

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

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

#### *Social Housing Regulation Bill*

1. The Bill is currently at Committee Stage in the House of Commons. We have set out our position on the reforms announced in and alongside the Bill, and we continue to brief parliamentarians as the Bill progresses through Parliament. We welcome proposals that will strengthen the role of the Social Housing Regulator to increase the rights of tenants and enable tenants to better hold their landlord to account on consumer issues. New amendments have recently been tabled, such as Awaab's Law which will force social landlords to fix damp and mould within strict time limits. Also, I chaired a webinar to provide information on the Bill to councils, which had speakers from Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, the Regulator for Social Housing and Folkestone & Hythe District Council.

#### *Out of Area Placement Guidance*

2. We recently published [Out of Area Placement Guidance](#) accompanied by a workshop for local authorities. During the workshop, we discussed the guidance in length and talked about the ways councils could implement. We also talked about what wouldn't be possible for councils to implement without further support or resources from central government. As part of this work, LGA engaged with the APPG for Temporary Accommodation which recently outlined out of area placements as a cause for concern and set an action to find out more about out of area placements. We're hopeful that we can work with the APPG to further disseminate the guidance and workshop to councils.

#### *Refugee/New Arrival Housing*

3. Despite the Ukrainian homelessness data having some accuracy issues, it shows an alarming increase in presentations to homelessness services from Ukrainian nationals. We continue to work with DLUHC and London Councils to improve this data. In December, a £500m Local Authority Housing Fund was announced, to be used by selected councils in England to buy housing stock, build new homes, convert existing non-residential properties, and refurbish delapidated housing or empty homes into accommodation for families. 183 councils in total including the GLA have submitted bids against their allocations against the funding. They should receive 30% of the funding Feb/March 2023. Year 2 allocation will be paid once an LA has demonstrated that at least 60% of the Year 1 allocation has been committed, with the first milestone for this to

occur is in May 2023. Also announced was £150m in additional funding for local authorities across the UK to help support Ukrainian guests move into their own homes and reduce the risk of homelessness, with allocation and focus still to be confirmed

#### *Rough Sleeping Advisory Group*

4. The government published an updated rough sleeping strategy '[Ending rough sleeping for good](#)' on 3rd September 2022 which made a commitment to ask the Advisory Panel to provide an update on delivery progress to Government to track progress in achieving our vision. Mark Lloyd will be attending the panel on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February to meet with the new minister Felicity Buchan and to discuss approaches in tracking progress of the Rough Sleeping Strategy, published in September 2022 as well as to raise concerns over the effects of cost of living, increasing evictions from the private rented sector, and increasing presentations from Ukraine arrivals on homelessness services.

#### **Environment**

##### *Environmental improvement*

5. Defra has released further information about the [implementation of biodiversity net gain](#) in new development from November 2023. New [guidance](#) has been published and funding of up to £16.71 million will be made available to local planning authorities between now and November 2023 to prepare for implementation. This will be followed by further new burdens funding following commencement of the requirement from November. Defra is expected to issue further guidance and regulations on the development of local nature recovery strategies, ahead of the appointment of responsible authorities (councils or Natural England) in April 2023.
6. Defra's [25 year Environmental Improvement Plan](#) sets out government goals for improving the environment and policies to support the implementation of the plan.

##### *Waste and waste crime*

7. Annual [fly-tipping statistics](#) were released at the end of January. The LGA's media response highlighted the need for tougher penalties from the courts and for manufacturers of frequently fly-tipped items to contribute to the cost of clear up. The Environment Agency annual waste crime survey contains new questions this year on smaller scale fly-tipping, which will help give a clearer picture of the link to organised crime.
8. Further information from Defra sets out detail of the new deposit return scheme for drinks containers. The LGA's media response highlighted the need for clarity

on how the deposit return scheme will work alongside other reforms, and called for measures to prevent waste in the first place to be given priority.

9. I have written to Defra and the Environment Agency on behalf of the Board to set out our concerns about the challenges of managing soft furnishings containing persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and I hope to have an update on this topic following further discussions with Defra in March.

## **Climate Change**

### *Mission Zero: Independent Review of Net Zero*

10. On 13 January Chris Skidmore MP published his final report [Mission Zero, Independent Review of Net Zero](#), it is a comprehensive and detailed report. The LGA [submitted evidence](#) in October 2022, followed by a meeting between the Climate Change Task Group and Chris Skidmore MP, and officer meetings with the review team. The final report references the LGA on multiple points, including around the need for funding reform. The Chairman and Co-chairs of the Climate Change Task Group have written to Chris Skidmore MP setting out which recommendations they do and don't support.

### *Ministerial Local Net Zero Forum*

11. On Thursday 9 February the first Ministerial Local Net Zero Forum with the Chairman and representatives across the political parties took place. The forum was chaired and attended by Lord Callanan and the bulk of the discussion was on the recommendation of the Chris Skidmore MP review of net zero. It was agreed that the Forum will meet every 6 months and will be co-chaired by the Chairman of the LGA.

### *Advancing local and central government collaboration in climate change adaptation*

12. We have commissioned Local Partnerships to undertake a project to investigate, capture, understand and present what local government needs from the update to the National Adaptation Programme. It will also consider and make recommendations on how the wider policy, regulatory and funding environment across Government can best enable councils to lead place-based climate adaptation. Following extensive engagement with council officers in person and via a survey, the report is due for completion and shared with Government officials ahead of finalising the NAP3.

### *Retrofit - Heat and Buildings Decarbonisation by 2050*

13. The LGA has awarded Energy Systems Catapult a project 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. The report is currently being finalised and will be shared with Government and placed on our website shortly.

## **Growth**

### *Identifying local authority best practice in repurposing shopping centres*

14. On 22<sup>nd</sup> February I Chaired a very well attended webinar presenting the initial findings of an LGA commissioned report undertaken by The Retail Group highlighting the social and economic opportunities and benefits of repurposing shopping centers to reflect the needs of the town center, the community, the local authority, and the businesses located within their area. The report will be published in March and will be evidence based with case studies and the provider will suggest measures and approaches councils can take to repurpose shopping centers or support the repurpose of shopping centers where their ownership lies solely in the private sector.

## **Transport**

15. Since the last Councillor's Forum I have met with both Richard Holden MP, the new minister for local transport and also Iain Stewart MP, the chair of The Transport Select Committee. I raised issues relating to buses funding and reform, levels of penalty charge notices, impact of inflation, pavement parking and other highways obstructions, and the balance of power between local and central government on managing transport. The EEHT Board will continue to pursue these issues over the coming year.

### *EV chargepoints funding*

16. OZEV have [announced](#) the expansion of the LEVI pilot scheme to 16 new areas, and the launch of an £8 million LEVI Capability Fund which to help equip councils with capacity and skills to scale up their plans for developing their charging strategy. The Government also brought forward a further £7 million funding for the existing On-Street Residential Chargepoint Scheme, bringing the total funding this year to £37 million.

### *Bus Funding*

17. Following extensive lobbying from the LGA and bus groups the Government [have extended](#) funding by 3 months for the Bus Recovery Grant and the £2 bus fares gap until the end of June 2023. Whilst this additional funding will help [we said](#) that bus services cannot survive on a hand to mouth existence and the Government must use the time this funding buys to work with councils and

operators to develop a long-term, reformed bus funding model with significant new money.

**Contact details**

Contact officer: Eamon Lally

Position: Principal Policy Adviser

Phone no: 0207 6643 132

Email: [eamon.lally@local.gov.uk](mailto:eamon.lally@local.gov.uk)