

## Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board – report from Cllr David Renard (Chairman)

### Housing, planning and homelessness

1. We have responded to the Government's ['Changes to the current planning system'](#) consultation. We raised concerns that the standard method for assessing local housing need does not accurately reflect local need or support government ambitions to level up and build more on brownfield land. We also raised concerns that implementation of First Homes will displace other types of affordable homes and that proposals to raise the threshold for affordable housing requirements will have a significant impact on affordable housing delivery.
2. We are developing our response to the Government's [Planning for the Future White Paper consultation](#) due on 29 October. We've held two joint workshops with the District Councils' Network (DCN) and County Councils Network (CCN) with presentations by MHCLG and feedback discussion groups and have been engaging with our Planning Sounding Board to get input from around the country. Councils are concerned about the wide-ranging proposals such as a shortened 30-month Local Plan timeframe; land in future Local Plans being allocated into one of three areas - Growth, Renewal, Protect; a new Infrastructure Levy; and the reduction of councillor and community input.
3. We have briefed MPs for parliamentary debates on [planning reform and housebuilding targets](#) and [motions related to planning](#). On homelessness, we have briefed on debates on No Recourse to Public Funds and the stay on possession proceedings.
4. We also ran a successful parliamentary briefing session on housing and planning, which I spoke at. This was attended by over 20 MPs and peers.
5. We [submitted evidence](#) to the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) inquiry on 'Energy Efficiency of Existing Homes'.
6. We recently published our research and hosted a webinar on [Improving the private sector: a guide for councils](#) which looks at the role of councils in improving the quality and standards of homes that best meet the needs of local residents and places. There is a report, a set of case studies and a toolkit which together form a good practice guide for councils.
7. I was pleased to contribute an essay to the [Localis Building for renewal: kickstarting the C19 housing recovery](#) report. This outlined the important role that councils could play in kickstarting housing delivery, given the right flexibilities, powers and funding. I also stressed the importance of a local, plan-led system in ensuring that councils and the communities they represent have a say over the way places develop.

22 October 2020

8. The LGA published a joint guidance note on how [voluntary sector organisations can seek to work strategically with councils](#) to tackle local homelessness issues.
9. [The LGA has now published its research on Fragmented Funding](#), which found that English councils received at least 448 government grants between 2015/16 and 2018/19. Our report calls for the Government to use core funding to allow councils to plan with certainty and flexibility as opposed to using short-term grants to meet demand pressures.
10. I chaired a webinar on managing homelessness as we exit lockdown. This featured Police Constable Hayley Langmead, who gave an insight into the multi-agency approach to supporting people sleeping rough in Essex, and learning for other councils.
11. Our Deputy Chair, Councillor Adele Morris chaired a webinar about the importance of creating great places to live, work and play, especially in the wake of COVID-19 and I also took part in an external webinar on council direct delivery of new homes.

## **Environment**

12. We responded to a number of parliamentary consultations and reviews over the summer on the theme of climate change and economic recovery. This included a submission to the inquiry led by the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee on [greening the post covid economy](#), and a submission to the Treasury Committee on decarbonisation and green finance. We also provided written evidence to the All Party Parliamentary Group on the Green New Deal for their “reset” inquiry.
13. The House of Commons EFRA Committee inquiry into the management of flood risk in last winter’s floods resumed after a pause due to the break in Parliamentary activity. I was pleased to be able to give oral evidence to the Committee on the 2 September and share the experiences of local government, highlighting the impact on areas that suffered from repeated severe floods. This generated further questions and we provided some additional points to the committee in writing.
14. In September we submitted evidence to the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee inquiry into ‘Biodiversity and Ecosystems’.
15. The Board identified renewable energy as an area to explore as part of our work on climate change. Our new [Renewable Energy good practice guide](#) was developed with Local Partnerships and is designed to be commissioned to help both members and officers of councils who are considering ownership of renewable energy assets to understand the potential risks and benefits and how these can be managed.

