

23 June 2022

Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board - End of Year Report 2021/22

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This report provides an overview of the work of the Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board (EEHT) Board in the period between September 2021 to August 2022. It also looks forward to consider the areas of focus for the Board in the coming year.

Is this report confidential? Yes No

Recommendations:

Members are asked to consider and comment on the achievements and forward look.

Actions:

Action will be taken as required.

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Climate Change and Environment

- 1. COP26.** The LGA had great success in representing UK local government on the international stage, taking a delegation of Councillors and officers with speaking platforms and events at the heart of the event, and with stalls showcasing the best of local government on climate change issues. Behind the scenes, we led the effort with international local government to successfully lobby for the inclusion of the invaluable role of local and regional governments in the final international agreement national governments around the world adopted.
- 2. Towards genuine local and national government collaboration on net zero.** The LGA has long championed the need for a more collaborative working relationship with central government, and has been successful in moving this agenda forward with Government: including a chapter on local net zero in the Net Zero Strategy; committing to establish a Local Net Zero Forum bringing senior officials and politicians together across local and central government, and; agreeing principle areas of focus to be simplified funding, council capability and capacity, and clarity on roles and responsibilities. The LGA was key to moving this forward, including in bringing together a roundtable of council CEOs and cross-Whitehall Permanent Secretaries.
- 3. Evidencing the impact of councils on climate action.** The LGA launched a report demonstrating the critical role of councils in decarbonising homes and buildings, transport, and energy. The report modelled how the impact of local action in these areas could deliver carbon reductions, create jobs and growth, protect health and more. The evidence was important for grounding the LGA's asks around climate change in some financial and cost benefit modelling on what can be achieved.
- 4. Financing green ambition.** The LGA launched a [Financing Green Ambition](#) report looking into the options for councils to finance their climate action. Working with Local Partnerships the project involved engagement with the UK Infrastructure Bank, the UK Municipal Bonds Agency, and others, the report helps councils considers their options and exposes the need for new financing options to achieve more on climate action.
- 5. Adaptation to climate change.** On 23 February 2022 the LGA ran a webinar with Defra and Local Partnerships on climate change adaptation policy. The focus was on the Government's approach to the preparation of NAP3 and the tools that Local Partnerships have developed to support councils adapting to the impacts of Climate Change. Approximately 100 delegates attended and [slides](#) are available on the LGA website.
- 6. Resources and Waste Strategy.** The LGA has continued to work with the Government over the proposed reforms to waste management. We continue to press on the need for

23 June 2022

some certainty and continuity of local flexibility to meet local needs, and the implementation of the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), consistency, and the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS). The Government's response to the EPR consultation is welcome in confirming that the scheme administrator will be a public body and we will continue to press for local government's representation on this. The LGA has also responded to consultations and engaged Government on proposals to reform waste carriers and tracking.

7. **Local Nature Recovery Strategies.** The LGA responded to the [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. We have pushed Defra to develop their communications with local government and the interrelations with other key policy agendas.
8. **Biodiversity Net Gain.** The LGA has engaged Government and responded to its consultation on the design and implementation of Bio-diversity Net Gain. We have raised several issues around its implementation, and the importance of councils being resourced to ensure it operates effectively including on monitoring and enforcement. We have also raised issues around funding and the new burdens process.
9. **Nutrients and water neutrality.** The LGA is working with the Government on the impact of moratoriums on house building within river catchments experiencing high levels of nutrient pollution or low water levels. We have established a policy inquiry to bring together all partners nationally to explore this issue further with a focus on finding solutions to the underlying causes. We have also commissioned some analysis that shows around 20,000 new homes a year are not able to be built due to the bans on development.
10. **Office of Environmental Protection.** The LGA has met Dame Glenys Stacy and Chief Executive Natalie Prosser to discuss the relationship between local government and the OEP once it is formally established. The meeting was productive and a good opportunity to discuss the remit of the OEP and how it will work with local government. Following the meeting we submitted a [response](#) to the Office for Environmental Protections draft strategy and enforcement policy consultation.
11. **Ongoing climate and environment policy work.** The LGA is represented in a range of cross-Whitehall groups to make the case for local government on critical issues, including on hydrogen, green buildings, green jobs, heat and buildings decarbonisation, energy and more.

