

Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board: Review of the Year

Background

1. The Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board provides strategic oversight of the LGA's policy, regulatory and improvement activity in relation to the economy and environment, including transport, employment and skills, economic development and business support, housing, planning, waste and climate change, in line with the LGA priorities and any specific regulatory and LGA European lobbying priorities as they relate to this activity.
2. The Board was formed in 2014 by combining the remits of the former Economy & Transport and Environment & Housing Boards.
3. At its first meeting, the Board took a decision to develop Task and Finish Groups to ensure that there was wider involvement in the work of the Board that the four meetings per year would allow. Four T+F Groups have been running and their work is detailed in this report.

Economy

4. The Board commissioned research to examine the success of the Government's intention to join up local economic funding into a single pot. Whilst there was recognition that Growth Deals were a good first step in devolving funding, research showed that there continued to be over 120 separate funding streams for growth in local areas. This research has been presented to civil servants in BIS and other relevant Government departments. This research has also been used by councils in the development of local deals to provide an evidence base for the joining up of local growth resources.
5. The Task and Finish Group on Apprenticeships has worked with a range of partners to explore how councils can support employers to create apprenticeship opportunities for young people. The Group worked with the Federation of Small Businesses, Construction Industry Training Board, Federation of Master Builders, the Engineering Employers Foundation, Association of Colleges, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, training providers, and an apprentice. To finalise its work, the Group fed into a report commissioned from IPPR which is detailed in the work programme update (Item 6). This report has recently been published and has been presented to Government to influence the implementation of the manifesto commitments on apprenticeships.

Environment

6. In order to influence future EU regulation on waste and recycling, the Board has been working in Brussels to ensure that local government's views are considered early as the Commission consider the next generation of waste regulation. A separate report

on this agenda details this work. Further lobbying on these issues will continue, with consultation on new proposals in the near future.

7. The Task and Finish Group on Energy has led a project to highlight councils work on developing renewable and low carbon energy schemes and explore and promote opportunities for councils to secure revenue and community benefit from renewable energy, including a case study library to promote action taken by councils and a report examining the potential for councils to reduce their energy costs through energy efficiency and generation and what is needed to enable councils to realise the benefits. Proposals for the project, to be delivered in conjunction with the Innovation and Improvement Board, will be completed by Summer 2015.
8. Further funding for the Climate Local programme was secured from the EA/Defra to continue the full time secondee arrangements into 2015/16. Currently, 102 councils are signed up to the programme, with a wider network of 440 members.
9. New national policy on Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) took effect from 6 April 2015, with Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) becoming statutory consultees to provide technical advice on surface water drainage and SuDS. The Board has lobbied against new unfunded duties on councils, securing £10 million in upfront funding.

Housing

10. As part of its work on influencing manifestoes of all parties, Sir Michael Lyons attended the EEHT Board in December 2014 to discuss his housing review. His report contained proposals on planning for housing, large scale development, community engagement, quality and sustainability.
11. The work on housing is detailed in a full report to this Board meeting.

Transport

12. The Infrastructure Bill became law on 12 February 2015. Following extensive LGA lobbying, it includes the requirement for the successor to the Highways Agency, Highways England, to produce route strategies on which to base future investment plans. Statutory guidance and license terms set out how it must consult and work with councils.
13. Secondary legislation in the Deregulation Act 2015 outlined a ban on CCTV for issuing automated fines except in no-parking areas around schools, bus stops, bus lanes and red routes. These exemptions were secured through LGA lobbying supported by the British Parking Association, Living Streets and disabled groups.
14. Following formal consultation, the Department for Transport announced individual allocations of funding for highways maintenance in January 2015. LGA lobbying ensured that there was a greater level of funding certainty than in previous years with 80% (£4.8 billion) allocated on a needs based formula basis, and at 10% of total funding (£580 million), the amount subject to competitive bidding is smaller than the original 25% of total funding proposed.

15. The work of the Task and Finish Groups on Active Travel and Community Transport is ongoing and further reports to the Board will be considered in due course.

Financial Implications

16. All work programmes are met from existing budgets and resources.

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