## **Transport**

*Moving traffic offences*

22 October 2020

16. The board celebrated a major lobbying win with the decision by the Government to allow councils to access all the powers contained within the Traffic Management Act 2004 part 6. This commitment was made in the Government's plan for active travel and will allow councils to enforce moving traffic offences like weight limits, banned turns and one-way streets. The LGA and member councils have been calling for local authorities to be able to access these powers since the implementation of other parts of the act over a decade ago. LGA officers are now working with civil servants to work on the details of implementation.

#### *Pavement Parking*

17. The Government is consulting on whether to legislate for a default ban on pavement parking which the LGA [has welcomed](#). We have consistently called for a default ban in legislation. The government are also consulting on whether the problem could be solved through TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) reform or decriminalising enforcement of obstruction of the highway.
18. Our view is that these changes could also be helpful but the long-term solution for this issue is a ban which will be consistent and easy to understand. It is currently the way the issue is managed in London. Our initial view is that the government undertakes all the options: reform and simplify the TRO process, decriminalise the enforcement of obstruction and transform the default position.

#### *Decarbonisation of Transport*

19. The Board's decarbonisation of transport project has published a number of policy briefings to help councils understand the practical steps they can take to decarbonise their transport networks and reach our net zero targets. The briefings were compiled with support from academics from the University of Leeds after a series of workshops with councils that took place last year. The briefings offer a challenging message to our sector given the scope of changes that will be needed in order to meet the country's net zero carbon target by 2050. The briefings are on the following topics:

19.1. Getting carbon ambition right

19.2. The role of buses

19.3. Accelerating the uptake of electric vehicles

19.4. Climate smart parking policies

19.5. The role of land use, localisation and accessibility

19.6. Travelling less and the role of online opportunities

19.7. Growing cycle use

22 October 2020

20. The briefings can be accessed at <https://www.local.gov.uk/decarbonising-transport>. Each briefing is also being accompanied by a supporting webinar which can also be accessed through the web hub.

*NAO bus study*

21. [The National Audit office have released their value for money study of the bus market in England outside of London](#). Officers from the NAO attended the board last year to brief on the scope of their study and hear initial thoughts from board members for areas their work could pursue. Their final report was published last week and concludes that the government should be more ambitious and strategic when attempting to increase bus patronage. It noted that the Department for Transport collects data on buses and can show it has funded valuable improvements, but to date it has not sought to demonstrate how its actions have contributed to supporting optimal value for money across the bus system. If it is to work with and through others at central and local level, make informed choices about funding, and be able to adjust its plans to ensure it meets its objectives, it will need greater clarity on what it wants to achieve and how it will know when it has done so.

**Publications and correspondence**

22. Since the last forum I have commented on the following LGA press release and external communications on behalf of the Board:

22.1. [LGA responds to Local Government Ombudsman report on homelessness](#);

22.2. [LGA responds to new laws to extend homes upwards and relaxing of planning applications](#);

22.3. [LGA responds to a report on change of use permitted development rights](#);

22.4. [LGA responds to HCLG Committee report on social housing](#);

22.5. [LGA responds to PACAC report on infrastructure projects](#);

22.6. [LGA responds to shelter research on private renting parents](#);

22.7. [LGA responds to 'Planning for the Future' proposal](#);

22.8. [LGA responds to Salvation Army report on homelessness](#);

22.9. [LGA responds to further extension of eviction ban](#);

22.10. [LGA responds to Affordable Homes Programme announcement](#);

22 October 2020

- 22.11. [LGA responds to support package for renters; New housing targets jeopardise any ambition to level-up country;](#)
- 22.12. [LGA responds to Government's Homelessness Reduction Act review;](#)
- 22.13. [LGA responds to introduction of space standards for homes delivered under permitted development;](#)
- 22.14. [LGA responds to latest housing supply figures;](#)
- 22.15. [LGA responds to Statutory Homelessness Annual Report 2019/20;](#)
- 22.16. [LGA responds to Shelter report on private renting during pandemic;](#)
- 22.17. [LGA – thousands of affordable homes would have been lost under planning reforms;](#)
- 22.18. [LGA responds to call to protect people sleeping rough this winter](#)

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