

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

Economic growth

1. The summer holidays, the Olympics and Paralympics are over and the economy is still dominating the headlines. A new Economy and Transport Board meets in late September. We need to double our efforts to promote the work that councils are already doing to promote growth and we need to ensure more devolution so local economic development is not hampered by national bureaucracy.
2. The Board is already committed to a programme with both the Department for Transport and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to test new ways of localising skills and transport delivery. A number of councils (such as Staffordshire, Manchester, Cambridgeshire and my own authority of Wakefield) are working with these ministries to ensure that the practice and potential of localism is understood and implemented by Whitehall.
3. We are also developing work with vice chancellors of universities to ensure that Higher Education (HE) plays a better role in local economic development. Whilst there are numerous examples of good local HE collaboration to drive local growth, our record in commercialising innovation to create new business is not as good as our competitors. We are arranging a summit with the HE sector to explore new ways of working.

Local Growth Campaign Town Hall Summits

4. Our programme of Town Hall Summits will continue this year. Hertfordshire, Essex, York, Manchester, Reading, Staffordshire, Bristol, Cumbria and Newcastle have all volunteered to host events. Each of these summits will focus on one of the main themes which were identified from last year's campaign (e.g. skills; transport; inward investment) and specifically look to draw out the detail of blockages and possible solutions which we will then present back to government. Following the success of last year's town hall debates, these will follow a similar format but will explore in more detail, with councils and other stakeholders, the barriers and issues identified via last year's debates. The full programme of Town Hall Summits will be sent to Members.

City Deals

5. Eight City Deals have now been signed between Government and the Core Cities (Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield, Leeds and Bristol). They each have negotiated control of powers and levers, previously held by government, to drive growth in their particular area. Whilst each deal is bespoke to the area there are a number of key factors of a city deal: a transformative idea, the unlocking of private finance and robust governance arrangements which are seen as

necessary for a city deal to work. The core cities are now starting the implementation phase.

6. A number of councils – both cities and other areas - outside of the Core Cities have expressed their desire to broker a local growth deal with central government along the lines of the City Deals. These local growth deals would provide councils and groups of councils with the flexibility to shape national programmes to local economic circumstances. LGA officials have been involved in discussions with the Cities Unit (Cabinet Office) to support extending the City Deal offer to other cities and *non city* areas and to explore how the LGA can support councils in this process.

Environmental Audit Select Committee

7. The Economy and Transport Board submitted evidence to the Environmental Audit Select Committee's inquiry into the impact of transport on access to public services, calling for greater local control over transport decision making as a route to improving access.

Looking forward

8. I must also welcome Cllr Tony Ball, Leader of Basildon DC, as the Board's new Vice Chair and Conservative Lead Member. He is a long-standing member of the Board and has a long history of driving economic development in his district.
9. We have a full year ahead of us and I look forward to the challenges it will bring.

Contact officer:	Ian Hughes
Position:	Head of Programmes
Phone no:	020 7664 3101
E-mail:	ian.hughes@local.gov.uk