

EEHT Board Priorities and Work Programme

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

This report sets out updated draft priorities for the Board together with a draft work programme for the period to December 2020. An updated draft work programme is set out in **Appendix A**.

Recommendation

That the Board considers and agrees a final version of the updated Board's priorities and work programme.

Action

Officers will take action as directed.

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EEHT Board Priorities and Work Programme

Background

1. The Board [priorities and work programme](#) up to July 2020 were finalised and agreed following the October 2019 EEHT Board meeting.
2. Given the ongoing COVID 19 emergency, it is timely to consider how the Board's work programme under each of its themes needs to adjust, in order to support councils as we exit from emergency measures and recover into a changed economic, social and environmental context.
3. In re-prioritising, the Board will also want to be aware of the issues that were being raised by councils prior to the COVID 19 emergency, which have informed the LGA's [2019-2022 business plan](#) priorities and take into consideration the Government's own priorities. The Board will also want to make a judgement on where it can make the most significant contribution.

The Updated Work Programme

4. The Work Programme, set out in **Appendix A**, updates the priorities agreed in October 2019 and sets out proposed specific actions up to the end of December 2020. There are important issues that the board will want to keep on the agenda and these are reflected in the proposed work programme. The key proposed changes to the work programme, reflecting COVID19 are that the Board has an increased focus on:
 - 4.1. **Place leadership in local recovery:** working with Government to ensure that councils have the right tools to support to convene local public services and businesses for a joint endeavour to recovery.
 - 4.2. **Climate smart recovery** – where we seek economic recovery from the crisis but in a way that is socially equitable and decarbonises the economy.
 - 4.3. **Planning** – The flexibilities necessary to support councils manage their services
 - 4.4. **Housing** – Working with councils and Government on a package of support to stimulate house building
 - 4.5. **Housing improvement** – Reorienting our work to reflect the additional challenges councils face as a result of COVID19
 - 4.6. **Transport** - Securing the future buses and supporting councils on active travel

- 4.7. **Business support** – Understanding councils' role and best practice in supporting businesses to recover
- 4.8. **Town Centre renewal** – refreshing our work on town centres to reflect the changed economic and social circumstances
- 4.9. **Homelessness** – Working with councils and Government to understand and respond to future demand for services as we emerge from the emergency measures and seek to keep previous rough sleepers in safe and appropriate accommodation
- 4.10. **Service costs** – Understand the cost pressures on services including waste
- 4.11. **Air quality** – Work with councils and Government on the priorities and action

LGA Priorities

- 5. Two of the LGA's six priorities, as set out in the latest business plan, are particularly relevant to the work of the Board:
 - 5.1. Places to live and work: Councils lead the way in building the homes that people need, driving inclusive and sustainable economic growth and creating safe and resilient communities that are great places to live.
 - 5.2. Sustainability and climate action: Councils take the lead in driving urgent actions in their local areas to combat climate change and its impacts and to deliver zero net carbon by 2030.

Government's priorities

- 6. Housing and planning will remain a key Government priority, not least in supporting economic recovery. [Planning for the Future](#), sets out the Government's plans for housing and planning following announcements in the 2020 budget and is a preface for the forthcoming Planning White Paper. The Government has also previously outlined proposals for a [National Design Guide](#), to drive up the quality of new homes, a [Future Homes Standard](#) to cut carbon emissions from residential property through energy efficient new build homes starting from 2025, and [First Homes](#), a discounted home ownership product for first-time buyers, funded through developer contributions. The Building Better, Building Beautiful commission has also published its recommendations to Government on how to promote and increase the use of high-quality design for new build homes and neighbourhoods.
- 7. Building on the successful lobbying that resulted in the lifting of the housing borrowing cap, the Board will want to continue to make the case for councils to have the funding,

powers and flexibilities to play a key role in increasing supply through delivery of their own house-building programmes.

8. This should include continuing support for councils to have the flexibility to require standards above the building regulations to ensure they can meet their own ambitions to achieve net zero carbon, support better quality housing, and develop and grow a skills base in the newly emerging green economy.
9. With potential for fundamental changes to the ways in which people live, work, play and travel in the future, councils as leaders of place, will also become more important than ever in ensuring the development of resilient local areas that meet current and future needs. It will be important that the Board continues to advocate for a properly resourced local plan-led system.

Transport

10. Transport will play a key role in any economic recovery as well as helping people and business ease out of travel restrictions when these begin to be lifted. The current restrictions have had a dramatic impact on people's travel patterns, with many fewer journeys by car and public transport, although there has been significant increases in cycling and walking. This has resulted in significant reductions in carbon and other harmful transport related emissions. From the Board's perspective and the priority, it has placed on decarbonisation of transport, it will be important that opportunities from changing travel patterns (such as active travel and walking) are captured and maintained whilst risks are minimised (e.g. the risk to provision of local bus networks and big increases in car journeys). However, these will need to be managed carefully as it will be important that councils are able to support economic recovery as well.
11. Prior to the COVID 19 pandemic, buses and active travel were seen as a key part of the solution to the decarbonisation of our transport networks. However, bus networks outside of London, are at particular risk as they have been dependent on commercial fares income. Since travel restrictions were placed, the operators are now dependent on state funding and it is highly likely that this will be the case for the medium to long term as it is envisaged that it will take considerable time for passenger numbers to recover. The Government have indicated that they will continue to provide financial support to the buses and light rail sector beyond the immediate support.
12. It will be important to continue to make the case for public transport because of its importance in reaching our goals concerning decarbonisation, inclusive economic growth and ensuring access to transport in otherwise isolated communities. The Board will need to consider whether the LGA is supportive of a more direct role for councils in the co-ordination and commissioning of local public transport. Similarly, there is an

