

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

### **Local Growth Campaign**

1. Whilst the latest economic growth figures and our double-dip recession have caused much political controversy, the Treasury's latest economic projections should send national policy makers to investigate the excellent work that is being driven at the front-line of the economy by councils. Our Local Growth Campaign has shown that not only are councils "just doing it", we also have an unlimited appetite for new powers and responsibilities at the local level to drive growth.
2. The Board's Local Growth Campaign is reaching its conclusion and we will be looking at the recommendations at the Board and Executive meetings in May. When we set out on the campaign, we envisaged publishing a Green Paper which set out the role that councils could play. The evidence of the campaign is that we have not only embraced the devolution agenda, but also have the ideas and ambition to demonstrate how councils can intensify the drive for economic growth at a local level. Thus our Green Paper needs a better name. A Green Paper tends to symbolise policy ideas from the centre rather than the front-line. Our Campaign's conclusions will, therefore, become an invitation to business and government to talk about action and delivery. The detail of our recommendations will be available in both May's Executive and Economy and Transport Board papers.

### **CLG Select Committee**

3. On Monday 30 April I gave oral evidence to the CLG Select Committee inquiry into the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). I made the case for a well resourced ERDF pot shaped by local authorities, and talked about the role it has played in the renaissance of places like Birmingham, Sheffield, and Liverpool. Over 20 years my authority, Wakefield, has created around 10,000 jobs, with £120 million of structural funds leveraging an additional £1 billion of private sector match-funding. This funding is vital, and I warned the committee that a lack of match-funding will lead to projects not going ahead, with funds being returned to Brussels rather than invested in communities.

### **Hidden Talents**

4. Over the last month we have been building consensus with partners around the proposals set out in our Hidden Talents report, for supporting the most disengaged young people into work and learning. Looking ahead we will be working with councils to build the evidence case for this approach, engaging

with councils joining-up services for these groups - we have a roundtable with councils, partners and David Miliband, who chaired the Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations' (ACEVO) Youth Unemployment Commission. We are also planning some work around the skills mismatch for our young people, and have commissioned research to assess the extent of this mismatch across sectors and places.

### **Transport projects**

5. Transport is central to the growth agenda and the government has recognised the importance of local decision-making in ensuring that solutions are fine tuned to match the economic, social and environmental needs of an area. The LGA is working with Cornwall, Cambridgeshire, Staffordshire and Leeds city region on demonstration projects to understand what works well, what is transferable and what barriers remain, on which we need to work with government.

### **Office of Rail Regulation (ORR)**

6. All of the Board's Group Leaders met the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) to ensure that councils play a bigger role in influencing how future rail investment is regulated. ORR was genuinely interested in working with groups of councils to discuss future economic growth issues and how investment decisions across the public sector can be joined up. We volunteered to deliver a number of sub-regional consultation events at which councils could set out their local investment plans to help influence future Network Rail investment decisions.

### **Cllr Kevin Lynes**

7. It is with great sadness I heard of the sudden death of Cllr Kevin Lynes from Kent CC. Kevin was an excellent and active member of the Board and the portfolio member for economic development in Kent. He could be relied upon at the Board to suggest new ideas and to quickly get to the real economic issues facing councils. He was far too young to leave us and we will miss his contribution to our work. On behalf of the Board, I would like to send my condolences to his family, his friends and colleagues in local government.

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