

## **Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board – Report from Cllr David Renard (Chairman)**

### **Housing, planning and homelessness**

#### *Housing improvement*

1. The [Housing Advisers Programme](#) (HAP) has returned for a fifth year and has now announced 30 successful projects for 2021/22. The programme continues 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.
2. Following the receipt of additional in year funding from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), HAP has awarded £25,000 to the 30 successful projects, supporting 90 councils across the country. This will secure expert advice in transforming how a service or partnership meets the housing need of communities.

#### *Building safety levy*

3. We [responded](#) to the government's consultation on a building safety levy. The levy will apply to relevant developments in England seeking building control approval from the Building Safety Regulator at the "Gateway 2" stage of the new building safety regime. Our response focused primarily on concerns about the potential impact of the tax on affordable housing delivery and who should be responsible for administering and collecting the levy.

#### *Permitted development rights*

4. 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.

#### *Ground Rent Bill*

5. We have [briefed](#) parliamentarians for second reading of the Leasehold Reform (Ground Rent) Bill, stressing the importance for new burdens funding to enable councils to undertake the proactive work necessary to ensure compliance with the new legislation.

#### *Public Accounts Committee Inquiry into Rough Sleeping*

6. We [responded](#) to a call for evidence which looked at the governments "lack of progress towards either the promise to end rough sleeping entirely by 2024, or the Government's manifesto commitments on house-building". We highlighted the vital role council housing plays in preventing homelessness and made the argument for a cross-departmental homelessness and rough sleeping prevention strategy following on from the achievements of 'Everyone In' to reap the benefits and deliver on promises to end rough sleeping by 2024.

*Temporary Accommodation Peer Support Programme*

7. Work is underway on setting up a number of delivery and impact panels to engage with 100-150 councils on the topic of temporary accommodation. Temporary accommodation use in England is on the rise and as councils continue to work with the legacy of Everyone In and an ongoing lack of affordable housing, homelessness services are faced with the increasing difficulty of finding suitable accommodation within their area which meets the various needs of their priority need households.
8. Following on from the success of the [Rough sleeper peer support programme](#), we are looking to utilise this workshop format again for the topic of temporary accommodation provision to capture best practice, uncover the main challenges and opportunities for change, and produce a voice of the sector report which will provide guidance to councils and be shared with central government.
9. To launch the programme, which will take place in February, we hosted [a webinar](#) on 17th January which featured speakers from DLUHC, our procured project lead Steve Bedser, and various councils sharing their local examples of best practice. We had 100+ attendees indicating a huge interest in this topic across the sector.

*Homelessness Prevention Project with Local Partnerships*

10. Leeds and Cornwall have been selected to take part in some research to identify best practice in relation to homelessness prevention and to begin to develop a case for investment that can help to improve homelessness prevention services nationally. This work is partially commissioned by LGA and will be carried out by Local Partnerships, a public sector advisory agent owned by LGA.
11. As part of this work, Local Partnerships will look to compare national and local KPIs in relation to homelessness prevention expenditure and outputs. They will be looking to understand what works well and how broad outputs associated with homelessness prevention can be measured or estimated. We will then work with Local Partnerships to consider making recommendations to DLUHC based on any examples of good practice which are replicable.

*Other Parliamentary activity*

12. We have also briefed for debates on: [access to affordable housing and planning reform](#); [role of developers, house-builders and management companies in new homes](#) and [insecurity in the private rental market](#).

## **Economic Growth**

*Public/ private partnerships*

13. We have published a [good practice guide and case studies](#) on how councils are working with the private sector to deliver investment in energy, housing and town centre development. The guide was accompanied by a [webinar](#) which included a case study from Energetik, a district heating company owned by Enfield Council. The guide sets out how robust and well-coordinated public/private partnerships present opportunities to

bring together resources, expertise, and powers available in ways that cannot be achieved by either sector in isolation. Developed by experts from Partnering Regeneration Development and Newbridge Advisors, with input from Local Partnerships, the guide sets out seven key steps of governance and control that should be put in place to manage and mitigate risks throughout the partnership.

#### *Councils' relationship with business beyond Covid 19*

14. The LGA commissioned Shared Intelligence to undertake research to identify and capture the learning from councils' extensive contact with businesses over the last 18 months in the context of COVID-19. The [report](#) and accompanying [webinar](#) set out how councils can engage more effectively with businesses in the future to support economic recovery. This firm foundation built through the pandemic gives an opportunity to bring a strong business voice into local action and policy making.

