

EEHT Update paper

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper provides updates on a range of issue within the remit of the Board

Recommendation

That the Board note the update

Actions

Officers will take action as directed

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EEHT Update Paper

Housing, Planning and Homelessness

Webinar: Social Housing White Paper – what next for the regulation of council housing?

1. On 19 March 2021. The Social Housing White Paper proposes some significant changes for the social housing sector. This webinar will cover the implications for councils and their residents and will explore how councils and the Regulator for Social Housing can work together effectively to achieve improved outcomes for local communities.

Decent Homes Standard review:

2. The Social Housing White Paper announced a review of the Decent Homes Standard. The review will be conducted in two parts. Part one will run from Spring to Autumn 2021 and will seek to understand the case for change to criteria within the Standard. If the case for change is made, part two will run from Autumn 2021 to Summer 2022 and will consider how decency should be defined. LGA officers have accepted an offer to sit on the Decent Homes Review Sounding Board and will be seeking input from our networks in order to provide advice and support to the review from a local government perspective.

Rough Sleeping Peer Support:

3. The LGA has been working jointly with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to develop and facilitate a Rough Sleeping Peer Support offer to assist councils in their rough sleeping response. This offer, launched in December 2020, involves the delivery of a programme of virtual Delivery and Impact Panels which provide a safe space and framework for council lead officers to come together, reflect on their work to date, share and challenge learning and highlight good practice across the sector. At the time of writing, 144 councils have attended a Panel and we have a further 62 booked on to attend and feedback has been positive. The LGA will produce a national report detailing key themes and emerging learning from the Delivery and Impact Panels which will be shared with the Ministry and participating councils in March 2021.

Homelessness guide and training for elected members:

4. The LGA has commissioned a written guide and associated training resources for elected members which will support them to effectively perform their role in shaping and scrutinising the local response to homelessness. The online training will be delivered in two half-day sessions on 11 and 12 May 2021.

Local Plan Housing Allocations Survey:

5. In September and October 2020 the LGA conducted a survey of Heads of Planning of English local planning authorities. The purpose of this survey was to estimate the number of dwellings allocated in local plans which had not yet either received permission or were yet under consideration. A total of 192 councils (59 per cent response rate). The survey results showed that across England there are over a million homes allocated in local plans which are waiting to be taken up by the development industry. We have used this evidence in our ongoing lobbying work.

Out of area placements: LGA protocol:

6. In March 2019, EEHT Lead Members support a recommendation that the LGA develop a sector-led protocol, accompanied by a dispute resolution process. The aim of the protocol would be to mitigate the impact of out of area placements on household, improve communications between councils making and receiving placements and allow for the resolution of disputes. Following several meetings of the working groups and various subgroups over 2019 and 2020, in addition to bilateral meetings with key councils or council networks, there is now a final draft protocol and annexes. These have been checked by a legal adviser and will be published for a six-week consultation in the coming weeks. The EEHT Board has also agreed previously to a programme of engagement with council chief executives and leaders, to encourage councils to formally sign up to the voluntary protocol. We will work with the LGA's regional teams to plan this engagement, with a view to holding meetings towards the end of Spring 2021.

Parliamentary debates:

7. We have briefed MPs for parliamentary debates on the [Planning for the Future White Paper](#), [support for homelessness during the winter months](#) and [homelessness and temporary accommodation](#).

Press releases and statements:

8. We have issued proactive press releases on the following: successful applicants for the [Housing Adviser's Programme](#); [around 450 primary schools worth of children stuck in temporary accommodation](#); [developers yet to seek planning permission for more than a million earmarked homes](#). We have also made public statements on the following: [response to PAC report on government housing policy](#); [response to £46m Changing Futures scheme](#); [response to number of deaths of homeless people](#); [response to government housing announcement](#); [response to Shelter report on people in temporary accommodation](#); [response to homelessness funding announcement](#); [response to Crisis report](#); [response to extra COVID-19 protections for rough sleepers and renters](#); [response to latest housebuilding figures](#); [response to NAO report on housing rough sleepers](#); [response to coalition call for planning rethink](#); [response to announcement of new housing development rules](#).

