

Item 3(d)

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

Winter Weather

1. The winter is once again upon us and the nation's attention turns to the state of our roads and whether councils are prepared for the snow. The answer is a resounding "yes".
2. The LGA's annual [Winter Readiness Survey](#) shows that councils are as well prepared as they have ever been to cope with snow and ice. We have as much salt stockpiled this year as in any other year, we have lots of new equipment, wider-reaching community schemes and more communication outlets to keep people up-to-speed with the latest information.
3. Unfortunately, our survey also found that nearly one in six councils had road salt stolen last year. As well as pilfering stock from on-street grit bins and loading it into trucks, raiders also stole actual grit bins and their contents. Some councils lost as much as 20 tonnes. Local authorities are urging people to be on the lookout for thieves stealing grit and asking residents not to buy it from door-to-door sellers.

Streetworks

4. In December, I launched a report looking at the cost to councils and businesses of poor roadworks by utilities companies. The report was picked up by the BBC and national media. The report 'Holes in our pockets? – how utility streetworks damage local growth' was launched at the House of Commons last week. In conjunction with the Association of Convenience Stores, we surveyed hundreds of high street businesses across the country to assess the impact of nearby streetworks by utility companies. Key findings include:
 - 4.1 57 per cent of shops have had streetworks nearby over the past three years;
 - 4.2 72 per cent of these were negatively affected by streetworks, with issues including forced closure, delivery delays, reduced footfall and reduced sales;
 - 4.3 43 per cent were affected for at least a month, with nine per cent at least six months;
 - 4.4 31 per cent say streetworks reduced their footfall by at least a quarter with, at worst, some losing about 2,500 customers a week;
 - 4.5 Half say they lost at least 10 per cent of sales with, at worst, some losing about £7,500 a week;
 - 4.6 96 per cent would like to see councils given enough power to ensure roads are returned to the proper standard after streetworks; and
 - 4.7 79 per cent believe utility companies should help finance the resurfacing.

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5. I did state at the launch with MPs in Parliament that this was not a declaration of war on the utilities but an offer to sit down with them and try and solve a big public problem that is a barrier to economic growth and costs councils over £200k per year. Following the launch I have written to utility company chief executives to invite them to an LGA Summit in 2013 to discuss how we can work together to improve streetworks outcomes.

Institute of Economic Development

6. I spoke at the Institute of Economic Development's (IED) Annual Conference on 27 November. It was useful to share the LGA's Local Growth Campaign with businesses and delegates and as a result, colleagues at the IED are keen to work with us and form a greater partnership between the organisation and local government. We will follow this up in the coming months.

Post Offices

7. On 3 December I chaired a meeting with Jo Swinson MP, Minister for Postal Affairs and Paula Vennells, Managing Director Post Office Limited to discuss the strategic relationship between post offices and local government. There were representatives from Barnsley, Hammersmith and Fulham, Leeds, Maidstone, Northumberland, Oxfordshire, Ryedale and Sheffield councils. A report will be published in the New Year on the ways in which local government and the post office can work together.

City Deals

8. On 19 December, Cllr Tony Ball, Vice Chair of the Economy and Transport Board, chaired a joint LGA/Centre for Cities event on City Deals. We have commissioned the Centre for Cities to develop a discussion paper on what national economic levers could be devolved to all places through a City Deals core package offer as part of future waves of City Deals. The paper will be discussed at our next Board meeting.

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