opportunity to build on the increased appetite for walking and cycling. However, councils are constrained in their ability to plan for longer term improvements to cycling and walking infrastructure as funding remains fragmented, short term in nature and subject to competitive bidding. It will be important that the Board continues to call for much more streamlined and certainty in funding with greater local flexibility.

13. Capacity and capability may remain challenges in individual councils' ability to develop active travel schemes and be able to effectively shape bus networks. The Board may wish to prioritise further work on this.

Economic recovery

14. Achieving economic recovery as we emerge from the COVID19 lockdown is a national and local priority. The OBR has published a baseline scenario which indicates that the real GDP will have declined by 35 per cent in Q2 2020. It's scenario predicts a V shaped recovery with real GDP growing by 27 per cent in Q3 2020. A number of commentators have questioned likelihood of a V shaped recovery, suggesting that with a slow emergence from lockdown, we might see a level of economic scarring that will slow any recovery. Trends that we saw before the onset of COVID19 including the decline in high street retail might be accelerated by the period of emergency measures. It seems clear that social distancing and other measures to slow the infection rate will be with us for some time. Councils are preparing their economic recovery action plans and will want to consider how they can support the restart and stabilisation of the economy and also economic renewal to reflect the innovation that has emerged, and expectations around a green recovery and reducing inequalities.
15. The Government has now set out its [plan](#) for exiting the emergency measures, which stepped approach in which those businesses which can open are being encouraged to do so now, with non-essential retail possibly opening after 1 June and cafes, restaurants and bars being considered for opening after 4 July.
16. The Furlough Scheme has also been extended beyond June when it will provide up to 60 per cent of the wages of those staff furloughed by companies.
17. Not surprisingly unemployment has seen a significant spike with 1.8 million households making Universal Credit claims between 16 March and 28 April. A significant proportion of these new claimants are young people who have been working in low paid jobs. It is not clear to what extent the ending of the furlough scheme, when it happens, will lead to further unemployment claims.

Relevant Government Legislation

18. Amongst the new Government legislation and other measures announced over the last few months, a number are of particular interest to the work of the Board:

- 18.1. Environment Bill: this bases environment protection on environmental principles overseen by an Office of Environmental Protection (OPE); and it contains measures to address improved biodiversity, waste reform, air pollution, single use plastic and the resilience of water and wastewater services. The Bill was re-introduced after the General Election. Progress has been paused due to the COVID-19 outbreak.
- 18.2. Rail reforms: in 2020 the Government will publish a White Paper informed by the recommendations of the Williams Review.
- 18.3. National Infrastructure Strategy: this was due to be brought forward alongside the Budget 2020 to set out a long-term vision to improve the nation's digital, transport and energy infrastructure, but has been delayed.
- 18.4. Building safety: The Government will bring forward laws to implement an enhanced building safety framework, taking forward the recommendations from Dame Judith Hackitt's independent review of building safety, and in some areas going further.

Implications for Wales

19. Many of the policy areas covered by the work of the Board are devolved matters for the Welsh Government. In matters of UK wide policy, and in general where it makes sense to collaborate, we will work with the Welsh LGA.

Financial Implications

20. There are no financial implications at this time.

Next steps

21. Members are asked to:

- 21.1. Consider and agree a final version of the Board's updated priorities and work programme.

Updated EEHT Objectives to end of December 2020	Outcomes	Actions	Timelines
Environment			
Waste and resources reforms	A waste and resource system that meets the needs of local communities; improves the use of resources; and significantly increases the funding for the system provided producers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to represent Members' interests as the Government finalises its reforms through the Environment Bill and subsequent consultations, when Parliament resumes normal business Work with councils to understand the cost pressures on waste and recycling services resulting from the COVID-19 outbreak and social distancing measures, and uncertainty over timetable for the implementation of Government reforms 	Ongoing
Climate change and environmental protection	Councils and communities set on a path to meet national and local carbon zero ambitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work to understand how councils can support economic recovery through the green agenda Establish cross-Whitehall/local gov climate task force (interrupted by COVID-19 outbreak) Review of LGA lobbying position on green energy Explore and share best practice on approaches to decarbonise local transport, including modal shift. Participate/ support DfT's engagement programme on decarbonisation. Hold a Climate change Conference (completed) 	Ongoing April 2020 March 2020 June - September 2020