Housing Improvement

Housing Advisers Programme

9. [The 2020/21 Housing Advisers Programme \(HAP\)](#) closed for applications on 7 January 2021. There were 41 applications for funding and 17 councils were awarded grants of up to £20,000 for projects ranging from delivery carbon neutral homes to redesigning homelessness prevention services to address the impacts of COVID-19. The list of successful applicants is as follows: Isle of Wight Council; Sunderland City Council; Wokingham Borough Council; West of England Combined Authority; Oxford City Council; Hertsmere Borough Council; Castle Point Borough Council; South Gloucestershire Council; Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames; King's Lynn & West Norfolk Borough Council; Hertfordshire County Council, as lead partner of the Hertfordshire Property Partnership (HPP); Cornwall Council; Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea; East Riding of Yorkshire Council; Mid Devon District Council; Bristol City Council; Council of the Isles of Scilly. For more information visit www.local.gov.uk/housingadvisersprogramme

Leadership Essentials Course – Housing

10. This was due to run from 4 - 5 February 2021. Due to a combination of a lack of registrations and the current lockdown we have decided to postpone the course until summer 2021.

Housing

Future Homes Standard and Future Buildings Standard

11. The Government has responded to last year's [Future Homes Standard](#) consultation responses, including agreeing with [our recommendation](#) that local authorities should retain powers to set local energy efficiency standards. In the [Future Buildings Standard](#) they are consulting on the remaining proposals for homes and all non-residential buildings to be net zero carbon. The consultation ends on 13 April.

Environment and Climate Change

Environment Bill

12. Due to delays to the Parliamentary timetable the Environment Bill will be carried over to the next Parliamentary session. This delays royal assent but ensures that the Bill is not "dropped" and has to re-start at the beginning. The Bill must complete the final stage in the House of Commons then be debated in the Lords. Government will

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continue to prepare for implementation of the Bill and further clarity on the timetable is expected in consultations on the significant changes to waste and recycling services.

APPG for energy studies

13. In January we submitted evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Energy Study Group inquiry into “the energy policies that will drive an independent UK to net zero while fuelling the economy”.

Public Accounts Committee Inquiry on Achieving Net Zero

14. We [submitted a letter](#) to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee inquiry on Achieving Net Zero. It was used at the evidence session on local coordination.

COP26 – A local path to net zero

15. The first think pieces on the Presidency themes of finance and clean transport are now on our website. These include contributions from the Grantham Research Institute at the London School of Economics and The Royal Automobile Club Foundation for Motoring (RAC) Foundation. We are building our ‘local path to net zero’ hub up with more think pieces, talking heads from industry experts and case study videos of leading practice by councils.

APPG for energy studies

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Waste and recycling

17. Consultations on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), Deposit Return Schemes (DRS) and Consistency in materials collected for recycling will now be published second half of March. We have continued to work with local authorities, government and the environment agency to ensure there is support and guidance on the safe collection, transfer and disposal of waste from Lateral Flow Device mass testing sites. We have been working with ADEPT and Defra to restart the local authority survey collecting vital data on waste services during lockdown.

Economic Recovery

18. The latest data from the ONS shows that:

- Over the year 2020 as a whole, GDP contracted by 9.9%, marking the largest annual fall in UK GDP on record (GDP First Quarterly Estimate October to November 2020, *ONS 12 July 2021*).
- GDP grew by 1.2% in December 2020 after falling by 2.3% in November. The economy grew by 1% in quarter 4 (October to December), following a 16.3% rise in quarter 3 (July to September).

18.1 The pattern of growth reflects the level of variation of the Covid related restrictions throughout the year.

19. According to the latest Bank of England Monetary Policy Report (3 February 2021)

10.1 UK GDP is expected to fall by around 4% in 2021 Q1, which will be 12% below its 2019 Q4 level.

10.2 The projections for growth are 5% in 2021; 7.25% in 2022 and 1.25% in 2023.

10.3 Unemployment is expected to increase from 5.1% in 2020 Q4 to 5.5% in 2021 Q1.

10.4 HMRC states that the number of employees on company payrolls has fallen by over 800,000 since the start of 2020.

10.5 As job support schemes are unwound, and as activity recovers, “most workers are judged likely to return to work, although some jobs are likely to be lost”.

10.6 Inflation which is anticipated to be 0.8% in 2021 Q1 is expected to rise further throughout the year as energy prices increase and the temporary cut to VAT ends.