Economic Growth

12. **Creating resilient and revitalised high streets in the 'new normal'.** High streets and town centres were changing long before covid. The pandemic supercharged many pre-

23 June 2022

existing trends, creating both new challenges and opportunities. They are moving from predominantly retail and functional activities, such as accessing banking and postal services, to providing a locus for socialising and enjoyable experiences - regular trips to the local shopping centre are no longer essential. Nowadays, high streets need to compete not just with each other but also with cyberspace to attract footfall. Councils need to understand and respond constructively to these trends to foster renewed and resilient high streets. Our [research](#) explored existing and future trends and what ingredients make high streets more resilient.

13. **Public-Private Partnerships: Driving Growth, Building Resilience.** Against a backdrop of significant uncertainty and challenge, resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and continued pressures on budgets, councils across the country are continuing to look to unlock a range of social, environmental, and economic benefits aligned to local and national priorities. This [good practice guide](#) aims to support councils to plan and establish more effective public-private partnerships, which can unlock and deliver the investment, development and services that are essential to boosting economic growth and recovery.
14. **Supporting councils with business engagement.** Relationships between councils and businesses have always been essential. The pandemic accelerated and emphasised the importance of that relationship and has become even more central to maintaining quality place-shaping and vibrant local economies – there was a rapid scaling up the interaction between private and public sector. LGA commissioned research to identify and capture the learning from councils’ extensive contact with businesses in the context of COVID-19. This [report](#) sets out how councils can engage more effectively with businesses in the future to support economic recovery.

Housing, planning and homelessness

15. **Housing Advisers Programme.** The 2021/22 programme awarded grants of up to £25,000 to 91 councils across 30 projects. This included local authorities that were identified by the LGA to receive targeted support via the programme. Project areas include homelessness, green homes, housing supply, planning and the private rented sector. An online survey of participants of the programme since its inception in 2017/18 found that:
 - 83-100% of participants indicated that the HAP had enabled them to make progress towards their key goals,
 - 97% of participants would probably, or definitely, recommend the programme if asked,
 - 97% of participants felt that HAP will have a lasting impact on their capacity to deliver housing and homelessness services, rough sleeping provision and place making,

23 June 2022

- 100% of participants stated that the support they received through HAP has had a positive impact.
- 16. Building Safety Act 2022.** The Act aligns with the LGA's [fundamental asks](#): that the construction industry, developers, and manufacturers should pay for the cladding crisis. We continue to press the government to distinguish between local authorities and developers, and fund councils to deliver the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). We are supporting a coordinated audit of risk within medium-rise residential buildings. The Fire Safety Act commenced, with [secondary legislation](#) implementing most recommendations of the Grenfell Inquiry. Following lobbying, the Home Office published the Fire Safety Assessment Prioritisation Tool alongside the Fire Safety Act and agreed to implement the LGA's working group on PEEPs neighbour assistance. We will engage in the [new consultation on PEEPs](#) and the Emergency Evacuation Information Sharing (EEIS) proposal. The LGA has published [case studies](#) and a document on [principles of effective regulation](#), and has run several webinars and Leadership Essentials events with more being planned currently. The Joint Inspection Team has secured funding for the next two years which will see it triple in capacity by the end of this financial year.
 - 17. Permitted development rights.** 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.
 - 18. Ground Rent Bill.** 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.
 - 19. Other Parliamentary activity.** 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.
 - 20. House of Commons, Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee Inquiry into Social Housing.** In partnership with Public Affairs colleagues, we briefed Cllr Renard (as the Chair of the EEHT Board) to present oral evidence to the Committee. The Inquiry focussed on the reasons for the poor quality of some social housing; the effectiveness of the Housing Ombudsman and Regulator of Social Housing; the Government's Social Housing White Paper proposals; and the impact on the Housing Revenue Account.
 - 21. Planning reforms.** The government has now set out the [direction of travel](#) for planning reforms – some of which will be delivered through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and the rest through secondary legislation or policy change. The proposed reforms are a significant improvement from those proposed in the planning white paper. In particular there is a greater focus on democratic input and community engagement; measures that

23 June 2022

intend to strengthen the weight of Local Plans and reduce speculative development as well as proposals to increase planning application fees. Crucially, the proposal for development 'zones', linked to an automatic permission, have been scrapped. These are all areas that the LGA has lobbied on. There is much to welcome in the new proposals but there are many changes and effective engagement with the sector on the detailed policy development will be key.