Flooding	Communities better protected from flooding incidents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to seek reforms to the allocation of flood prevention funding 	Ongoing
Air quality	Communities air quality improved in areas where it does not meet national standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represent member's interest on the clean air provisions of the Environment bill. Call for the implementation of Traffic Management Act 2004 Part 6. Seeking to understand whether we could introduce trials of the powers. Engage with local authorities on their air quality priorities/ action in light of COVID19 pandemic measures and reduction of emissions. 	May 2020 Ongoing May/ June 2020
Housing planning and Homelessness			
Delivering more homes	Councils build more council homes and facilitate the delivery of housing that meets the needs of their local community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Government to establish a package of economic stimulus for housing Make the case for councils to have the powers and funding to deliver more homes that are affordable, sustainable and meet the needs of communities Make the case for right to buy reform and flexibilities including 100% retention of receipts and ability to set discounts locally Work with councils to understand the impact of income and cost pressures resulting from COVID-19 on council housebuilding programmes Lobbying for increased funding for council housebuilding through the new Affordable Housing Programme 	May/June 2020 June/July 2020 July/August 2020 May-July 2020 Ongoing

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with councils and Government to influence policy on improving the quality of the private rented sector. 	Ongoing
Build safe, healthy and prosperous places that are well supported by infrastructure and services	A planning system which supports the building of good quality, sustainable homes and supports inclusive, sustainable economic recovery and growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lobbying for increased flexibilities for local planning authorities to ensure continued delivery of effective planning services during ongoing COVID-19 outbreak Pursue options for: streamlining the local plan process; giving councils greater powers to act where housebuilding has stalled; 'infrastructure first' approach; removal of national permitted development rights; removal of sanctions where councils do not meet 5 year housing land supply or Housing Delivery Test requirements; locally-set planning fees Continue to influence the Planning White Paper Work with Homes England and other stakeholders on skills and capacity issues that are slowing housing growth Press for payment of outstanding Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) allocations to councils and an acceleration of the proposed Single Housing Infrastructure Fund to provide the infrastructure needed to support new homes and post COVID-19 economic recovery 	<p>May/June 2020</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>May/June 2020</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>

Reduce homelessness	The rise in homelessness and rough sleeping is slowed (or even reversed) and the cost of temporary accommodation (TA) is arrested.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with councils and government to identify and manage impact of COVID-19 on services • Continue to work with councils and government to influence policy on homelessness prevention, including the Homelessness Reduction Act review, Government's review of homelessness data, and the Spending review funding settlement • Develop out of area placement protocol against context of large numbers of COVID-19 related placements • Influence other policies creating pressure on councils' provision of temporary accommodation, including welfare reforms. • Support local authorities to utilise evidence and to share best practice and learning with other relevant authorities 	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>To influence next spending review</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
Housing Improvement Programme	Councils in a better to position to meet their housing challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a series of national sector-wide projects and bespoke support to address housing delivery, planning and homelessness challenges in line with wider improvement work on economic and housing recovery. 	Ongoing
Transport			
Infrastructure and maintenance	Better progress in addressing the maintenance backlog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobbying for the end of fragmented bid-based funding, and for adequate funding to address the maintenance backlog with specific emphasis on funding for cycling and walking infrastructure, 	April – July 2020

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> building on gains made in travel patterns during COVID19 pandemic Engage in planned future review of Treasury Greenbook (the 'rule book' used by central Government departments to determine whether public funds should be invested or not in projects) 	Tbc 2020
Future transport & decarbonisation	Councils have the knowledge and tools to facilitate the move to electric vehicles within a context of overall decarbonisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work on establishing the resource needs and regulatory changes to support the move to electric vehicles (EV) Respond to Transport Committee inquiry and Dft regulatory review on e-scooters Respond to DfT consultation on moving the date for transition to electric vehicles forward 	Autumn 2020 May 2020 June 2020
Public transport	Communities benefiting from effective public transport provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure local government has the powers to play a full role in shaping future bus services, building on the special measures implemented during COVID 19 pandemic Submission to Transport Committee's COVID 19 inquiry Lobbying for full funding for concessionary fares and for devolution of BSOG. Seek another round of total transport funding, spreading the lessons of the first round and seeking greater buy in across public agencies Continue to influence rail reform through the Government's proposed White paper on the Williams' recommendations 	To influence next spending review May - June 2020
Economy			

Empower place leadership	Recovered local economies with councils supported in their practical leadership role addressing the local UK's economic challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with Government to ensure councils have the powers and flexibilities to lead economic recovery locally. 	December 2020
Town centre revitalisation	Improved town centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue support for councils' leadership role in place and town centre revitalisation. Call for acceleration and expansion of Government's town centres programmes (Future High Streets Fund and Stronger Towns Fund) in support of post-COVID19 economic recovery of high street business and town centre regeneration. 	Ongoing 2020
COVID 19 Economic Recovery	Ensure that Councils are able to support their local economies to restart, recover and renew, over the next year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Government to ensure that councils have the right tools to support their local economies. (We have set out our initial asks in a letter from the Chairman to Simon Clarke MP who is chairing the MHCLG economic recovery taskforce) Climate smart recovery – where we seek economic recovery from the crisis but in a way that is socially equitable and decarbonises the economy. Work to understand the practical work that councils are doing to support their businesses and publicising best practice 	May to Dec 2020