20. It has been challenging for Whitehall to focus on longer term economic recovery, given the immediate pressures of responding to the pandemic. However, some interesting work has been done. Under the auspices of MHCLG’s Local Economic Development Group a number of task and finish groups, chaired by local government chief executives, were established to look at urban and rural recovery, business support and skills and employment (particularly focused on the implementation of the Kickstart programme). These task and finish groups have now reported and MHCLG has engaged across Whitehall on the recommendations.

21. A ministerial Urban Task Force has been established, jointly chaired by the Secretary of State, Robert Jenrick and Peter Freeman, chairman of Homes England, with a wide number of sectors represented. Sir Richard Leese, Leader of Manchester City Council is the lead local government representative.

22. The LGA will need to continue to push to ensure that longer term recovery in all areas of the country remains a high priority across the whole country.

23. We are still waiting for the Government to publish the prospectuses for the Levelling Up Fund and £220m to pilot projects in preparation for the UKSPF. At the LGA’s Councillors Forum on 21 January 2021, Robert Jenrick stated that these would be

published within weeks. Following the Secretary of States recent comments, these funds are now expected to be delivered via councils. The LGA has said that it is concerned by the prospect of a competitive bidding process at a time when councils want to be fully focused on protecting communities and businesses from the impact of the pandemic.

24. In our 2021 [Budget submission](#) to the Treasury the LGA has stated that the Government must move away from a pattern of piecemeal, fragmented, and short-term interventions driven by Whitehall silos, towards a localist settlement that gives councils the ability to drive green and inclusive growth that meets the needs of their communities. [Recently published research highlights the link between fiscal decentralisation and growth](#): if the UK moved to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average for tax decentralisation, all regions of England could see a gain in GDP, with on average a 1.79 per cent increase.
25. The LGA has established an [Economic Growth Adviser programme](#) with the purpose of offering direct bespoke advice and support to local authorities. Through the process public, business and non-governmental partners work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation.

Planning consultations

26. As part of the ongoing planning reforms, the Government consulted on [Supporting housing delivery and public sector infrastructure](#). The proposals would allow premises in the new Commercial, Business and Service use class (E use class) to be converted into residential use without planning permission, under a new permitted development right and a faster planning application process for the extension of public service developments such as hospitals, schools, colleges and prisons. [In our response](#) we said the proposals undermine councils' ability to make decisions that reflect local need and could undermine councils' plans for local recovery.
27. The Government is currently consulting on two additional sets of proposals which we will respond to:
 - 18.1 [Right to regenerate: reform of the Right to Contest](#) is meant to encourage the right to be utilised more effectively and more widely to stimulate regeneration and the more productive use of land. It is intended to provide a quicker and easier route for individuals, businesses and organisations to identify, purchase and redevelop underused or empty land in their area. The deadline for responses is 13 March.
 - 18.2 The Government is seeking views by 27 March on [draft revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\) and draft National Model Design Code](#) for England as part of the planning reforms. The National Model Design Code is meant to provide a clear framework setting out the parameters that contribute to good design and a step-by-step process

for local authorities to follow to produce their own local codes and guides. The NPPF clarifies that all areas should produce their own codes or guides, based on the principles set out in the Design Code.

High Streets - dealing with empty properties

28. As previously mentioned to the Board, the LGA has produced [a good practice guide](#) with several case studies on the options and opportunities available to councils to deal with this challenge. The guide covers soft and hard powers available to councils and has a range of case study examples to illustrate the different types of powers and interventions already used by many councils. A complementary webinar also took place on 10th February – slides used will be available from the [webinar webpage](#).

Future of bus travel

29. The LGA published its [final report](#) into the future of bus travel; the Board may recall the presentation they received on the emerging findings in the October 2020 board meeting. The findings have been shared with the DfT and buses minister, Baroness Vere. This work was undertaken by transport specialists, Systra Ltd, and explored:

- 20.1 The ambitions that exist across local authorities;
- 20.2 The enablers to that help deliver these ambitions;
- 20.3 The barriers to the delivery of these ambitions; and
- 20.4 What needs to change to help overcome the main barriers.

30. Slides from the accompanying webinar that took place on 19 January can be found [here](#).