

## **Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board – report from Cllr Peter Box CBE (Chair)**

### **Infrastructure Act 2015**

1. On 12th February the Infrastructure Bill became an Act following Royal Assent. Importantly for councils the Act, following extensive LGA lobbying, now includes the requirement for the successor government-owned company to the Highways Agency, Highways England, to produce route strategies on which to base future investment plans. The Highway Agency split the motorway and trunk road network into 18 routes, and produced strategies for each, including priorities, challenges and opportunities would be produced to outline operational and investment priorities. The aim was to cut red tape for nationally significant infrastructure projects and boost investment to regions. Further statutory guidance and the license terms for the new company will set out how the new company will have to consult and work with councils. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/infrastructure-act-will-get-britain-building>.

### **RAC Foundation Meeting**

2. I recently met Philip Gomm, Head of External Communications at the RAC Foundation. The foundation publishes influential research on topics such as parking income and potholes compensation claims. We discussed the financial pressures facing councils, highways maintenance funding and addressing the challenges posed by the projected increase of 43 per cent increase in traffic on local roads by 2040. I think, and hope, that a constructive dialogue has been initiated.

### **Active Travel and Community Transport**

3. The LGA's Economy, Environment, Housing and Transport Board has set up and commissioned two councillor-led task and finish groups to look at the current issues facing councils in promoting active travel and community transport, including funding and policy barriers that prevent councils from doing more to support these important areas. If any councils wish to discuss their councils work on these areas please contact [kamal.panchal@local.gov.uk](mailto:kamal.panchal@local.gov.uk) or [charles.loft@local.gov.uk](mailto:charles.loft@local.gov.uk).

### **Chairs of Regional Flood and Coastal Committees**

4. I met with the Chairs of the 12 Regional Flood and Coastal Committees on 12<sup>th</sup> February to discuss local government's work on ensuring communities are resilient to flooding, including investment in flood defences and the work the LGA has been doing to lobby for funding for flood defences and to promote councils role in preparing for and responding to flooding events.

### **Meeting with Brandon Lewis MP**

5. The Board's Vice Chair Cllr Mike Jones met with Housing and Planning Minister, Brandon Lewis on 9<sup>th</sup> February to discuss local government's role in increasing housing supply with a particular focus on LGA proposals for pooling public land, funding for infrastructure and affordable housing and supporting small and medium sized house builders.

### **Affordable Housing Conference**

6. Cllr Keith House chaired the LGA's affordable housing conference on 17<sup>th</sup> February which provided the opportunity to hear about the recent review for Government on Local Authorities role in housing supply and explore how councils are securing investment and delivering new affordable homes.

### **Meeting with National Housing Federation**

7. Lead Members of the Board met with the Chair and Board of the National Housing Federation on 3<sup>rd</sup> February to discuss our shared ambitions to build more affordable homes. We have agreed to work with the NHF in the lead up to the election to ensure that the role of councils and housing associations in tackling the shortage of affordable housing is recognised.

### **Visit to Luton**

8. On 18 February I visited Luton Borough Council to receive a briefing on various initiatives, projects and challenges for Luton, including the Vauxhall Van Plant, Northern 7 Shell Napier Park, the University and Sixth Form, Airport growth, housing and constrained boundary challenges and the skills deficit. I met with Cllr Hazel Simmons, Leader of the Council, Cllr Dave Taylor, portfolio holder for Environment, and Trevor Holden, Chief Executive.

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