

Note of last Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board meeting

Title: Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board
Date: Thursday 3 February 2022
Venue: Hybrid / Beecham Room, 7th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Declarations of Interest The Chairman welcomed and introduced members to the Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board meeting. No declarations of interest were made.	
2	Office of Environmental Protection Draft Strategy The Chairman introduced Dame Glenys Stacey, the Chair of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP), and Natalie Prosser, the Interim Chief Executive of the OEP who gave a presentation of the work of the OEP, outlining its powers and the aims of the draft strategy and enforcement policy. Following discussions, Members made the following comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members commented that environmental targets can be missed due to lack of resources and the protection of the environment being less of a priority as a result.• Members expressed concerns that some powers and functions were not best placed to ensure environmental protection.• It was suggested that a regional environmental panel be established as a place for representatives from different authorities to raise any concerns.• Members queried if local authorities were always most suitable to address complaints given there were other authorities, such as water companies, that can have an environmental impact.• It was queried what the OEP's relationship was with the Environment Agency.	

In response to Members, Dame Glenys Stacey and Natalie Prosser made the following comments:

- Should there be recurring reports of resource concerns from local authorities unable to meet environment targets, the OEP would bring the issue to parliament.
- As part of the scrutinising of environmental law, the OEP were checking for “gaps” in powers and had previously been made aware of concerns around the Waste Carriers Licence system.
- As part of 25 YEP, governance had been explored and consideration would be given to introduce a regional panel for representation at a local level.
- The OEP holds all public authorities to account which included water companies as well as local authorities.
- The Environment Agency was a big public authority the OEP oversees and has the statutory power to request information from.
- It was clarified that the OEP was filling a governance gap of holding government to account. They hold public authorities to account as a requirement of the Environment Act.

The Chairman introduced Andrew Richmond, Adviser, who advised that the LGA would be responding to the OEP’s Draft Strategy and Enforcement Policy. Comments from Members would be incorporated into the response.

The Chairman thanked Dame Glenys Stacey and Natalie Prosser for their presentation.

Decision:

The Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board noted the update.

3 Neutrality and Water Issues

The Chairman introduced Cllr David Hitchiner, the Leader of Herefordshire Council, and Paul Walker, the Chief Executive of Herefordshire Council who gave a [presentation](#) outlining the impact and response to phosphate pollution in the River Lugg and River Wye catchment. Water pollution had been impacting housing delivery and the local economy.

Following the presentation, Members made the following comments:

- Representatives from Cornwall, West Sussex, and Horsham echoed the concerns raised from the presentation and outlined their own local concerns with water pollution and water extraction, and the impact on housing delivery.
- Members expressed concerns that there was a lack of guidance from government on how to address the issue.
- It was suggested that LGA officers feed into Ofwat’s forward plan to help bring forward investment in infrastructure needed to reduce nutrient pollution from wastewater.
- Members commented that both nature-based solutions and long-term solutions such as changes to agricultural practices and water treatment infrastructure should be implemented.
- It was suggested that the LGA put together a commission to work with relevant bodies in water neutrality
- It was noted that there was a taskforce which included DEFRA,

Natural England, Environmental Agency and DLUHC but seemed to not include any local government representation. Members expressed that they would like the opportunity to be part of taskforces such as this to voice concerns and to help determine solutions.

The Chairman introduced Hilary Tanner, Adviser, who informed Members that it was anticipated that more councils would be impacted by this problem as it remains under review by Natural England, and as climate change will continue to have an impact on fragile natural environments.

The Chairman thanked the Cllr David Hitchiner and Paul Walker for their presentation and others in attendance for the discussion.

Actions:

- Officers to consider comments and feedback from Members on the report
- Officers to take forward plans to have the LGA sitting on relevant working groups and consider starting a commission to work with other relevant bodies

Decision:

The Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board noted the issues raised in the report and provided feedback on next steps.

4 Building Safety Update

The Chairman invited Charles Loft, Senior Adviser to give an update on developments in building safety work including the progress on the Building Risk Review and the recent statement made by the Secretary of State.

Following the discussion, Members made the following comments:

- Members expressed concerns that local authorities, by law, are not able to differentiate from developers who deliver good service compared to those who do not when determining whether to give planning permission.
- Members commented that the Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA) were under a lot of pressure following enforced rent reduction, lack of investment in stock, and existing fire safety work to carry out on top of work on cladding.
- Concern was raised at the lack of funding to councils for remediation

In response, Charles Loft made the following comments:

- DLUHC were trying to understand the full implications if social landlords were required to cover costs. There were concerns that it could have implications for councils' provision of housing in the future. Some work would be done to study the effect on social landlords and the LGA would support this.
- The LGA would be pushing for DLUHC to require developers to contribute towards costs councils have covered as well as the fund

they are required to pay into

The Chairman thanked Charles Loft for his update.

Actions:

- Officers to circulate information on the building safety leadership essential to the board

Decision:

The Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board noted the paper.

5 Other Board Business

The Chairman introduced the report which provided updates on a range of issues within the remit of the Board.

Members made the following comments:

- It was noted that the LGA had written to the Secretary of State for Transport and the Chancellor to highlight the potential threats to local bus services. Members expressed concerns that the Bus Recovery Grant was due to end in March 2022 and would impact vulnerable people. It was suggested that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities also be contacted on this matter.
- It was noted that at COP26, it was ensured that the importance of councils in tackling climate change was recognised in the final wording of the Glasgow Climate Pact.

Actions:

- Officers to write to Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on bus services and call to continue the Bus Recovery Fund.
- Officers to circulate the final wording of the Glasgow Climate Pact to Board members.

Decision:

The Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board noted the update.

6 CONFIDENTIAL Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

Appendix A - Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr David Renard	Swindon Borough Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Darren Rodwell	Barking and Dagenham London Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Pippa Heylings Cllr Loic Rich	South Cambridgeshire District Council Cornwall Council
Members	Cllr Kelham Cooke Cllr Mark Crane Cllr Daniel Humphreys Cllr Paul Marshall Cllr Patrick Nicholson Cllr Linda Taylor Cllr Martin Gannon Mayor Philip Glanville Cllr Ed Turner Cllr Claire Holland Cllr Cathy Mitchell Cllr Emily Darlington Cllr Vikki Slade Cllr David Beaman	South Kesteven District Council Selby District Council Worthing Borough Council West Sussex County Council Plymouth City Council Cornwall Council Gateshead Council Hackney London Borough Council Oxford City Council Lambeth London Borough Council Warrington Borough Council Milton Keynes Council Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council Waverley Borough Council
In Attendance	Cllr Diana Moore Cllr Phil Jordan Dame Glenys Stacey Natalie Prosser Cllr David Hitchiner Paul Waler Rachael Joy Catherine Howe Matt Bates Sallie Lappage	Exeter City Council Isle of Wight Council Chairman, Office for Environmental Protection Chief Executive, Officer for Environmental Protection Leader of Herefordshire Council Chief Executive, Herefordshire Council Interim Delivery Director, Herefordshire Council Horsham District Council Horsham District Council Crawley Borough Council
LGA Officers	Calum Davidson Charlie Fudge Eamon Lally Charles Loft Ben Murray David Pealing Emilia Peters Nick Porter Andrew Richmond Hilary Tanner	