

## **Economy & Transport Programme Board – report from Cllr Peter Box (Chair)**

### **Meeting with Norman Baker MP**

1. Vice Chair, Cllr Jim Harker and Deputy Chair Cllr Richard Knowles met with Norman Baker MP on 13th October to discuss key areas of the LGA's transport work. Cllrs Harker and Knowles stressed the need for continued investment in transport to support local economies and the need to ensure that councils have maximum flexibility over how they prioritise investment locally. The meeting also discussed the LGA's proposals for reform of bus subsidies required to deal with expected reductions and argued that concessionary travel should be funded via special grant to ensure transparent and equitable funding for all local authorities. The Minister confirmed that no decisions had yet been made on changes to the administration of bus subsidies said that he saw an important role for the Local Government group in supporting improvement and leadership on transport.

### **Financing infrastructure**

2. We have been lobbying - most recently in our publication on planning and funding for infrastructure - for more flexibility for councils to raise funding locally. The recent announcement from government that it will allow councils to raise investment against future business rates is an important lobbying success on this issue and potentially offers councils a much needed new source of investment for infrastructure.

### **Winter weather and transport networks**

3. I spoke at a national event on Resilient Transport Networks: Planning for Severe Weather Conditions on 6th October on lessons learned from last year's winter, actions councils are taking to ensure they are prepared for future winters and longer term action that is needed to resolve issues of salt supply. The independent review commissioned by the department for Transport reported its findings on 23rd October. The report agreed with the LGA's findings that the UK salt supply chain lacks resilience and cannot respond to periods of increased demand for salt.

### **Concessionary Fares**

4. As well as writing to Ministers individually, myself together with Chairs of PTEG, DCN and CCN agreed that we should write as a group of organisations to

emphasise the strength of feeling in the sector that concessionary fares should be funded through special grant. We sent a joint letter to Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, copied to both Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP and Rt Hon Danny Alexander MP on 12 October 2010.

### **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)**

5. Councillor Peter Box spoke at the Delivering Economic Growth conference on 26 October, the Urban Commission on 27 October and the LGA event on 28 October on local enterprise partnerships making the case for the devolution of economic powers and the importance of partnership working with the private sector.
6. The LGA event for representatives from over 80 councils will look at local enterprise partnerships from government, business and local council perspectives - on the day that government launched its Local Growth white paper with more details on the Regional Growth Fund and the new financing mechanisms available to LEPs including tax increment financing.

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