22. **Permitted development rights.** In a proactive [press release](#) on 9th May, Councillor David Renard raised concerns that more than 18,000 affordable houses have been lost as a result of office-to-residential conversions under permitted development. The release called for permitted development rights to be removed to ensure all conversions and new developments contribute to the delivery of desperately needed affordable homes.
23. **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)— assessing the new challenges.** The LGA is working with the Association of Retained Council Housing and the National Federation of ALMOs to jointly commission a research project to assess the recent and emerging pressures to HRAs. The overarching project objective is to understand and assess how effectively the HRA self-financing model is operating in relation to meeting expenditure needs. The supplier(s) will develop a report which will comprehensively capture the long-term challenges to the HRA; and produce a set of evidence-based policy recommendations to assist in the LGA's lobbying.
24. **Homes for Ukraine webinar.** In April, the LGA hosted a webinar for council practitioners to share the case studies and the lessons learnt from administering the Homes for Ukraine scheme. More than 270 delegates had the opportunity to hear from, and pose questions to Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. The aim of the webinar was for councils to improve their local offer and ensure that new arrivals from Ukraine can access suitable accommodation that meets their needs.
25. **Social Housing Management Peer Challenge (SHMPC).** We have developed a Social Housing Management Peer Challenge that will support host councils to reflect on, receive feedback on and learn how to improve the service provided to social housing residents. It will also assess their readiness and plan for a new emerging consumer regulation regime. The peer challenge was piloted at South Holland District Council in February 2022, and we are in the process of redeveloping the guidance and scope following evaluation and feedback from the council and the peer team. South Holland District Council will give an Innovation Zone presentation on their experience of the peer challenge at the LGA Annual Conference.
26. **Out of Area Placement Guidance.** We ran a consultation exercise on the out of area protocol at the end of last year and made the decision at board to amend the protocol to guidance and release as best practice. The guidance has now been amended and sent out for further consultation with council partners and should be ready for publication in summer.

23 June 2022

27. **Kerslake Commission.** We continue to work to implement the recommendations of the Kerslake Commission. Earlier in the year we delivered a temporary accommodation peer support programme, we are also planning a cost-of-living event in partnership with the National Housing Federation which will feature the commitment to refer. We are also continuing to work in partnership with Homeless Link and recently ran a joint roundtable with them on the commissioning of rough sleeper services.
28. **Rough Sleeping Advisory Panel.** Mark Lloyd is a valued member of the rough sleeping advisory panel, regularly presenting on behalf of councils to share their views on what is required to end rough sleeping in line with the manifesto promise. He presented a 10-step plan at the last rough sleeping advisory panel and will next be appearing on 8th June to present the LGA rough sleeping roundtable findings.
29. **APPG for Ending Rough Sleeping.** Cllr Pippa Heylings attended an APPG for ending rough sleeping on Tuesday 24th May in Parliament. The LGA called for government to address the system drivers and levers of homelessness and reassure councils they will be supported with rising pressures relating to the cost of living crisis. We also shared difficulties around recruitment and retention of staff, data sharing and increasingly complex customers. We called for better partnerships at a central government level and asked for the new rough sleeper strategy to look at broader homelessness prevention as opposed to being focused on the crisis end of homelessness.
30. **Vagrancy Act Submission.** At the beginning of May we responded to government's vagrancy act submission. We commented that not everyone who is living a street-based lifestyle is homeless and this crossover can be difficult for councils and partners to manage. A one size fits all approach will not work and different tools are needed to respond to different types of begging. We noted that it would be helpful to have a clear view from councils and the police about what gaps could be created through the repeal of the Vagrancy Act, and which existing or new powers could be better utilised to address these complex issues. We also asked that any new reforms proposed would need to be clear and enforceable, with enforcing bodies fully resourced to apply them.
31. **Rough Sleeping Strategy Roundtables.** The LGA have participated in and facilitated workshops which will influence the new rough sleeper strategy. Over 30 councils attended the local authority roundtable hosted by LGA on 19th May, as well as representatives from across the various central government departments. The roundtable was split up into three workshops focused on what central government, local government and the third sector can do to end rough sleeping and we were assisted by valued partners from Crisis and Homeless Link. The outcome paper will be submitted to lead members for approval this week. LGA officers also attended the DLUHC hosted roundtable on homelessness prevention.
32. **Building a case for investment in homelessness prevention.** We have commissioned Local Partnerships to work with two councils (Cornwall and Leeds) to look at what savings are made across an area when councils invest in homelessness

