

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

Transport for a Growing Economy – 8 March 2016

1. The importance of good transport links to boost productivity and support local economies to grow is something that councils have long recognised. Through investing in new local roads, supporting bus services, fixing potholes, providing integrated solutions, and promoting cycling and walking councils play a vital role in connecting people and businesses to each other.
2. There are exciting and challenging times ahead for councils on local transport as technology progresses, and through people's changing travel patterns. I hope that you can all join the [LGA's 'Transport for a Growing Economy' conference on 8 March](#), in London, which is free to all LGA member councils. The event will help all places think about the leadership needed and opportunities to be exploited over the next few years to deliver transport investment to support growth, and will discuss opportunities of working with Highways England and Network Rail, the economic case for investment, and case studies on how councils are taking responsibility for securing the delivery of their future transport needs.

Housing Commission

3. The LGA Housing Commission has now held two evidence sessions in Eastleigh and Wakefield, chaired by EEHT Lead Members. These were well attended by councils, partners and other key organisations and provided an opportunity for wide-ranging discussion and debate. Two more evidence sessions are scheduled for April. The Commission's call for evidence closed on 26 February 2016, but we continue to welcome submissions and interest after the deadline. The Housing Commission will publish a report which will be formally launched at the LGA Annual Conference in July.

Housing Lobbying

4. The LGA has been working hard behind the scenes to try and influence the [Housing and Planning Bill](#) and the [Welfare Reform Bill](#), but is now clear that some of our key concerns remain. Our public and private efforts will now be fully focused on improving legislation so that councils can play their lead role in increasing housebuilding, enabling home ownership, and reducing homelessness and benefits. This has included calls for additional flexibilities to prevent the loss of 80,000 council homes widely covered in the national press.

CLG Committee Inquiry into National Planning Policy

5. The Communities and Local Government Committee took oral evidence on national planning policy from key stakeholders, including Vice-Chairman of the LGA Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board Cllr Martin Tett. During the session Cllr Tett set out that the introduction of the NPPF was a positive step and there should now be a proper review of the Framework. He used the opportunity to raise concerns about the lack of proper resourcing in local planning departments and around proposals for Starter Homes in the Housing and Planning Bill, and also called for new settlements to be determined locally.

Employment and Apprenticeships

6. The Work and Health Programme, announced in the November 2015, will support claimants with health conditions or disabilities and those unemployed for over two years, replacing Work Programme and Work Choice. The LGA was pleased it reflects many of our [own proposals](#) submitted to Government, but believes for the WHP to be effective, it must be locally commissioned across England, with appropriate funding levels. [Click here](#) for information about LGA activity to influence it.
7. The Government has committed to creating three million new apprenticeships by 2020, with two primary measures to achieve this – a public sector target and an Apprenticeship Levy. Local authorities will be subject to both. You can feed into the LGA response to the Apprenticeship targets for public sector bodies consultation [here](#) The LGA will host a roundtable with Whitehall and councils on 23 February to discuss practical measures local areas are considering.

Buses legislation

8. Councils are hoping that the Government's new buses legislation will allow bus services outside London to be provided in the same way as they are in London, giving local transport authorities the powers to plan, develop and regulate bus services, offering passengers simpler, integrated Oyster-style ticketing and guarantees on service quality. Most devolution deals include the powers to pursue a franchising model. We understand the Government's Buses Bill will aim to do this, however we feel there are other measures which could be taken, including devolving Bus Services Operators Grant to councils, which will help ensure public subsidy is better targeted. The LGA's ['Missing the Bus?'](#) report outlines how councils have responded to reduced funding and DfT have provided a helpful [Buses Bill Update](#).

Air Quality

9. The LGA presented both [written](#) and [oral](#) evidence to the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee enquiry into air pollution. The enquiry is looking into Defra's role for reducing emissions of key pollutants, including NO₂, and whether they go far enough and fast enough to meet EU standards; and whether Government departments should intervene further to reduce emission. The LGA believes that Defra has insufficient input into on policies implemented by other government departments, notably Department for Transport and that Government should do more nationally to address air quality, such as making industry-wide changes to influence a switch from petrol and diesel vehicles to ultra-low emission vehicles and other alternative modes of transport. This should be further supported by giving local authorities the powers and funding to manage traffic and provide alternatives to the car.

Climate Local Annual Conference

10. [The Climate Local Annual Conference](#) will be held in London on Tuesday 22 March 2016. This event will bring together councils, partners and Government representatives to debate issues, hear details of pioneering council led projects to reduce carbon emissions and increase resilience to a changing climate.

Contact officer: Eamon Lally
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone number: 0207 664 3132
E-mail: eamon.lally@local.gov.uk