

18 November 2021

## **EEHT Update paper**

### **Purpose of report**

For information.

### **Summary**

This paper provides updates on a range of issues within the remit of the Board that are not already covered in other Board agenda items.

#### **Recommendation**

That the Board note the update.

#### **Actions**

Officers will take action as directed.

**Contact officer:** Eamon Lally  
**Position:** Principal Policy Adviser  
**Phone no:** 0207 664 3132  
**Email:** Eamon.lally@local.gov.uk

18 November 2021

## **EEHT Update Paper**

### **Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2021**

1. The Chancellor set out the Government's spending plans for the next three years on the 27 October 2021. The LGA's On the Day briefing is appended to the update paper.

### **Housing, Planning and Homelessness**

#### *Council housebuilding business case*

2. We have published a [report](#) that make a robust and credible business case for investment in council housebuilding. It demonstrates that building 100,000 social homes would improve the public finances over thirty years by the equivalent of £24.3 billion. It also shows how delivery would support economic recovery and levelling-up, as well as help to address the climate emergency and support the green building and construction sector.

#### *Keynote speech at Westminster Social Policy Forum*

3. Councillor Renard gave a keynote speech at a Westminster Social Policy Forum on the local government perspective on council housebuilding; locally-led planning and sustainable communities. The Minister for State, Chris Pincher, also spoke at the event.

#### *Building safety levy consultation response*

4. We [responded](#) to the government's [consultation](#) on a building safety levy. The levy will apply to developments in England seeking building control approval from the Building Safety Regulator at the "Gateway 2" stage of the new building safety regime (unless a relevant exclusion applies). Our response focused primarily on concerns about the potential impact of the tax on affordable housing delivery and where the proposed 'collection agent' role should sit.

#### *Consultation on supporting defence infrastructure and the future of time-limited permanent development rights*

5. We responded to the government's [consultation](#) on the future of two temporary permitted development rights introduced to support businesses and the high street in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. The consultation also sought views on new permitted development rights for the Ministry of Defence to modernise and develop the Defence estate. We raised concerns about the further proposed expansion of permitted development rights and stressed that what is needed is a locally-led planning system in which councils and the communities they represent have a say over the way that places develop.

18 November 2021

*Housing improvement support*

6. The LGA continues to work with partners to develop a Social Housing Management Peer Challenge. A draft scope and framework have been developed, and an engagement exercise with the sector is underway to gather feedback and refine this further. Plans for the first pilot in December are underway, and a further pilot confirmed at the beginning of February. These pilots will inform proposals for 2022/23, which are under discussion.
7. The [Housing Advisers Programme \(HAP\)](#) has returned for a fifth year and closed for 2021/22 applications on 15 November. The programme will continue to fund the provision of bespoke expert support to councils – or groups of councils – wanting to transform the delivery of homes and places, the quality and security of existing homes and/or to prevent and reduce homelessness. HAP will award up to £20,000 to successful applicants for the purpose of securing expert advice in transforming how a service or partnership meets the housing need of communities. This year there is emphasis on strategic housing projects that will support local authority housing delivery. A survey has been launched of the first three cohorts' projects, to evaluate the impact of the HAP, and discussions are underway as to the design of the programme for 2022/23.

*Temporary Accommodation*

8. We will shortly be commissioning work looking at temporary accommodation use in England. Use of temporary accommodation has been increasing over the last few years, with associated costs rising and concerns over quality and local availability. This work will be informed by several delivery and impact panels carried out with councils across the country and will highlight best practice in the area as well as shape our more specific lobbying asks.

*Homelessness Prevention*

9. We are working with Local Partnerships to commission an in depth look at the homelessness prevention options in two different councils. The aim of this work will be to develop a case for investment in prevention, by showing how preventing homelessness can have a positive impact on a range of local indicators such as reductions in A&E admissions, improved school attendance, increased numbers in employment etc.

*Housing Association/Local Authority Partnership Working*

10. In partnership with National Housing Federation and Homes for Cathy, we are looking at ways we can help councils work closely with Registered Providers in their area to develop strategies for reducing homelessness. The Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) are carrying out some research to understand the barriers and facilitators for housing associations in allocating homes to homeless households and alongside that we will be commissioning some guidance and toolkits for councils to use in their areas.

18 November 2021

*Public Accounts Committee Inquiry*

11. We responded to a committee inquiry on levelling up and homelessness. We provided evidence which called for an increase in council housebuilding, improvements in the private sector, and a longer-term strategy for ending rough sleeping following on from the success of 'Everyone In'.

*Press releases and statements*

12. We have issued proactive press releases on the following: [housing waiting lists could double next year with one in 10 stuck in queue for more than 5 years](#). We have also made public statements on the following: [response to Kerslake Commission report on ending rough sleeping](#); [response to latest quarterly housing supply figures](#); [response to support package for renters](#); [response to homelessness funding](#); [response to Building Back Britain Commission report on housing shortage](#)

**Environment**

*Local Nature Recovery Strategies*

13. On 2 November we submitted our response to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) [consultation](#) on [Local Nature Recovery Strategies: how to prepare and what to include](#). We welcomed the increased focus on Local Nature Recovery and reversing the decline of biodiversity, as well as the Government's intention to provide new burdens funding to adequately resource councils to carry out the new responsibilities.

*Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in domestic soft furnishing*

14. Over the past month we have been working with Government on the preparation of guidance following [new research](#) into the presence of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in domestic soft furnishings (sofa's, futons, armchairs, desk chairs etc). The studies have confirmed that there are many items of domestic seating waste entering the waste stream that contain POPs at levels that trigger special requirements for waste handling.
15. Government is asking councils to complete an online survey to improve their understanding of current domestic seating soft furnishings waste management practices and any barriers to change in dealing with this waste appropriately. The benefits from collecting the data will be significant as it will inform guidance for waste handlers and help us understand how best to support Local Authorities to adapt operations. The survey can be accessed via the following link and it will be available for a period of four weeks.

[https://defragroup.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_0DPkf7G5XeRwXCC](https://defragroup.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0DPkf7G5XeRwXCC)

*Tree planting*

16. Government has announced their latest [project to plant extensive woodlands along England's riverbanks](#). The Woodlands For Water project aims to create 3,150

18 November 2021

hectares of trees in six river catchment areas from Devon to Cumbria by March 2025. [Landowners, land managers and public bodies can apply to the England Woodland Creation Offer](#) (EWCO) for support to create new woodland, including through natural colonisation, on areas as small as 1 hectare.

#### *Waste and recycling reforms*

17. Rebecca Pow MP has written to Councillor James Jamieson, Chair of the Local Government Association, following a meeting they had to discuss the LGA's concerns about Governments proposed changes to waste collections. The letter seeks to explain that the Environment Bill is only extending the existing Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011, which requires glass, metal, plastic and paper to be separately collected for recycling, to include food and garden waste. The letter goes on to say 'waste collection authorities may collect dry waste streams co-mingled with one another if it is not technically or economically practicable to collect the recyclable waste streams separately from each other, or there is no significant environmental benefit. They will simply have to carry out the same assessment process they are already required to conduct under the current waste regime.'

#### *Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)*

18. Councillor Renard met the Chair and Interim Chief Executive of the new Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) in early November. The OEP will be formally established when the Environment Bill is passed into legislation and it will hold public authorities to account for breaches of environmental legislation. The initial meeting was an opportunity to discuss the remit of the OEP and how it will work with local government. A consultation early next year will seek views on how the OEP should use its enforcement powers.

### **Transport**

#### *EV chargepoint duty*

19. The LGA is responding to the [consultation](#) on whether there should be a duty to plan and provide public EV chargepoints, and who should hold it. A roundtable was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November to get views and insights from member councils - it was attended by more than 20 authorities. The deadline for responses is 22<sup>nd</sup> November. Board members are invited to share their council's draft response with LGA officers ([simon.jeffrey@local.gov.uk](mailto:simon.jeffrey@local.gov.uk)).

#### *Local roads funding*

20. We have received recent clarification on the funding available for highways maintenance from DfT following queries from councils on the announcement made in the recent Spending Review.
21. The recent Spending Review fixed funding until 24/25 at £1.125 billion each year – in line with this year but far below the amount last year which was £1.65 billion.

18 November 2021

22. In the March 2020 budget, the Government said that through the £2.5 billion Potholes Fund councils would get an additional £500 million a year through on top of what they were getting at the time. In that particular year, the additional funding pledge came on top of a sustained general roads maintenance fund so that in 2020/21 councils received a total of £1.65 billion overall, a boost of about £500 million commensurate with the Potholes Fund.
23. This was effectively reversed in the December 2020 Spending Review. The headline Pothole Fund figure remained at £500 million but the highways maintenance block was reduced so that overall funding in 2021/22 was around £500m lower than the 2020/21, close to the level it had been in 2019/20.
24. The LGA has put out a recent [press release](#) based on a previous assessment of the shortfall. The UK Roads Liaison Group estimates that a sustained £500m Potholes Fund boost would have supported 'maintenance' and 'gradual improvement' of the road network. The new, reduced level confirmed in the Spending Review will likely lead to continued 'decline' or 'managed decline' of the local roads network.

#### *Buses contribution to tackling climate change*

25. The LGA also highlighted the increased investment needed in bus services to help reduce car journeys, lower carbon emissions and help the UK towards its net zero targets. Our [press release](#) mentioned that the number of local bus passenger journeys in England in 2020/21 fell significantly by 2.5 billion or 61 per cent, largely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but even since 2004/05, bus mileage has declined by 34 per cent in England outside London. We welcomed the additional funding for the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) scheme but called for the Government to address the £700 million shortfall in concessionary fares funding to help us deliver a bus network to support the country's net-zero ambition.

#### **Implications for Wales**

There are no implications for Wales.

#### **Financial Implications**

There are no immediate financial implications.

#### **Next steps**

The Board is asked to note the items for information in this report.