

Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Board – Report from Cllr Darren Rodwell (Chair)

Housing, Planning and Homelessness

Government withdraws plans to remove HMO licensing requirements for asylum accommodation

1. The government has confirmed that it has withdrawn plans to introduce changes that would have temporarily exempted houses procured by Home Office contractors from Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing requirements. The draft regulations that had been laid in Parliament have now been withdrawn. The LGA provided a [briefing](#) in advance of a discussion in the [Lords](#) last year and engaged with government and councils to raise concerns about the proposed changes and potential impacts if current standards were not maintained.

Rural Rough Sleeping Guide

2. The LGA jointly published a [local authority practice guide](#) with English Rural on evidence-led approaches to tackling rough sleeping in rural communities. A webinar was held to launch the report and included speakers from the Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities, English Rural, and local authorities. More than 70 delegates attended the webinar.

Awaab's Law Consultation

3. The LGA hosted a discussion session with over 40 attendees from across local government and arms-length management organisations to inform the LGA's response to the upcoming Awaab's Law consultation. The consultation seeks views on the proposed timeframes that landlords will be required to investigate and fix reported health hazards.

Temporary Accommodation (TA) Subsidy

4. The LGA has procured and commenced a research project to review councils' TA subsidy loss for 2022/23 (and mid-year estimates for 2023/24) and compare this to the likely impact of allowing the TA rate to rise in line with rents. The project is expected to be completed in early summer.

Street Vote Development Order consultation

5. The LGA responded to the Government's [consultation on the detailed operation of street vote development orders](#), a new route to planning permission introduced in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. We are concerned that street

vote development orders will not bring material benefit to the development and delivery of the homes and infrastructure we need in this country. We also do not consider that the proposals as set out in this consultation have been properly considered with regards to elections or the role of local authority democratic services' teams, nor will they have positive implications for planning and place-making.

Government's long-term plan for housing consultations

6. Two consultations were announced as part of Secretary of State for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities Michael Gove's "build on brownfield now" statement on 13 February 2024; one on [permitted development rights](#) and one on [brownfield land development](#). The LGA will be responding to both these consultations in due course.

Right to Buy Position Statement

7. The LGA published a [position statement on the Right to Buy scheme](#) which sets out our belief that the system in its current format does not work for local communities and those in need of social housing. We call on Government to implement the asks in our statement and give councils the control, powers and flexibilities to make the scheme work for everyone whilst protecting our stock of social homes.

Social housing allocations consultation

8. The LGA along with 15 other organisations from the [housing sector wrote a joint letter](#) to the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and the Secretary of State for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities Michael Gove on the announcement of the [consultation on reforms to social housing allocations](#), setting out our concerns and calling on the Government to urgently help deliver more social homes.

Building Safety Levy consultation

9. The LGA responded to the Government's second technical consultation on the Building Safety Levy [*link to be inserted once published on website*]. We have [previously urged the Government to reconsider](#) their proposal to require more than 300 local authorities to set up separate, individual processes to act as a collection and administration agency for the BSL. This remains our view. We have suggested that a more streamlined, cost-efficient approach to raising the additional funds for building safety remediation, which would benefit both central and local government, would be to expand the scope of the Residential Property Developer Tax (RPDT).

Leasehold and Freehold Reform Bill

10. We have highlighted our concerns that the Bill does not make non-discretionary provision for new burdens funding for lead enforcement authorities required to enforce against a new redress scheme. It is vital that the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities conducts a full assessment of the resources councils need to effectively administer the redress scheme and the costs of setting up a scheme, and allocate new burdens funding accordingly.

Waste

Mandatory weekly food waste collection

11. Defra has confirmed the allocation of transitional capital funding to individual waste collection authorities towards the cost of implementing mandatory, weekly food waste collections in 2026. Some councils have raised concerns over allocations and are encouraged to speak with Defra about these. Work continues to understand the on going cost of mandatory food waste services, including transitional and ongoing revenue costs.

Persistent organic pollutants in household waste

12. The LGA has written to Defra to highlight concerns about the need for a long-term solution to dealing with persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in household waste. The issue has been raised previously but remains a concern, with the burden of added cost and complexity of finding a safe disposal route falling on councils.

Producer responsibility for packaging

13. Defra has appointed an interim Steering Group to oversee the process of setting up a Scheme Administrator for extended producer responsibility for packaging. The LGA successfully lobbied for a seat on the Steering Group and represents the interests of local government, alongside representatives from the LGAs of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The LGA has co-ordinated a Local Authority Technical Advisers Board to feed into the steering group and bring frontline expertise into the process of packaging reform. The Steering Group had their initial meeting on 2 February 2024.

Climate Change and Energy

International learning on the governance of national and local collaboration on climate action

14. ARUP has submitted the final draft of the international learning on the governance of national and local collaboration on climate action report. The five

example countries they have explored are Netherlands, Norway, South Korea, New Zealand and United States. Early indications are that there are some lessons that could be learned from each of the case study countries.

