

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

### **Buses**

1. I have written to the Department for Transport (DfT) and Treasury Ministers on the issue of bus provision, to bring to their attention the pressures that continue to be faced by councils in supporting bus provision, especially in non-metropolitan areas, together with a suggested package of regulatory and funding reforms that will help with local provision. These issues were raised in the recently published LGA report *Missing the Bus?: Councils and the future of the bus in non-metropolitan areas*.

### **Road Traffic Law Enforcement and Review of the Traffic Signs and Regulations General Directions**

2. Lead members of my Board submitted responses on behalf of the LGA to the Transport Select Committee's inquiry into traffic law enforcement and to DfT's consultation on traffic signs and regulations General Directions. The LGA highlighted how devolution of traffic management powers (by implementing Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004) to local authorities would have a significant impact on road safety by allowing councils to enforce cycle lanes and banned turns and other dangerous manoeuvres. Our response to the latter focused on our concern that the DfT appeared to be backtracking over its proposal to remove the requirement for yellow line restrictions to have an associated traffic order, which impose an unnecessary cost on councils.

### **Sunday Trading**

3. Lead members signed-off the LGA's response to the Government's recent consultation on Sunday Trading hours. In summary, the LGA welcomed the new powers, believing the Government is right to recognise the role of councils in driving local growth and being better placed in shaping decisions that affect the well-being of local people and businesses. However, we urged the Government to make the power to extend Sunday trading hours available to all areas and do so in a way that avoids central prescription and bureaucracy, additional costs and gives local places the freedom to make their own choices.

### **Parking Reform: Tackling Unfair Practices**

4. The LGA responded to a DCLG discussion paper on the management and regulation of parking on private land, and land owned by public bodies, and cash payment facilities for municipal parking. We expect the department to announce the outcome of the consultation this autumn.

### **Proposed reduction of social rent by 1 per cent a year over 4 years**

5. The Board has led the LGA's response to the proposed social rent reduction, submitting evidence to the Welfare Reform and Work Committee calling for a deletion of the clause which the Chairman followed with oral evidence. This has included publishing our

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analysis that the proposal will cost councils £2.6 billion over 4 years up to 2020, which has been widely covered in the press including the [Financial Times](#). The Board is preparing a strategy for influencing the Bill ahead of it progressing to Report stage, including developing and evidencing a number of amendments.

### **Extension of Right to Buy and Sale of High Value Assets**

6. The Board has continued to call for the sale of high value assets and extension of Right to Buy to be pursued as two separate policies, and for councils to retain 100 per cent of receipts from sales to reinvest in building locally. It has commissioned Savills research unit to provide an independent analysis on the different national housing policies on housebuilding, affordable housing stock, and home ownership. The Board has used the first report as a basis for work to influence policy ahead of the Housing Bill, and included it in a widely covered press statement on the proposed extension of Right to Buy, covered by the [Guardian](#). A final report will be completed after the Housing Bill is published to take into account additional details.

### **Rogue landlords**

7. The LGA responded to a DCLG consultation on improving the private rented sector. We called for tougher penalties for rogue landlords and support for councils to make robust decisions about a “fit and proper” test for landlords, including a blacklist of rogue landlords. LGA Vice President Gerald Vernon-Jackson gave interviews to support our press work in September. BBC breakfast, Radio 5, Channel 4 news and around 20 national media channels covered the story.

### **Starter Homes**

8. The LGA has continued to raise concerns about the Government’s proposal to fund the 20 per cent discount on 200,000 Starter Homes through exemptions from affordable housing contributions and infrastructure payments. This has included publishing our analysis that the proposal will cost councils at least £3 billion over 4 years up to 2020 in lost affordable housing contributions. The BBC included our concerns in a story it ran in October.

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