

12 February 2019

## **Growth and transport Update**

### **Purpose of report**

For information.

### **Summary**

An update of the Growth and transport policy work that has been carried out for the Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board

### **Recommendation**

That members note the contents of the report, paying attention to the Town Centre Visits invite in paragraph 2.

### **Action**

Officers to take forward any member comments for future policy work.

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## **Growth and transport Update Paper February 2019**

### **Growth and Transport**

#### **Town centre visits**

1. The Board requested officers to explore and organise study visit of town centres. Following further exploration and to provide members with two diverse approaches, Woking and Bracknell Forest have agreed to host a visit, which will take place on **Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> April**. The two towns are within 30 mins drive of each other therefore it should be practical to fit in visits to both on the same day. Practical arrangements are still being discussed with both councils although we anticipate that the first visit, in Woking, will start at 10.30am. Depending on the success of this visit, a further visit could be arranged in a different part of the country later in the year.
2. It is proposed that the invitation is opened up to other LGA boards that are likely to be interested in the town centre agenda – namely People and Places, City Regions and Culture, Tourism and Sports. Please confirm your interest with Thomas French ([Thomas.french@local.gov.uk](mailto:Thomas.french@local.gov.uk)).
3. Members may also be aware that following the announcement in the Budget the Government has launched its prospectus for the £675 million Future High Streets Fund. This will provide co-funding towards capital projects that bring transformative change to town centres. Local authorities are invited to submit expressions of interest by 22 March 2019 setting out their challenges and strategic approach to regenerating town centres. The Government will assess these and make an announcement on places moving forward to Phase Two in summer 2019.
4. The LGA's work on the future of high streets and town centres continues. The second session of the town centre masterclass took place on the 17th January and the LGA's national conference on town centres takes place on 14th February, which is now fully booked.

#### **Concessionary bus fares funding**

5. The LGA put forward Paul Woods, Interim Chief Finance Officer for the North East Combined Authority, to provide oral evidence on 30<sup>th</sup> January to the Transport Select Committee inquiry on the health of bus markets, and specifically on concessionary fares funding. Paul has undertaken extensive analysis on costs and the funding that councils receive and has concluded that for 2017/18, there was an overall funding gap for concessionary fares of £652 million. The analysis is particularly complex as there have been a number of changes in how the funding has been allocated and in recent years has not been particularly visible in Government figures. Previously, in 2016, the LGA had estimated that the funding gap was at least £200 million.
6. It is intended that the new analysis will inform the LGA's submission to the next spending review. We will continue to highlight the impact that underfunding of the statutory concessionary fares scheme has on other council services, including supported bus

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travel and discretionary concessions. Officers can provide more detailed information on the new evidence.

### **Future transport**

7. On 17th January the LGA held its future transport conference entitled Clean, Connected and in Control - the future of transport technology. We hosted a diverse range of speakers involved in electrification, autonomous trials and data analysis. The day covered a range of topics from the future of regulation to the emerging commercial opportunities for local authorities. A feature in First magazine is currently being produced to outline some of the key topics that emerged from the day as well as outlining future LGA work on future transport.
8. From feedback at the conference there was a clear desire from attendees for the LGA to be more active in understanding and communicating best practice on how councils manage data. There are significant opportunities for councils to provide existing services in smarter ways and to gain new insights from transport data. However many authorities feel that they lack sufficient expertise to fully utilise the data they generate from managing their networks and the large amount of data that will be generated from increased vehicle connectivity. This is an area of work the LGA will help develop.
9. The Energy Savings Trust is currently planning to produce a guidance publication for local authorities seeking to increase electric vehicle charging provision in their area. The LGA plans to publish an accompanying guide helping elected members to make the case about how increasing electric charging provision can benefit their authority and the steps they can take to help make it happen.
10. There has been significant interest in cycle hire schemes especially give the rapid expansion and subsequent retrenchment of the dock less industry. The LGA intends to publicise successful case studies highlighting successful schemes from around England to guide authorities who are interested in this area.