
Note of the Last Meeting and Decisions Taken

Present:

Chairman	Cllr David Sparks (Dudley MDC)
Vice-Chair	Cllr Jim Harker (Northamptonshire CC)
Deputy Chairs	Cllr Richard Knowles (Greater Manchester ITA / Oldham MBC), Prof John Whitelegg (Lancaster City)
Conservative	Cllr Shona Johnstone (Cambridgeshire CC), Cllr Andrew Carter (Leeds City), Cllr Ricky Bower (Arun DC), Cllr Kevin Lynes (Kent CC)
Labour	Cllr Mahroof Hussain (Rotherham MBC), Cllr Mark Dowd (Merseyside Travel / Sefton Council), Cllr Roy Davis (Luton BC)
Liberal Democrat	Cllr Heather Kidd (Shropshire Council), Cllr Zulfiqar Ali (Rochdale MBC)
Apologies	Cllr Peter Jackson (Northumberland Council),
Substitutes	Cllr James Morrish (Torrige DC) Conservative
In attendance	Nick Bisson (Department for Transport) LGA Officers: Paul Raynes; Philip Mind; Steve Skelton; Fatima de Abreu

The Chairman welcomed everybody to the first meeting of the session and introduced new members, Cllr Kevin Lynes, Cllr Mahroof Hussain and Cllr Zulfiqar Ali. He welcomed Mr Nick Bisson, Director of Regional and Local Transport Policy at the Department for Transport (DfT), who had been invited to give a presentation on recent transport policy developments and current and future policy priorities for the DfT to the Board.

1. Transport Presentation from Department for Transport

Mr Bisson presented the Board with DfT's objectives in trying to support local delivery according to plans set by Government to integrate local transport with housing and economic development. Objectives included:

- Supporting the economy;
- Reducing carbon emissions;

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- Improving quality of life;
- Promoting safety, security and health;
- Promoting equality of opportunity.

DfT are keen to work together with LAs to support and improve Local Transport Plans and to encourage the sector to take on a leadership role where possible.

Nick updated members on outcomes of the Local Transport Act 2008 and current work around concessionary fares. He noted that new reimbursement arrangements are currently under consideration and that further research would be finalised soon. The efficiency and carbon reduction agenda were significant but vitally important challenges Nick told members that an event was currently being organised to showcase work on carbon reduction. As part of developing better engagement DfT have agreed in principle to invest money in Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships. They also now distribute a regular newsletter.

Mr Bisson assured members of DfT's keenness to support local delivery and thanked them for the opportunity to present. Members welcomed the presentation, and the work of the DfT in this area. Specific issues raised by members included:

- the Chair noted that Sadiq Khan – or any other current or future DfT Minister – would always be welcome to attend the Board;
- the presentation did not include any information about roads, and did not focus on the transport pressures and need for improved travel connectivity in rural areas;
- the use of Smartcards needs to be addressed – whilst the data will give us a clear picture for funding purposes the costs will be substantial and disproportionately high for smaller operators;
- the Government needs to think about funding in a more creative way, in particular with regard to regional funding allocations;
- devolution funding for buses should be considered;
- equality of provision needs to be addressed, particularly in rural districts where buses are lacking;
- the DfT had been slow to engage with the Welsh Assembly Government on the issue of cross border concessionary bus travel;
- the Department's priorities (and senior Ministers) had been frequently changed in recent years – a degree of consistency was needed;
- in line with its stated priority outcomes, the DfT would need to lever in funding from other Government Departments where it was contributing to their work;
- likewise, councils carry the public transport costs associated with local relocation or restructuring of other public services (i.e. Health, Education);
- if Concessionary Fares funding is to be included as part of the RSG settlement in future years, special provision must be made for ITA areas;
- The Transport Innovation Fund needs to be made accessible to schemes which would cut congestion without reference to road-pricing;

Mr Bisson addressed members' comments as far as he was able to, and invited them to submit specific concerns to the DfT for further consideration. He reiterated that

although a reduction in public sector net investment is expected in future years, but that it would be impossible to predict by how much in advance of a full spending review.

The Chairman thanked Mr Bisson for his presentation and the opportunity for an extensive discussion on the work of the Department for Transport.

Decision

The Board

- **Noted** the presentation.