23 June 2022

prevention. We are expecting the findings to be published in the next few weeks and they will also be presented at the LGA conference.

Transport

33. **Moving Traffic Offences (Part 6 of Traffic Management Act 2004).** The final Parliamentary scrutiny stage for councils to be able to apply for powers to enforce against moving traffic offences has now passed meaning that highways authorities can now apply for designated powers. This is a significant win for local government and for the EEHT Board. The LGA has long called for powers that already exist in London to be made available to all local areas outside London and had provided substantial evidence in support. This will help highways authorities to deal with a range of traffic contraventions such as yellow-box junctions, banned turns and overweight vehicles on weight restricted roads. The Draft Civil Enforcement of Road Traffic Contraventions (Representations and Appeals) (England) Regulations 2022 cleared scrutiny stages through both houses and will become law from 31st May 2022.
34. **Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Strategy.** The Government published its [EV charging infrastructure strategy](#) which sets out a raft of measures to rapidly scale up public EV chargepoints across the country, including increasing the Local EV Infrastructure (LEVI) Fund to £450m and a further up to £50m to support local authority skills and capacity. A £10m pilot of the LEVI Fund for local authorities was also launched. The expectation is that combined authorities will take the lead on developing local EV infrastructure strategies and outside of these, that highways authorities will take the lead (in consultation with district councils in two-tier areas). The EEHT Board had long called for clarity on the role of local government and for further funding and resources to support local investment. The LGA had commissioned [research into barriers](#) that was preventing further local investment and welcomed that these were recognised in the strategy.
35. **Funding for buses and the National Bus Strategy.** Following calls from the LGA and other organisations the Government provided emergency funding to bus operators during the pandemic to prevent them going out of business and enable them to continue providing services for those that depended on bus services. The LGA also successfully campaigned for further funding to support local services as their recovery faltered owing to the Omicron wave. However, funding in support of the National Bus Strategy (NBS) has been disappointing: less than half of places submitting Bus Service Improvement Plans receiving any funding; and the total funding envelope had reduced from an original £3 billion to £1.2 billion. The EEHT Chairman had written to Buses Minister to express councils' disappointment and also made clear the LGA's position at the Transport Committee inquiry on progress of the NBS one year on.
36. **Fixed Penalty Notices.** Following a request from several member councils the EEHT Board has agreed for the LGA to campaign for councils to be given powers to issue fixed penalty notices for certain dangerous contraventions under the Highways Act 1980 such as unlicensed skips and wilful obstruction of the highways. Having such powers would

23 June 2022

bring councils outside London into line with boroughs in the capital. The Board has agreed to undertake further work on this, including a survey of member councils.

- 37. Road pricing.** The EEHT Board held a private session with Mott MacDonald who have been commissioned to develop the LGA's understanding of road pricing and gather views from a range of member councils around the country. The Government have indicated that they will replace the lost income from motoring taxes as the country transitions to electric vehicles. The Transport Committee recently published a [report](#) saying that road pricing should be the Government's preferred way forward. Our work will help ensure that the LGA is better prepared to respond to further national policy developments on this issue. A [webinar](#) on 15th June and a report from Mott MacDonald capturing the findings will be shared on the LGA website.
- 38. Last Mile Deliveries.** We published a [report](#) and ran a webinar exploring the local view on the growth of last mile deliveries and the potential role of councils and what changes need to be considered for councils to play a more effective role, building on DfT's Transport Decarbonisation Plan. This work had been led by University of West of England and has involved workshops with councils as well as a workshop with elected members (across EEHT, P&P and City Region boards). The findings have now been captured in a report which can be found [here](#). This work and the findings will be used as a basis for engagement with DfT officials working on freight/ last mile deliveries to influence emerging national policy.
- 39. Highways Maintenance funding.** The Board has continued to support the case to Government of the importance of funding for highways maintenance of local roads, calling on the Government to restore funding to 2020/21 levels as since then funding has declined by over £500 million per year. [Experts](#) have said that continued funding at this level will lead to a slow deterioration of local roads. The annual ALARM survey [reported](#) the current backlog of road repairs has risen to £12 billion.

