

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board – Report from Cllr David Renard (Chairman)

Housing, Planning and Homelessness

Refugee / new arrival resettlement

1. LGA have hosted and taken part in a number of task and finish groups to look at housing options for Ukrainian new arrivals and Afghan refugees. These included a group to look at the homelessness referral pathway for Afghan households in bridging hotels, as well as the first meeting of the post-sponsorship task and finish group who focused on options for Ukrainian households being accommodated under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. We have also finished a small data collection exercise looking at the cost of households accommodated under temporary accommodation to inform our asks around this. LGA lobbying also recently contributed to DLUHC publishing their stats on [Ukrainian households owed a homelessness duty](#).

Improving the duty to refer

2. LGA officers attended the Kerslake commission meeting on behalf of Cllr James Jamieson where the existing duty to refer was discussed as well as the possibility of extending the duty to a duty to collaborate which we were in support of. Attendees agreed that generally the duty to refer only works well when existing partnerships exist and are well staffed and resourced which further supports the need for a duty to collaborate. London Councils shared information on a mystery shopper exercise they have carried out which is valuable to help councils understand how they are perceived, full details of which will be shared with participating councils.

Investing in homelessness prevention

3. Local Partnerships have been commissioned to lead some research on savings to the public purse that can be made when councils invest in homelessness prevention, the initial findings of which were presented to delegates at the LGA conference in a session chaired by Cllr Darren Rodwell. The response was positive as the findings bolster the argument for joint funding of services to encourage shared targets. The full report will be available in draft this week for lead members to comment on before subsequent publication later in the month.

Prison Discharge

4. MoJ have announced an [End to Friday releases to cut crime and make streets safer - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#). This is something the LGA have been keen to support as we frequently hear from members that Friday releases reduce the likelihood of positive engagement with prison leavers. This will make a huge difference to prisoners registering with statutory services trying to find suitable accommodation. 1 in 3 prisoners are currently released on Friday leaving them having to beat the clock to access services in time.

Homelessness Prevention Grant Consultation

5. On 1st July, DLUHC launched a [consultation on the Homelessness Prevention Grant \(HPG\)](#). Government wants to support councils in doing more work on early prevention to ensure better outcomes for households concerned and reduce the cost of homelessness. In line with the multi-year spending review, DLUHC are reconsidering homelessness funding and developing a longer-term ambition for the grant. Consultation will be open until 28th August and we will be providing a response following engagement work with councils.

HRA commission – assessing the new challenges

6. The Housing Revenue Account (HRA) records expenditure and income on running a council's own housing stock and closely, which are provided primarily for the benefit of the council's own tenants. The LGA is working with ARCH and the NFA to jointly commission a research project to assess the new challenges to the HRA, following the most recent reform to the system in 2012 when the HRA became a self-financing model. We have appointed Savills as the supplier to take forward three separate, but interrelated contracts in relation to: expenditure; income; and the Right to Buy. The overarching project objective is to understand and assess how effectively the HRA self-financing model is operating in relation to meeting expenditure needs. Savills 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.

Social Housing Regulation Bill – Second Reading briefing

7. We produced a [briefing](#) with Public Affairs on our position on the reforms for the Second Reading in the House of Lords, which was the 27 June.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill Public Bill Committee

8. We supported the submission of oral evidence to the committee (21 June) on planning issues, and specifically in relation to compulsory purchase and the high street rental auction power.

Social Housing Management Peer Challenge

9. The LGA launched its new [Social Housing Management Peer Challenge](#) at the LGA Annual Conference with an Innovation Zone presentation by South Holland District Council, who took part in the pilot peer challenge. The peer challenge, funded by UK government, has been designed to help councils to improve their social housing management and is available to all stock-holding councils.

Economy

High Streets

10. There was standing room only at the High Street's workshop, chaired by Cllr David Renard, at the LGA annual conference in Harrogate. The packed room heard from Margaret Dale from the High Streets Task Force, Mike Greene, Chief Executive, Scarborough Council and John Percy, from Montagu Evans. The discussion focused on the changing retail offering on our high streets and the innovation that is taking place, how councillors can work in partnership with their communities, and how councils such as Scarborough were taking control of key high streets assets in order to revitalise them.

Environment and Climate Change

Local Net Zero Forum

11. The LGA has been working with the Government on the establishment of the Local Net Zero Forum, which will aim to advance the collaboration between local and central Government Departments from across Whitehall in achieving climate change mitigation and adaptation in places. It is likely the Forum will focus on priorities set out in the Net Zero Strategy, including roles and responsibilities, funding, and capacity and capability. The LGA has a seat on the Forum and the first meeting of the Forum was held on Monday 20 June 2022.

