

16 March 2016

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

### **Housing Lobbying**

1. 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**

2. 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**

3. 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.
4. 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**

5. 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](#).

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#### **Air Quality**

6. 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 NO<sub>2</sub>, 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**

7. [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.

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