

Notes of last Meeting and Decisions

Item 6

Regeneration and Transport Board

26 March 2009

Local Government House at 11:00

Present

Chair: Cllr David Sparks OBE (Dudley MDC)
Vice Chair: Cllr Jim Harker (Northamptonshire CC)
Deputy Cllr John Whitelegg (Lancaster)
Chairs:

Present: Cllr Andrew Carter, (Leeds CC); Cllr Ricky Bower (Arun DC); Cllr Stephen Parnaby (East Riding of Yorkshire); Cllr Tony Page (Reading); Cllr Mark Dowd OBE (Merseyside PTA); Cllr Roy Davis (Luton); Cllr Lesley Clarke (Wycombe DC); Cllr Jon Ball (Ealing)

Apologies: Cllr Shona Johnstone, (Cambridgeshire CC, Con); Cllr Peter Jackson (Northumberland CC, Con); Cllr Richard Knowles (Oldham MBC, LD)

1. Connecting Local Economies - the case for rail

Julie Mills, Director of Greenguage21, gave a presentation to members. Greenguage21 is an organisation which promotes the focus on high speed rail.(HSR) During the presentation, Julie outlined the reasons for developing high speed rail networks, and informed members that a public interest group has been set up to sponsor the work. The public interest group approved a set of guiding principles which underpin the development of the strategy for high speed rail. Details of the public interest group, guiding principles and the strategy can be found in the **attached** presentation.

The board held a lengthy discussion raising several issues, which Julie responded to. Members were concerned about connectivity at different levels- to and from airports, docks, regionally and at a local level. Julie agreed that connectivity is essential, and that HSR needs to contribute to significant benefits for passengers over the whole journey. Details of future schemes will be explored with local agencies. The project is not about developing HSR in place of local transport.

In response to their concern about the proposed route corridors appearing to focus on access to and from London, members were informed that cross country routes are also on the map- for example from Liverpool to Hull, or York to Scotland.

With regard to the issue of affordability for travelling on HSR, Julie responded that no firm view has yet been formed. Cheaper fares would be available for travel off peak, but it will be a political decision whether government or the fare payer bears the major cost. Funding for building the new high speed rail networks is still being investigated. Julie also clarified that at this stage of development of the strategy, extensive consultation is

23 4

not being carried out. 50 stakeholders were consulted about HS1, and workshops are being held regionally to begin thinking through some of the options. There are no resources available for extensive consultation this year, but it will be possible next year. Members were assured BAA's position is to support HSR, and that BAA are clear about Greenguage21 objectives.

The Chairman thanked Julie for the presentation

Decisions

- Members noted the presentation
- Members noted the report on connecting local economies

Actions

- Send powerpoint slides to members

Jenny Day

2. Local Authority Mutual Fund

Following members' previous discussion on Councils' Response to the Recession, the Board asked for a finance update to be provided at the next meeting.

Stephen Jones, LGA Director of Finance and Performance, provided an update. He explained the work the LGA has been doing to support councils seeking to provide various forms of banking support to their local communities and to improve their own treasury management. LGA Executive is taking responsibility for a number of action points detailed in paragraph 6 of the report to take this work forward, working with councils.

Decisions

- Members noted the report

3. Transport Update

Caroline Green gave an update to the Board on LGA transport priorities, including concessionary fares. Caroline responded to members' concerns about funding for concessionary fares, and the impact on those councils affected by shortfalls in special grant funding for the scheme. It is not yet possible to establish the exact costs, but after councils have submitted financial reports, we will know how much was spent. Members were assured that LGA officers are aware of all the issues raised on concessionary fares, and are working hard to resolve them.

Members discussed how salt supplies were dealt with during the cold weather, and were assured that the LGA had raised their concerns over supply chains, vulnerability etc during the process of distribution, at the time of the LGA gave evidence to the Transport Select Committee inquiry into the issues on 11 March.

The Board also requested further information on the Office of Fair Trading Competition Inquiry into local bus services.

Decisions

23 4

- Members noted the update.

Actions

- Invite OFT to future meeting to discuss the competition inquiry into local bus services.
- Provide progress report on transport issues at the next meeting.

Caroline Green

4. Oral Feedback

Cllr Ricky Bower reported that the Channel Tunnel Initiative (CTI) is reviewing its terms of reference and work plan which would be submitted to the LGA for comment. Cllr Bower also reported that the Chairman of the Motorists Forum has written to Sir Jeremy Beecham about the coordination of streetworks and statutory provisions. The Forum also discussed the proposed introduction of a rural speed limit of 50mph. Cllr Sparks responded that the LGA view is for local authorities to apply the limit where they think necessary. He also thanked Cllr Bower for his work with the CTI on behalf of the LGA.

Actions

- Cllr Bower to feedback the Board's response on a rural speed limit to the Motorists Forum.

5. Update on the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill

Ian Keating presented this item.

Decisions

- Members noted the report

6. Council Action on the Recession

Paul Raynes presented this item.

Decision

- Members noted the report

7. Note of previous meeting

Members approved the note of the previous meeting.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 20 May 2009 11:00