

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

Spending Review

1. I have been following debates within Government as departments have been submitting their bids to the Treasury for the 2015-16 spending round. Some tough decisions have to be made so that public spending is targeted to ensure growth and jobs. Ministers will need to remember that councils are one of the few parts of the public sector to use their resources to drive growth and jobs. The LGA put in a comprehensive submission to Government and central to our bid was a proposal to boost local growth. One big decision that the Government has to make in this spending review is whether or not to back Lord Heseltine's single pot for regeneration. We are lobbying hard to ensure that the ambition of Lord Heseltine for a substantial devolution of budgets to the local level is met. However, we have also put down markers that this needs to be devolved cash, rather than a recentralisation of cash already devolved to councils and LEPs (such as the transport majors funding). Lord Heseltine will speak at the LGA conference in July and I hope that we are all sharing good news at this plenary session.

Manchester Town Hall Debate

2. Our series of Town Hall debates to highlight what councils are doing to regenerate their towns and cities came to a conclusion in Manchester at a session held jointly with Universities UK (UUK), where we examined the role of universities in local growth. I chaired an excellent panel of speakers including Manchester CC Deputy Leader, Cllr Sue Murphy and Professor Rod Coombs from the University of Manchester. A joint publication with Universities UK promoting collaborative working was launched at the event and is available [here](#) on the LGA website.

Oral evidence to Local Growth APPG

3. On 16 April, I gave evidence on behalf of the LGA to the Local Growth APPG as part of their inquiry into local growth and skills. Speaking during the roundtable session, I highlighted the fragmented nature of the skills system and the resulting mismatch. I also said that skills and growth need to be decentralised as national approaches do not allow for local differences and pointed out that local councils are best placed to bring together local partnerships. Alongside my oral evidence, the LGA has also submitted written evidence to the APPG.

Update on Streetworks

4. Following on from our December publication which highlighted the cost of streetworks by utility companies to business and local growth, I chaired a streetworks summit in March which looked at how we can work with these companies and business to improve streetworks, better inform business of works being carried out and of compensation schemes and to ensure contractors do a much better job. The summit was attended by Norman Baker MP, Transport Minister, Louise Ellman MP, Chair of the Transport Select Committee, the Association of Convenience Stores, the British Retail Consortium, fifteen utility companies and the National Joint Utilities Group (NJUG). Local government representatives included Transport for London, the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP) and the Joint Authorities Group (JAGUK). Cllr Nick Clarke, Cambridgeshire CC represented other Board members and led discussions at the summit.

5. The most important outcome of the summit was a recognition by local government and the utilities present that streetworks pose a problem for all and that we need to work together to improve performance in terms of coordination, minimising disruption and reinstatement. There was agreement to establishing a task force which will bring together partners to take matters forward and report back to the larger group. The first meeting of the task force is on 20 May.

High Streets development

6. On 17 April, Deputy Chair, Cllr Mike Haines, was a panellist on the Kilburn High Road Forum, which brought the London Boroughs of Camden and Brent together for the first public debate on the future of Kilburn High Road. Alongside councillors from both Boroughs and a local resident, Cllr Haines provided an overview of the national debate on the future of Britain's high streets, as well as the LGA's work in supporting councils to think outside of the box.
7. On 29 April, Cllr Haines attended the launch of the 2013 Love Your Local Market (LYLM) fortnight, hosted by Ann Coffey MP and the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) in the House of Commons. This year's LYLM fortnight will run from 15-29 May and has already improved on last year's campaign, with a significant increase in traders and participating markets across the country.

Cycling All Party Parliamentary Group

8. Since Deputy Chair, Cllr Roger Symonds, gave evidence to the Cycling APPG as part of their inquiry titled "[Get Britain Cycling](#)", the APPG has published its report. The summary and recommendations of the report are available [here](#), and the full report authored by Professor Phil Goodwin, University of West England, is available [here](#).

Parking Evidence Submitted

9. The Commons Transport Select Committee has opened an inquiry into local authority parking policy. The LGA has submitted written evidence to the Inquiry, which can be found [here](#) at PE42, page 163. The key messages are that council revenue from parking (including penalty charges) is dwarfed by council spending on transport; and that the need for parking provision or its restriction, and the appropriate level of charges, will vary from place to place even within a single district; these needs can only be properly assessed at the local level.

Hidden Talents

10. The LGA's Hidden Talents campaign features in an article in The Guardian, which writes of the good work being done by local councils and the LGA to match skills training with the needs of the local economy and to remove barriers for local businesses to employ young people. You can read the article [here](#) on The Guardian website.

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