### **Environment and Climate Change**

#### *Waste and recycling*

15. Household waste and recycling services have been under pressure from staff shortages related to the Omicron variant. We have responded to media requests for information and continue to work with Defra and the waste officer networks to understand the impact on service delivery. There are signs of localised disruption but the overall picture is still unclear. We also responded to the release of updated figures on household recycling rates from Defra in December, which covered 2020 and the period of national lockdowns. Our response highlighted the significant achievements from local government in increasing food waste collections and reducing the amount of waste sent to landfill by 7% on the previous year.

#### *Cop26*

16. In November 2021 a delegation of local leaders and EEHT members, Cllrs Pippa Heylings, Claire Holland and myself, attended COP26 in Glasgow, alongside our Chairman Cllr James Jamieson and Chief Executive Mark Lloyd. The LGA had representation in both the Blue Zone, where the negotiations took place, and the public-facing Green Zone where we showcased the important work of councils tackling climate change. In the Blue Zone, we hosted a series of important discussions and events focusing on the vital role of councils in delivering net zero and the potential for local government to make this happen further and faster. Throughout COP26, the delegation worked hard to make sure the importance of councils in tackling climate change was recognised in the final wording of the Glasgow Climate Pact and that was achieved.

#### *Phasing out fossil fuel heating*

17. On Wednesday 12 January 2022 we responded to government consultations on [Phasing out the installation of fossil fuel heating in homes off the gas grid](#) and [Phasing out the installation of fossil fuel heating in non-domestic buildings off the gas grid](#). You can read our response to the [consultation relating to homes](#) and to the one on [non-domestic buildings](#).

*Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in Domestic Soft Seating Furniture*

18. Officers have been working with Defra and the Environment Agency on guidance for Local Authorities on managing domestic soft seating furniture waste following [New research](#) confirming that many items of domestic seating soft furnishings waste contain significant amounts of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), meaning that the POPs content must be destroyed. Officers are looking to ensure that the guidance is clear, aims to maintain current levels of repair and reuse, doesn't exhaust existing EFW disposal capacity and that councils are not financially burdened from new regulatory requirements.

*Nutrient neutrality*

19. Councils subject to advice from Natural England on "nutrient neutrality" met with the LGA policy team and the Planning Advisory Service in November. This applies to certain river catchment areas where high levels of chemicals are entering the water supply and damaging protected natural habitats. The meeting highlighted the immediate pressures on planning departments, as well as longer term concerns for growth and land use. The EEHT Board will discuss the issue at their February meeting.

*Environment Agency*

20. The EEHT Board welcomed Tony Grayling from the Environment Agency to their November meeting. This was a timely discussion and an opportunity for the LGA and the Environment Agency to look at ways to work together on climate change.

*Environment Act*

21. The Environment Act received Royal Assent in December after a long journey through the Houses of Parliament. The Act gives significant new responsibilities to local authorities on nature and biodiversity, and provides the legislative basis for reforms to waste and recycling services. We are working with Defra on the next steps, and seeking clarity on the timetable for implementation of the waste and recycling reforms.

## **Transport**

*EV Charging infrastructure*

22. On 23<sup>rd</sup> November I met with the new minister responsible for EV charging and OZEV (Office of Zero Emission Vehicles), Trudy Harrison MP. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the role of councils in delivering the EV charging infrastructure that will help the country to transition to a electric vehicles. As well as roles, the discussion also covered issues such as local capacity, future funding and the forthcoming EV charging infrastructure strategy from OZEV. The LGA also submitted a [response](#) to OZEV's Future of transport regulatory review: zero emission vehicles consultation on whether there should be a statutory obligation to plan and deliver a charging infrastructure.

*Last mile freight*

23. The LGA has commissioned research to explore councils' perspectives on zero carbon solutions for last-mile freight, including enablers/barriers to their implementation in England. Through a series of engagements with councils, the project aims to improve

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understanding of the challenges around last mile freight and opportunities for local intervention and consider views towards managing local freight systems. Led by Dr Daniela Paddeu, senior research fellow at the Centre for Transport and Society (UWE, Bristol), this work will help inform future LGA policy on freight and the Department for Transport's decarbonisation strategy. The project aims to present findings by March 2022.

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