Fuel Poverty

12. The LGA is undertaking some work seeking to understand the impact of energy price increases on the number of households in fuel poverty, the costs of bringing these properties up to EPC C standard, and the benefits of this for energy cost savings and wider health savings. The work will be used to explore and make the case for councils lead role in improving the energy efficiency of fuel poor households, and the links to the wider green economy and decarbonisation ambitions.

Heat and Buildings Decarbonisation by 2050

13. The LGA has commissioned Energy Systems Catapult (via an open tender) to design an approach whereby local and central government would work together to further enable decarbonisation of heat and buildings up to 2050, building on existing local strategies and bringing them together into a single national framework. It will focus on: the objectives and value added of locally led approaches; the governance and process for how existing and new local strategic approaches can be brought together into a single coherent framework clarifying roles and responsibilities, and how to shift to joined-up multi funding plans for delivering outcomes and market change.

Green Streets

14. We have commissioned D.G.Cities to undertake a piece of work that will seek to demonstrate the case for a local approach to decarbonising buildings and transport at the street or neighbourhood level. As part of this project, DG Cities will undertake case study research with local authority experts. DG Cities will be conducting 45-minute interviews with participants during July and is keen to speak to local authority leads and their partners as part of their interview programme. Participating authorities will benefit from having their case studies shared through the publication of a report and set of case studies on the LGA website, and will be invited to share more information at dissemination events and other networking opportunities.

If you would like to take part or have any questions please do get in touch with ed.houghton@dgcities.com at DG Cities who will be happy to answer any of your questions

Future of local energy institutions and governance

15. On 6 June the [LGA responded to](#) the Ofgem call for [input into future local energy institutions and governance](#). The call sought input from stakeholders on energy system functions needed at sub-national level to facilitate the transition to net zero, the suitability of current and planned institutional and governance arrangements and the opportunities and risks of change. The LGA submission focussed on the pivotal role Councils need to play in effective energy system planning and operation at the sub national level.

Hard to decarbonise homes

16. The LGA has co-funded a piece of research with the National Housing Federation to identify hard-to-decarbonise homes and policy solutions for increasing the viability of retrofit. Parity Projects have undertaken the work and the final report will be on our website after Annual Conference.

Waste and recycling policy

17. Waste and recycling policy has been the subject of number of government consultations, including a proposal from BEIS and Defra to extend the carbon emissions trading scheme (ETS) to waste incineration and energy from waste facilities. This could have significant cost implications for local authorities and the LGA response highlighted these concerns and called for a strong focus on waste prevention. Defra is consulting on the technical detail of new regulations designed to stop councils charging for DIY type waste at household waste and recycling centres (HWRCs), and this is accompanied by a call for evidence on booking systems. The LGA responded drawing on the line we have previously taken, which is that the operation of HWRCs is a local decision and it should be left to councils to decide how to run them.

Local Nature Recovery Strategies

18. The LGA is in discussions with Defra about the development of proposals around the requirement on councils to develop Local Nature Recovery Strategies, and how they fit with the wider environmental and land-use policy. Following representations on the lack of clarity on this issue, Defra provided a briefing to councils on the progress, future timeframes, and objectives. We will continue to engage with Defra and councils in advance of further details, expected later this year.

Transport

Road pricing

19. The Board commissioned Mott MacDonald to undertake [independent research](#) into the views of councils on national road pricing. With the transition to zero-emission cars the £35 billion income from fuel duty and VED will diminish although the Government have said that revenue from motoring taxes keeps pace with this change. The Transport Committee have published a report calling for the existing system to be replaced by a national road pricing system. Whatever new system is introduced there will be impact on local transport. Whilst there is strong agreement of the benefits of road pricing, there are a range of views of how and when it should happen.

Active Travel England

20. The Board welcomed Chris Boardman, the National Commissioner for Active Travel England (ATE), and Olympics gold medallist, to its June meeting. Chris presented his vision for the new Government appointed body that is set to play a significant role in funding and supporting councils on cycling and walking schemes. ATE will also begin to inspect, and publish reports on, highway authorities for their performance on active travel and identify any particularly dangerous failings in their highways for cyclists and pedestrians. It will also be a statutory consultee on major planning applications to help ensure that the largest new developments properly cater for pedestrians and cyclists.

Moving traffic offences

21. The Secretary of State for Transport [has now designated the first tranche of 12 areas](#) that will receive powers for the civil enforcement for moving traffic offences. The LGA has long campaigned for these powers, which already existed in London, to help all councils deal with congestion, poor air quality and road safety. News on the timescale on the next tranche will follow from the Department for Transport.

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