update to the 2013 Probity in Planning guide for councillors and officers. The final version will be published in December.
3. Future Homes Standard consultation – we are engaging with councils and other stakeholders to inform our response to this consultation which looks at how the national commitment to reducing emissions can be achieved through new homes building guidance.
4. Future Place programme – we are continuing to work with the RTPI, CIH, RIBA, Homes England and 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. A mid-term review has recently been held with programme participants presenting on activity to date.
5. Housing, Planning and Infrastructure Conference – this will be held on 17 March 2020 and work is underway to secure speakers.
6. Compulsory purchase – we ran a technical masterclass for local authorities on understanding compulsory purchase orders and compensation.

Housing

7. Working with the National Housing Federation – following on from the case studies we have recently published on councils working in partnership with housing associations, officers are currently planning future joint activity.
8. Parliamentary briefings - we have briefed MPs ahead of the following debates: [Building out extant planning permissions](#)
9. Right to Buy (RtB) reform – We continue to make the case for 100 per cent retention of sales receipts and the ability for councils to set discounts locally through the media and our engagement with government and other stakeholders. A government response to the RtB consultation which closed last year is still awaited.

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10. Social Housing Green Paper – an update is still awaited from Central Government on the next steps from the Green Paper.

Private Rented Sector

11. Private rented sector improvement project – the researchers leading this work will soon be engaging with councils to look at the range of activity being undertaken to improve the quality of private rented sector housing and to understand the key challenges. The final report will be published in March 2020.

Homelessness

12. Homelessness prevention project – We have now received and are responding to sector feedback on our research into how central government can help councils to prevent homelessness, which is led by researchers at Heriot-Watt University's I-SPHERE. The report is due for publication following the pre-election period. In parallel, the LGA's cross-policy analysis of the fragmentation in central government funding is also nearing completion and will be published shortly.
13. Out of area placements – Following discussions at the previous Board meeting, the LGA's out of area placements protocol has undergone further development, including a proposed dispute resolution process. This work has been 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. The draft protocol is due to be finalised in December, after which the LGA will commission legal advice to ensure it is compatible with the legislative framework and then formally consult with local authorities.
14. Working well with the voluntary sector – the LGA continues to 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 members from both organisations in December 2019, and will publish the guidance shortly afterwards.
15. Local Homelessness Strategies – our guidance for local authorities on formulating, delivering and governing local homelessness strategies will be published in December. 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.

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Building safety

16. Hackitt Review – 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. In particular, we are lobbying the Government to ensure that the views of local building safety enforcement agents are taken into account when devising the form of the new building safety regulator. Government is expected to respond to the “Building a Safer Future” consultation by the end of the year and to legislate at the earliest opportunity. In our response to the Building a Safer Future consultation, we highlighted the need for any new regulatory framework to consider the safety of buildings under 18m. We continue to engage with partners on this issue
17. Remediation work – work of the Joint Inspection Team commenced in August and is ongoing, with four inspections having taken place so far. This is the LGA-hosted, MHCLG-funded multi-disciplinary taskforce which is supporting councils to enforce the removal of ACM cladding. The deadline for private sector building owners to apply for ACM remediation funding (made available by government in May 2019) is 31 December. The fire in student accommodation in Bolton took place in a block clad with High Pressure Laminate panels; the LGA continues to call for MHCLG to provide funding for the removal of dangerous non-ACM cladding.
18. Grenfell inquiry – The independent inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire published its phase 1 report on Thursday 30 October, which focuses on the night of the fire. The LGA issued a statement in response, which emphasises that there are important lessons for the fire brigade nationally and London Fire Brigade individually to learn from the fire, whilst arguing that the inquiry had made an error by focusing on the fire brigade’s response to the fire before examining the fire’s causes.

Housing Improvement

19. Housing Adviser Programme (HAP) update – the 2019/20 programme is now funding 19 successful projects, supporting more than 80 councils to meet their local housing need via direct grant funding through which councils can secure specialist expertise. A series of case studies from the 2018/19 projects are now available on the LGA website.
20. Housing Springboard programme – this programme developed and delivered by the Housing & Finance Institute, and sponsored by the LGA, held its first session on 9 December. It is designed to meet the needs of councils that have the appetite and ambition to shape the delivery of homes for their area, and who recognise that getting support will deliver results faster. Throughout the programme, councils will have the opportunity to present and get tips from experts in their field, including investors, professional services, housebuilders and others.

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21. Leadership essentials – the LGA ran its first leadership essentials programme focusing on homelessness on 5 and 6 December 2019. It was aimed at leaders, deputy leaders, and relevant portfolio holders, and was designed to support political leadership in reducing the risks and levels of homelessness in local areas.

Press releases and statements

22. We have issued proactive press releases on the following: [successful applicants for LGA Housing Advisers Programme announced](#)

23. We have also made public statements on the following: [responding to launch of new accessible homes coalition](#); [Queen’s Speech: LGA responds to Building Safety Bill](#).