

Note of last Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board meeting

Title:	Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board
Date:	Thursday 4 June 2015
Venue:	Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Declarations of Interest No delcarations of interest were made.	
2	Chair's Report The Chair introduced the report, which was for information. The report summarised the work which had been undertaken by the Chair, Lead Members and the Board since the previous meeting. Decision <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Board noted the report.	
3	Queen's Speech The Chair introduced the report, which provided an overview of the legislative programme for the new Government as set out in the Queen's Speech on 27 May 2015. The Board noted that the Bills of particular interest to the Board were the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, the Buses Bill and the Housing Bill. Future housing policy was the focus of a report later on the agenda. Regarding the Cities and Devolution Bill, the Chairman commented that it would be useful for Lead Members of the Board to meet with the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. A further report on this Bill should be considered by the Board at the next meeting following discussions with the Secretary of State. The Head of Policy explained that the Bill had already started progress through the Houses of Parliament, and that a report would also be considered by the City Regions Board and the People and Places Board. Members endorsed the LGA view of the Buses Bill, which had been set	

out in the 'on the day' briefing on the Queen's Speech.

Decision

- That a meeting between the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the EEHT Board Lead Members be sought to discuss the Cities and Local Government Bill.
- That the LGA position on the Buses Bill be endorsed.

Action

- Officers to arrange meeting between the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and the EEHT Board Lead Members.

4 Housing Priorities and the New Government

The Chair introduced the report, which was to inform the Board's discussion on refreshing the LGA's housing policy following the General Election. Caroline Green, Senior Advisor, highlighted that housing was a priority for the new government, which was endorsed by the forthcoming Housing Bill announced in the Queen's Speech. The current indication was that the Housing Bill would be debated in the autumn, but initial discussions were already taking place.

Measures expected to be in the Bill included commitment to deliver more affordable homes and deliver additional starter homes, extend Right to Buy to housing association tenants by requiring local authorities to sell their most expensive council housing, provide councils with stronger powers to bring forward brownfield land for development, and provide additional funding for infrastructure development.

The proposed LGA positions, which would form the basis of a refreshed LGA policy on housing and were intended as the priorities for discussion with Ministers and wider lobbying activity, were set out in the report.

In the discussion that followed the following points were discussed:

- Housing associations were concerned that they would be losing their housing stock if Right to Buy was extended to housing association tenants, and could raise legal challenges. Housing associations should be given the full value of the house if tenants were able to purchase.
- There was cross-party concern regarding the proposal that councils should sell off housing stock to fund Right to Buy.
- Local Government needed to take a lead in researching how the government's proposals would impact upon regions.
- There was a need to define the percentage of council land available for development nationally.
- There was an urgent need to increase funding for strategic infrastructure to support development, including the building of roads and schools to support new communities.
- Consideration should be given to how the withdrawal of housing benefit for young people would impact upon local authorities if

council housing stock was also reduced.

- Clarity should be sought on who would receive infrastructure funding in three tier areas.
- Current Section 106 contributions were inadequate and required revision.
- 'Like for like' development of housing should be implemented, so that councils and housing associations built houses with the same number of bedrooms to replace those which were sold.
- Councils should have the ability to take control and develop brownfield land which had been unused for a long period of time, such as ex-MOD sites.
- Transparency and reporting of landholdings and valuation should be increased.
- Compulsory purchase powers should be quicker and cheaper for councils to use.
- There was a potential for the Rural Exception Scheme to be lost in the new Right to Buy arrangements, which was particularly important in many rural local authority areas.
- The LGA should reaffirm that sustainability of development should remain a priority.
- Any City deals should include funding for infrastructure in the areas concerned.

The Chair summarised that the areas raised by the Board would be taken into account, and further research would be conducted into the potential implications of the proposals. He would also raise the issues discussed at the Board with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.

Decision

- That further research into the potential implications of the Housing Bill proposals be undertaken for consideration at the next meeting of the Board.

Action

- Members' comments on the proposed LGA positions set out in the report to be taken into account as part of the process to refresh the LGA policy on housing, and future reports to the Board.

5 EU Circular Economy Proposals and Meeting EU Recycling Targets

The Vice-Chair introduced the report, and informed members that he had led a delegation to Brussels to discuss proposals for the Circular Economy with MEPs, UK government representatives, the Commission official leading the work on the proposals and the CBI team in Brussels. Meetings had also taken place with a former Defra Minister and Defra officials. Following these meetings LGA policy position papers on the EU Circular Economy and meeting EU recycling targets had been produced, and were included with the Board papers.

