

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

Title: Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board
Date: Thursday 1 October 2015
Venue: Rathbone Rooms 1&2, 7th 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 None of the members present had interests to declare.	
2	Chair's Introduction The Chair opened the meeting with a round of introductions and noted the apologies.	
3	Membership, Terms of Reference and Outside Body Appointments The Chair introduced the report which set out the Board's membership and Terms of Reference for information and asked the Board to make appointments to relevant Outside Bodies for the 2015/16 meeting cycle. Members noted the membership and Terms of Reference of the Board without further comment and agreed that responsibility for appointments to outside bodies be delegated to the Political Group Offices. Decision That the Board agreed that responsibility for the appointments to outside bodies be delegated to the LGA Political Group Offices. Action Officers to take responsibility for the appointments to outside bodies.	
4	Chair's Report The Chair introduced his report that would be submitted to the October Councillors' Forum meeting. In discussing the report, a Member welcomed the inclusion of reference to Part 6 of the Management Act.	

Decision

That the Board noted the Chair's report.

Action

The Chair to submit his report to the October Councillors' Forum meeting.

5 Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Work Programme 2015/16

The Chair presented the report which set out a draft work programme for the Board and focussed on providing continuity, recognising the government's legislative agenda and reflecting the priorities of the LGA Leadership Board. The Chair asked the Board to consider and comment on the draft work programme in the report and to agree a final version.

In the discussion that followed, Members acknowledged that, with fewer meetings and officers, it would be necessary to select main aspects of the Work Programme to focus on in order target resources most effectively to deliver most impact. It was noted that the subsequent discussion on the next item around housing should also inform the development of the work programme.

Decision

The Board agreed to the Work Programme.

Action

Officers to progress the Work Programme in line with the Members' comments.

6 Housing Update

Nick Porter, Senior Adviser at the LGA, presented the Housing Update report which updated the Board on the progress and sought Members views on next steps. In doing so he expressed disappointment, that despite LGA lobbying, so far it had not resulted in much traction with Government.

During the subsequent discussion the following points were raised:

- In discussing the LGA's lobbying strategy, Members commented that it was important that the LGA be seen to be vocal on the issues raised in the update. It was agreed that the best way to influence government would be by focusing on select issues which the sector could work with Government on to offer a solution, and would therefore most likely to have traction.
- In sharing experiences from their localities of the different challenges authorities' face in term of meeting housing demand

and supply, Members emphasised the importance that these geographical differences be acknowledged and that there is 'one size fits all' solution.

- In discussing current housing shortage and the potential impact of the Government's proposals, serious concerns were expressed, particularly relating to: the combined lack of skills, shortage of materials and in some areas shortage of available land; the financial sustainability of councils' Housing Revenue Account as a result of the reduction of social rents by 1%; the social, economic and financial impact of the extension of Right to Buy to housing associations resulting in a loss of affordable housing stock; private sector 'land banking' practices; and the impact of public opinion and the role of planning authorities' beyond councils.
- With reference to the erroneous perception that councils' approach to planning permission was a key restraint on housing growth, Members emphasised the importance of developing a robust evidence base that demonstrated the multifaceted nature of the barriers to house building that were restraining local authority, particularly around Government policy and developers' practices.
- The Chair suggested organising a meeting with the minister to discuss the sector's concerns and work jointly with Government to deliver a mutually beneficial solution. This meeting would allow the views of local authorities to be represented and to show the authorities that the LGA is protecting its councils.
- In discussing the voluntary agreement between the Government and the National Housing Federation (NHF), several concerns were raised about impact on councils that had business plans in place and the circumventing of Parliamentary scrutiny. It was suggested that the LGA consult local authorities that had previously been part of the LGA's HRA sounding board and that a meeting between the Board Lead members and the Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation be arranged to as to develop a more aligned working relationship going forward.
- Another member drew the Board's attention to the fact that there is a large audience of people working on creative solutions to the issues raised in the update and that the EEHT Board should be helping both government and the civil service in creating new ideas.

Decision

That the Board agreed:

- that its comments inform the LGA's policy position and the next

steps for influencing the forthcoming Housing Bill and the current Welfare Reform and Work Bill;

- that a meeting between Members and the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, Brandon Lewis MP be arranged; and
- and that a meeting between Members and with the Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation, David Orr, be organised.

Action

- Meeting with the minister and the Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation to be organised by officers.

7 Housing Commission

Nick Porter, Senior Adviser at the LGA, introduced the Housing Commission report and asked Members to decide on the direction of an LGA housing commission. The paper set out the background for an LGA housing commission which the Board had been requested to undertake by the LGA Leadership Board.

Members agreed with the Recommendations of the Housing Update with the caveat that the commission has elected members on it and is outcome-based.

Decision

That the Board agreed the objectives and governance for the LGA's housing commission.

Action

Officers to progress with the Recommendations of the Housing Update.

8 Transport Update

Kamal Panchal, Senior Adviser at the LGA, introduced the Transport Update which updated the Board on LGA activity following agreement of policy and lobbying lines at the last Board meeting. Members' views were sought on the next steps.

During the discussion of the report members raised the following points:

- Members highlighted the importance of subsidised bus transport and commented on the danger of losing funding for it. Particular concerns included the link between isolation and mental health issues and the recent scaling back of patient transport.
- With reference to recent global concerns regarding the air quality safeguards on vehicles, Members highlighted the implication for local authorities and that this be raised with Government. They emphasised the importance that no local authorities be unfairly

penalised the EU for air quality standards as a result and that the car manufacturing industry be held to account. More broadly, Members emphasised the importance of lobbying more local authorities to be given greater powers to be able to meaningfully address the problem of air quality.

- With reference to regulation of taxis, it was noted that this responsibility sat with the Safer and Stronger Communities Board.
- The positive impact of investing in public transport on air quality was highlighted.
- Another member commented that the government is focussed on improving bus engines when the actual damage to the quality of air comes from cars primarily.
- Concern were raised that whilst there was investment in national infrastructure schemes, it was difficult to secure funding for smaller areas to link into these larger urban centre transport networks.

Decision

That the Board noted the report and agreed for their comments to be passed on to officers.

Action

Officers to continue their work based on the items raised in the discussion of the report.

9 Minutes of the previous meeting

Decision

That the Board agreed on the notes of the previous meeting.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Peter Box CBE	Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Keith House	Eastleigh Borough Council
	Cllr John Northcott	Mole Valley District Council
Members	Cllr Adele Morris	Southwark 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 Jason Ablewhite	Huntingdonshire District Council
	Cllr Simon Cooke	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr Peter Fleming	Sevenoaks District Council
	Cllr David Westley	West Lancashire Borough Council
	Cllr Alyson Barnes	Rosendale Borough Council
	Cllr Gillian Campbell	Blackpool Council
	Cllr Simon Greaves	Bassetlaw District Council
Apologies	Cllr Jim Harker OBE	Northamptonshire County Council
	Cllr Julian German	Cornwall Council
In Attendance		
LGA Officers		