

## **Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board – report from Cllr Peter Box (Chair)**

1. As the first report under the LGA's revised governance arrangements, I am pleased to introduce myself as the Chair of this new Board, which incorporates the remits of the Environment and Housing Board and the Economy and Transport Board following the LGA's review in January. The new structure will meet to set priorities over the next few weeks. In the meantime, the information within this report collates the work undertaken by the two separate Boards over the summer.
2. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the work of the outgoing Chair of the Environment and Housing Board, Cllr Mike Jones, who will continue to participate as Vice Chair on the new Board. I am confident that this arrangement will ensure a consistent approach is maintained in amalgamating the two work areas and ensure that the key issues across both Boards continue to be addressed effectively.

### **Parking**

3. The LGA were successful in securing exemptions to the Government's proposed ban on use of CCTV cameras for parking enforcement as part of their parking reforms. The exemptions include: outside a school, on a red route, in a bus lane and at bus stops. The LGA will continue to oppose the ban as we believe the balance of responses to the government's consultation were in opposition of the ban. At the same time, LGA officers are working with other partners in order to present a coherent opposition to the plan and seek assurances that the ban will not take effect until the exemptions are in place and regulatory and equalities impact assessments have taken place.

### **Transport devolution**

4. "Investing in our nation's future: the first 100 days of the next government", set out local government's offer on what the next new Government will need to do to secure a bright future for our communities. The offer included a costed plan (paid for through existing fuel duty) to deal with the backlog of road repairs as well as a call to give councils the same powers as London to manage local traffic (Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act). The LGA will shortly be publishing a complementary report "Better Roads for England" which provides independent evidence to support our 'first 100 days' asks and calls for the type of transport devolution that benefit many European cities as well as London.

### **Bus Partnership forum**

5. Cllrs Symonds, Wood and Ablewhite attended the Bus Partnership Forum at the Department for Transport on 16 July. The Forum meets bi-annually to discuss bus sector issues with Government and bus operators. Among the issues raised, members highlighted the severe impact that revenue funding cuts continue to have on the ability of councils to support subsidised travel arrangements. They proposed that the Government's 'growth deal' work with Greater Manchester to develop sustained bus market growth should feed into a wider reform agenda for buses, given wider concern from many local authorities about their ability to influence and fund local services.

### **Highways Agency – future working with the LGA**

6. Graham Dalton, Chief Executive of the Highways Agency attended the July meeting of the Economy and Transport Board to discuss the implications of the transformation of the Agency into a government-owned company, on the Agency's relationship with local government and how the Agency and its successor body will work with councils to support local growth. The Board made clear its expectations that a transformation of the Agency should also include a transformation in the way it engages with local councils and a wholesale culture change. Members suggested that high level councillor representation, ideally through the new company board, or other similar mechanism, could be one element of ensuring there was continuous and meaningful dialogue between the sector and the Agency.

### **Planning Advisory Service Board**

7. Cllr Jones chaired the Planning Advisory Service Board on 31 July 2014. Key issues discussed included progress in the delivery of existing planning support programmes including an impact assessment and feedback from councils and work undertaken by councils to put a five year land supply in place.

### **Housing**

8. Cllr Jones wrote to Oliver Letwin MP and Brandon Lewis MP setting out opportunities to bring support the delivery of homes more swiftly by assessing the current approach to viability appraisals. Cllr Jones outlined proposals for joint work across local government and the industry which would simplify, speed up and make more transparent viability appraisals to support a less contested system.

### **Letters to new ministerial appointees**

9. Cllr Jones wrote to Brandon Lewis MP on his appointment and Minister of State with responsibility for planning and housing. The LGA used the correspondence to highlight the LGA's proposals which would see an additional 500,000 homes delivered over the lifetime of the next parliament. The letter also registered our concerns with proposals being taken forward through the infrastructure bill to introduce deemed discharge of planning conditions and proposals to introduce a ten unit threshold for affordable housing contributions through the planning system. Finally, the LGA highlighted its support for continued sector led support on planning delivered through the Planning Advisory Service.
10. Cllr Jones wrote to Liz Truss MP on her appointment as Secretary of State for Defra. The LGA used the correspondence to press for sustainable arrangements for the full implementation of SuDs to be put in place as quickly as possible. This should include adequate notice for local authorities and a suitable resolution to the issue of funding to allow for long term maintenance. The LGA continues to engage with government to discuss suitable options to resolve this issue.

### **Inquiry into 'Waste management in England'**

11. Cllr Gary Porter, Vice-Chair of the LGA provided oral evidence to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee inquiry into 'Waste management in England' in July. Cllr Porter's contribution emphasised the importance of councils having access to the proceeds from landfill tax to maximise their impact in reducing waste at local level.



**Councillors' Forum**

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