The Vice-Chair drew attention to what councils had already achieved on the Circular Economy. He highlighted that there had been a 78% reduction

in waste to landfill (per household) since 2002/03, which would have been impossible without investment from local authorities. He also commented that a number of other EU member countries were not achieving the high rates of recycling and reduction of waste to landfill seen in the UK. Meeting recycling targets should not mean an additional burden on taxpayers; instead a waste market in reusable waste should be created.

In the discussion which followed the following points were raised:

- The EU Circular Economy and EU recycling targets policy position papers should be endorsed.
- A great deal of work with the private sector had been undertaken to change product design so that products and packaging were reusable and recyclable. Packaging was a big concern for local authorities, and work would continue to make it more easily recyclable.
- Food waste was also a major concern for councils, as it was expensive to collect. Supermarkets should examine the most effective way of tackling food waste, as there should be responsibility all the way through the food chain. Further work with WARP would continue to address this issue.
- Urban and rural councils shared responsibility for meeting waste and recycling targets, and poor performers should be targeted.
- The drive for secondary materials to improve the financial viability of recycling collection should be increased.
- Longer product warranties could potentially reduce the amount of residual waste produced.

In response to a question on fines, it was highlighted that the Secretary of State had the authority to distribute fines equally amongst councils. There should be a focus on improving the recycling rates and reducing the waste sent to landfill of metropolitan councils as that would protect all councils against fines if targets were not met.

Decisions

- That the policy positions set out in the two policy papers in the report be noted, and members' comments on them be taken into account.
- That the next steps, as outlined in the report, be agreed.

Actions

- Arrange a meeting with Defra Ministers to present both sets of proposals.
- Respond to revised consultation on the EU Circular Economy proposals.
- Potentially send a further delegation to Brussels in the autumn at the end of the consultation period.
- Develop a further media strategy to support the work on recycling targets.

The Chair introduced a report which provided an update on developments related to the EEHT Work Programme, including the work of Task and Finish Groups.

One member asked if there was any opportunity to include further work on skills in the work programme for 2015/16. The Board had led some successful work on apprenticeships, but there was a need to ensure there were opportunities for reskilling, and to make sure residents were digitally skilled to meet the aspirations of councils. The Head of Policy highlighted that the LGA had delivered a paper on localising skills before the General Election, and there would be a need to adapt that work to make sure there was an evidence base for city and county deals. There was a national concern that there was not a big enough skill base to build the number of houses expected over the next five years. The Chair highlighted that the Board had already done a lot of work on this issue through the Hidden Talents campaign.

Decision

- The Board noted the updates on the Work Programme.

7 EEHT End of Year Board Report

The Chair introduced the Board's End of year Report, which summarised the issues and work the Board had overseen over the previous year.

Decisions

- The Board noted the work which had been undertaken in 2014/15.
- The Board noted the programme of meetings for 2015/16.

8 Minutes of the previous meeting

Members agreed the notes of the meeting held on 18 March 2015 as correct.

It was confirmed that the Secretary of State for Transport had been unable to attend the Board meeting, but would attend a future meeting of the Board later in the year.

The Board expressed their thanks to Caroline Green, Senior Advisor for Waste, Housing and the Environment, for her hard work and support of the Board. Caroline would be leaving the LGA over the summer.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Peter Box CBE	Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Mike Jones	Cheshire West and Chester Council
	Cllr Jim Harker OBE	Northamptonshire County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr John Northcott	Mole Valley District Council
Members	Cllr James Lewis	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Timothy Moore	Liverpool City Council
	Cllr Tony Newman	Croydon Council
	Cllr Ed Turner	Oxford City Council
	Cllr Steve Count	Cambridgeshire County Council
	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Geoffrey Theobald OBE	Brighton & Hove City Council
	Cllr Deborah Croney	North Dorset District Council
	Cllr Julian German	Cornwall Council
Apologies	Cllr Brenda Arthur	Norwich City Council
	Cllr / Dr Joan Dixon	Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Keith House	Eastleigh Borough Council
In Attendance		
LGA Officers		
Ian Hughes		
Caroline Green		
Kamal Panchal		
Jo Allchurch		
Charles Loft		
Paul Goodchild		