Local Net Zero Forum

15. An officer level forum meeting was held on 18 January with an agenda building on the work of the task and finish groups. Since then, government has launched the following page providing some information on previous meetings [Local Net Zero Forum - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Just Transition

16. Officers have been working on a report on what a Just Transition to net zero should be which will include recommendation for government. We held a roundtable with representatives from Citizens Advice, Young Foundation, Think NPC, Women's Environmental Network, Heat Trust and member councils including Newham and Cheshire East to help inform the report which will be finalised spring 2024.

Regional Energy Strategic Planners

17. Marzia Zafar from Ofgem attended the Feb 24 LINZ board meeting to introduce the establishment of Regional Energy Strategic Planners (RESPS) that are due to be operational early 2025. There are likely to be between 8 and 10 RESPs in England and they will plan the electricity generation and transmission infrastructure required to meet net zero. Officers are now working with Ofgem to influence the geographical boundaries of the RESPs so they work for councils spatial planning functions.

Heat Network Zoning Event

18. I (Councillor Darren Rodwell) attended an in-person roundtable event on the Heat Network Zoning Consultation hosted by Lord Callanan on 21 February. I emphasised the importance of councils leading the coordination of heat network zoning as place-shapers, housing providers, convenors of communities, delivery agents, commissioners, and owners of assets but also the need for the role to be fully funded.

Heat Network Zoning Consultation

19. Lead members have approved a consultation response submission to Department of Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) on their secondary Heat Network Zoning consultation. The response supports government's view that councils will be first choice for Heat Network Zone Coordinator, but highlights that the resources currently being suggested are unlikely to be sufficient. Officers will

continue to work with DESNZ on the detailed planning.

Local Government Roundtable

20. Officers held a local government roundtable on What next for local climate action on 14 February. Representatives from DCN, CCN, UK100, Core Cities, London Councils and Local Partnerships were in attendance and we agreed to work more closely on our shared objectives.

Data Sharing Agreement

21. LGA LINZ officers, working with LGA Legal have agreed a Data Sharing Agreement with Ofgem, that the LGA considers suitable for members to sign up to. The data sharing agreement will enable councils to use ECO Flex (money from energy suppliers) to tackle fuel poverty through the installation of insulation measures. The agreement has been sent to all Heads of Legal with the council having the final choice on whether to sign.

Environment

Flooding

22. Councillor Emily O'Brien gave evidence in the House of Commons to a one-off EFRA committee on flooding on 20 February 2024. Councillor O'Brien highlighted the LGA's call for a place-based approach to flooding and devolution of funding to councils to tackle the risk of surface water flooding.

Water quality

23. The impact of poor water quality on coastal councils was highlighted in a recent study by the LGA's Coastal SIG. The LGA issued a [press release drawing attention to inadequate testing of water quality](#), calling for more testing and better data analysis to help councils tackle poor coastal water quality and the impact it is having on tourism and local economies.

Transport

Pavement accessibility

24. The LGA published the [independent report on inclusive footways](#) that it commissioned from Sustrans and Transport for All. The report details the barriers faced by people, especially those with a disability, walking or wheeling on the footway and the challenges facing local authorities when making footways accessible. The [LGA called for powers](#) to ban pavement parking to be extended to all areas across England to save lives and make our streets safer, more than three years after a government consultation to introduce them ended.

Transport and economic inclusion

25. Pragmatix have completed their interviews and data analysis and submitted a draft of the report commissioned by the LGA looking into local transport demand and barriers to mobility. It shows how this varies across different geographies, life stages of residents and their economic resources, and how local authorities must have the powers and flexibility to vary their transport policies.

Traffic demand management policies

26. The LGA has commissioned CPCS to look at the potential tools available to councils to manage traffic demand to support the country's transition to Net Zero, as well as dealing with local issues such as congestion and poor air quality. We are keen to understand the political challenges in taking up effective available measures, any lessons from existing schemes, and to draw out any recommendations for central government to help councils who want to implement demand management measures but currently feel unable to.

Local and national powers for local transport policy

27. LGA has commissioned Riber Consulting to look into the balance of local transport powers between central and local government, and the impact this has on achieving shared national and local ambitions on decarbonisation and improving local transport accessibility.

Rail and Urban Transport Independent review

28. The LGA submitted a response to the Urban Transport Group's independent review into how a future government could accelerate connectivity within and between the UK's key urban areas. This reiterated our view that councils as leaders of place should have a much greater role deciding on changes to train services, and the use of stations and railway land. It will be published online soon.

EV chargepoint street works access reform consultation

29. Government launched the consultation '[Street works access: electric vehicle chargepoint operators](#)' on 5 February that proposes among other things to give EV charge point operators the right to carry out street works using a permit rather than a licence. The LGA will respond to this consultation.



Councillors' Forum

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