Action

- The Chairman to write to DfT to expedite discussions on cross-border concessionary bus travel between England and Wales **Cllr Sparks**
- Officers to prepare a report on future transport funding for a future meeting **Officers**
- Send Member's details to DfT for receipt of newsletter **Fatima de Abreu**
- Circulate presentation to Board **Fatima de Abreu**
- Invite Sadiq Khan to attend January Board meeting **Officers**

2 Investments in Roads

Members were asked to consider priorities for LGA policy in light of future expected cuts to public spending and investment. Prioritisation within the overall transport budget would become increasingly important, as would the level of government at which funds were administered. Members also felt that the LGA should be arguing for investment to be a higher priority overall in future spending settlements.

Road pricing and other revenue raising schemes, such as the workplace parking levy, might also be reconsidered as a source of future investment. Cllr Harker suggested revisiting previous work around funding streams and road pricing. Members discussed road user charging schemes, in particular the lack of take-up of the Transport Innovation Fund (TIF). It was felt likely that unless these funds were secured by councils soon the money would be reallocated or clawed back. The Board agreed that the LGA should investigate:

- ways of using TIFs to invest in innovative schemes to reduce congestion, but not to introduce congestion charging;
- resourcing examples of good contracts and sharing them with LAs;
- considering tolling and other schemes as a source of income to fill gaps in funding;

Members briefly discussed the impact of increased movement of freight by road and the need to link these networks with railfreight.

Decision

- The Board **noted** the report.

Action

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Officers to explore further and report back to the Board on:

- ways of using TIFs to invest in innovative schemes to reduce congestion, but not to introduce congestion charging;
- examples of best practice around highways contracts;
- considering tolling and other schemes as a source of income to fill gaps in funding;

3. Audit Commission Report on Council Action on the Recession

Members considered items 3, 6 and 7 together. The Audit Commission report found that local and national government had made a positive initial response to the recession but warned that councils should prepare for worsening social impact with the rise of unemployment. Members were told that one in five young people were out of work that the LGA are producing a programme of work on youth unemployment and training under the banner “Hidden Talents”. The Chair felt that a focus on youth unemployment was justified, but that the LGA must make clear that it understood that the issues went much further. A number of issues were raised by the Board, including:

- the Audit Commission report did not look at what local and national government could do together;
- there should also be a focus on how other parts of the public sector are responding to the recession;
- graduates would not be able to benefit from Future Jobs Fund schemes for a year; meaning that the value of their degrees might be lost;
- there is insufficient guidance and advice for young people – job centres can be unwilling to accept involvement from councils.

Members agreed that the LGA should emphasise its track record to government in addressing issues in this area and link local procurement into the approach for tackling problems in the recession.

Decision

- The Board noted the reports and **agreed** that LGA officers should continue with the work programmes set out.

Action

- Feedback comments on using ‘town hall’ in press releases back to the media office
Officers
- Officers to continue with the work programme and report regularly on updates.
Officers

4. EU Funding and Transport Policy Update

Nick Porter introduced an update on the LGA’s work on EU funding for regeneration and jobs, informing members of a new stream of work to influence funding mechanisms post-2013.

Decision

- The Board noted the report and **endorsed** the work outlined.

Action

- Continue with the work programme and report on updates. **Officers**

5. Transport Update

Members **noted** the report, but expressed concerns with regard to delivery of planned investment in rolling stock. Despite the recession, evidence clearly shows passenger numbers increasing and the Board agreed that the LGA should convey the importance of dealing with delivery congestion in communication to the government.

Action

- Chairman to write communication of concerns regarding delivery of investment in rolling stock to the Government. **Cllr Sparks**

6. Hidden Talents: Re-engaging Young People

Members **noted** the report, which was discussed earlier in the meeting.

7. Future Jobs Fund

Members **noted** the report, which was discussed earlier in the meeting.

8. Oral Feedback from Members and Outside Bodies 2009-10

Members **noted** the report and agreed that further discussion on representation should be addressed by Office Holders at their meeting in October. The Board **agreed** that Cllr Sparks should be the representative on the EU and International panel and that members should notify their Lead Members should they wish to be appointed to any particular body.

Members were concerned that they had never had feedback from some appointees and it was **agreed** that officers/Office Holders would review the list.

Action

- Outside Bodies appointments to be on agenda for consideration by Office Holders at their next meeting. **Fatima de Abreu**

9. Note of the last meeting and Decisions taken

Members **agreed** the note of the last meeting.

10. Any Other Business

Officers asked that future meeting dates avoid school holidays as far as possible.