

Economy & Transport Programme Board – report from Cllr Peter Box

Programme Board Meeting 16 September

1. Members received a presentation from Paul Woodcock, Rotherham MBC, on the work undertaken by the council with partners to support development of new businesses in their area. Other items on the agenda included an update on the 56 proposals for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) submitted to government. Members agreed that in relation to investment in roads a radically different approach to planning and funding for infrastructure is needed to give councils more flexibility to target investment effectively. Members also noted an update on LGA lobbying on the Work Programme. Members and officers are also continuing to lobby the Department for Work and Pensions on our LEP asks on skills.

Publications on Infrastructure and Buses

2. The Board launched publications on two of its lobbying priorities in September. *Funding and Planning for Infrastructure* makes the case for investment in a range of physical infrastructure needs and argues that localising decision making and giving councils more flexibility to raise investment locally are crucial to meeting the country's infrastructure needs. This was soon followed by the Deputy Prime Minister's announcement about Tax Increment Funding, which signalled the government's acceptance of one of our key recommendations. *The Future of Bus Subsidy* argues that increases in fares could be controlled by giving local people, through their council, more of a say on how their bus services are run, whilst protecting local bus services. Lead Members will pursue these arguments when we meet with Transport Minister, Norman Baker MP, on 13 October.

Air Pollution

3. In September, the Chairman of the Environment and Housing Board and I jointly wrote to Defra Minister, Lord Henley, and Transport Minister, Norman Baker, to seek further commitment to, and action on, tackling air pollution caused by transport emissions. The LG Group has made a commitment on behalf of local government to play its part in reducing air pollution, but is seeking definitive action from Government to help councils to adequately tackle pollution. This includes the Government changing the method used to assess transport projects to better take account of pollution, better supporting cleaner fuel options such as biomethane already used by some councils in their fleets and

putting greater effort into changing the behaviour of the public including increasing the use of public transport, and cycling and walking.

Labour Party Conference

4. I spoke at conference and also at four fringe events at the Labour Party conference, on transport issues and with FSB and BCC. I used this opportunity to raise awareness of our lobbying priorities on transport infrastructure funding, bus reform and on concessionary fares issues and the way in which local government can work with businesses.

Winter Salt Stocks

5. I spoke on Radio Live 5 and 3 Counties as well as BBC News 24 on the situation facing local authorities and for the need for action before winter sets in.

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