Looking Forward

- 40.** A draft work programme for 2022/23 will be presented at the Board's September meeting. A number of factors will be taken into account in proposing the future work programme. These will include the LGA's overarching business plan; the ongoing work that the Board is engaged in; and the Government's policy and legislative agenda.
- 41.** The LGA is currently developing its business plan for the three years from September 2022. At this stage it is not expected that the high-level priorities will change significantly. The Board's themes, including housing, climate change, economic recovery and transport and infrastructure, are significant priorities in the current business-plan.
- 42.** Much of the Government's domestic policy and legislative agenda is in areas that come under the remit of the EEHT Board:

23 June 2022

- 42.1. **Planning:** The Levelling up and Regeneration Bill was published on 19 May 2022. It contains the Government's proposed legislative reforms to the planning system.
- 42.2. **Housing:** The Government's legislative proposals also include the Renters Reform Bill to strengthen protections for private renters and abolish 'no-fault evictions,' and proposals to strengthen both the role of the Housing Ombudsman and the Regulator in the Social Housing Regulation Bill.
- 42.3. **Transport and Energy:** In addition, the Queen's Speech anticipates a Transport Bill and an Energy Security Bill.
43. Details of the Government's legislative programme and the LGA views on the individual elements of the programme can be found in the [on-the-day briefing](#).
44. Much of the work of the Board in 2021/22 carries on:
- 44.1. **Economic growth** runs as a theme through much of the work of the Board. The cost of living concerns, the transition to a green economy, the economic case for investing in council housing and investment in infrastructure (including the role of the UKIB) are factors that will influence the work of the Board
- 44.2. **Climate change** is now a top priority for communities, councils and Government. The LGA will continue to work through the Board and the Climate Change Task Group to influence policy. This will be achieved through engagement in the national/local climate change forum; work on decarbonisation of heat and buildings; work on hyper-local climate change action; and through the engagement of Government Ministers and senior officials.
- 44.3. **The Environment Act 2021** will have a significant influence on the work of the Board. The nature elements of the Act create new strands of work for councils and we will continue to work with the Government and councils on the details of this work.
- 44.4. **Waste reforms**, a framework for which are set out in the Environment Act, have been the subject of consultations and we await the government response on consistency. These reforms will continue to influence the work of the Board as councils adapt to the new systems and as the scale of the new Burdens are established.
- 44.5. **Housing and Homelessness:** council housebuilding, the sustainability of housing revenue accounts, the regulation of social housing and the continuing

23 June 2022

pressure of homelessness services continue to be significant issues for the councils.

- 44.6. **Building Safety Act** – We will engage with HSE’s programme to establish the new building safety regulator and raise awareness amongst councils of their responsibilities as regulators and duty holders under the new building safety regime. As part of this, we will continue to lobby for the funding of new burdens and a proportionate approach to transition to the new regime and new FSO responsibilities. We will continue to support councils in taking enforcement action under the Housing Act 2004 through hosting the Joint Inspection Team and to monitor the impact of the continuing competitive environment in building control regulation for buildings under 18m.
- 44.7. **Transport**, including the effectiveness of the public transport system; the future of transport related taxes, infrastructure and the continuing growth of EV, will continue to an important aspect of the Board’s work.

Implications for Wales

45. We will continue to work with the Welsh LGA to share good practice and information.

Financial Implications

46. There are no immediate financial implications

Next steps

47. A draft work programme for 2022/23 will be brought to the Board in September and this will reflect any comments made by Members at the Board meeting.