

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

1. As we start the new year on the Board, I have been reflecting on the big priorities that we have to address over the next year. In June and July, the Government made announcements about extending Local Growth Deals to all LEP areas (a long-term lobbying objective of the Board) and localising EU funding (again, a long-term objective of the LGA). Whilst both of these announcements provided a good direction of travel, they did not reflect the scale of ambition found in councils or the breadth of devolution called for by Lord Heseltine.
2. In the coming months, councils will be engaged in the detailed work of producing the first drafts of their EU spending plans and the Strategic Economic Plans which need to be delivered in the autumn. But we must remember that the remit of these plans (as set out by Government) does not reflect local government ability to deliver growth and jobs, which was set out so clearly in our conference document, *Rewiring Public Services*.
3. At the last Board meeting, we discussed the most effective work that the LGA could deliver and we felt that we needed to twin-track our work over the coming months.
4. In terms of the immediate need, councils will need support in delivering these Strategic Economic Plans. I have heard from colleagues who have attended BIS and CLG workshops over the summer on local growth funds and there continues to be confusion about the aligning funds, departmental rules and future resources. It is some distance from the joined-up £70 billion proposed by Lord Heseltine. The LGA has prepared a prospectus of support on growth that can be drawn down by councils, available [here](#) and I would be keen to hear from councillors about any further support they might need.
5. However, the Board was clear that we need to maintain the pressure on national parties for further economic devolution. Local Growth Deals are a good step forwards, but we need further devolution to support growth. For example, there are so many funding streams which were identified for devolution by Lord Heseltine that remain in the hands of Whitehall civil servants rather than local businesses and partners. Members were very clear that the spirit of the Heseltine work needed to be revived, especially the work to ensure that localities had a greater powers to support skills and employment.
6. At our September meeting, we will be looking to push forward on the LGA's Rewiring agenda and to have a clear work and lobbying programme with our business partners for future economic devolution.

### **Skills and youth unemployment**

7. Joint work between the Economy and Transport Board and the Children and Young People Board has continued over the summer, where we have pushed the case for local authorities to have greater levers over services to help young people into work and learning. This has included publishing a poll of unemployed young people which found services too complicated and poorly targeted to their personal needs; a press release on where some councils are putting Government's Youth Contract to shame in areas where local authorities are leading it rather than national agencies; and recently a report highlighting a drop in the number of young people receiving support on national skills and employment programmes over the last three years.

8. We have had a good deal of press attention on our work, which has been beneficial in our efforts to influence the Deputy Prime Minister's Review of national schemes and services to 16-24 year olds, which is due to report in mid- September. The LGA Chairman has met with Sir Jeremy Heywood to discuss the review, our officers have fed in evidence and held a roundtable with local authorities and the review team, and on 5 September a Lead LGA member will meet the DPM, the Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP, to discuss the review and its recommendations.
9. We have also sent in a submission to the new construction and youth unemployment parliamentary inquiry chaired by LGA President Lord Best, and former Labour housing minister Rt Hon Nick Raynsford MP (Greenwich and Woolwich). Our submission assesses the challenges, including the poor responsiveness of the skills system as a major barrier to local economic growth, and recommends a way forward that builds on local partners' capacity to support young people into work, as advocated by the LGA's *Rewiring Public Services* campaign.

### **Streetworks**

10. I, along with other Board and Lead Members, attended the second Streetworks Task Force on 25 July. We have developed a common understanding between Highway Authorities and utilities of what good reinstatements look like, based on five principles: cooperation; communication; quality; safety and impact reduction. Business partners asked for improvements in communication and access to information on compensation and what to expect from different companies and public sector organisation if they are affected by streetworks. A framework is being drafted on engaging and communicating with businesses. There were also discussions around contractor performance, which will be looked at in more detail at the next meeting in September.

### **Parking**

11. A number of statements relating to proposed new guidance on parking were issued by DCLG ministers during August.
12. On 30 July, I responded to stories suggesting that Communities Secretary Eric Pickles was considering relaxing rules on double yellow lines so that motorists could park on them for up to 15 minutes when visiting local shops. My message focused on how yellow lines keep traffic moving and people safe and how each local area needs to decide how best to draw more shoppers to the high street.
13. On 1 August, I responded to a report on council parking charges published by the RAC Foundation, which was picked up by much of the national media.

<b>Contact officer:</b>	Ian Hughes
<b>Position:</b>	Head of Programmes
<b>Phone no:</b>	020 7664 3101
<b>E-mail:</b>	<a href="mailto:ian.hughes@local.gov.uk">ian.hughes@local.gov.uk</a>