

**Item 9**

**Note of decisions taken and actions required**

**Title:** Economy & Transport Programme Board

**Date and time:** 15 September 2010, 11am

**Venue:** Local Government House, Smith Square

**Attendance**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Councillor</b>		<b>Council</b>
<b>Chairman</b>	Peter Box	Labour	Wakefield MDC
<b>Vice chair</b>	Jim Harker	Conservative	Northamptonshire CC
<b>Deputy chair</b>	Richard Knowles	Liberal Democrat	Greater Manchester ITA / Oldham MBC
<b>Members</b>	Shona Johnstone	Conservative	Cambridgeshire CC
	Kevin Lynes	Conservative	Kent CC
	Peter Martin	Conservative	Essex CC
	Antonia Bance	Labour	Oxford City
	Roy Davis	Labour	Luton BC
	Heather Kidd	Liberal Democrat	Shropshire Council
<b>Substitutes</b>	Tony Ball	Conservative	Basildon DC
	John Walsh	Conservative	Bolton MBC
<b>Apologies</b>	Andrew Carter	Conservative	Leeds City
	Philip Atkins	Conservative	Staffordshire CC
	Mark Dowd	Labour	Merseyside Travel / Sefton C
	Zulfiqar Ali	Liberal Democrat	Rochdale MBC
Deputy chair	Andrew Cooper	Independent	Kirklees MBC
<b>Also in Attendance</b>			
Speaker:	Paul Woodcock		Rotherham MBC
Officers:	Paul Raynes		LG Group
	Caroline Green		LG Group
	Philip Mind		LG Group
	Steven Skelton		LG Group
	Fatima de Abreu		LG Group

Georgie White	LG Group
Ian Woodford	LG Group
David Kidston	LG Group
Jonathan Bray	PTEG

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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**Welcome and Introductions**

Cllr Box (Chairman) welcomed Members to the meeting and introduced Paul Woodcock, Director of Planning and Regeneration at Rotherham MBC. Mr Woodcock conveyed apologies from Peter Harman, Chief Executive of UK Business Incubation (UKBI).

**1 Councils supporting local business**

Members received a presentation from Mr Woodcock on the work undertaken by the council with partners to support the development of business incubators to help new businesses in their area.

Members discussed local government constraints in the current financial climate and the economic value of provision of this support to local areas. They were informed of examples where councils have used existing buildings to assist businesses, thus increasing the value of council assets. They discussed issues around public spending cuts and the importance of engaging with the private sector as a way of counteracting cuts to employment in local areas.

Members were informed of success rates in Rotherham MBC and the processes used in selecting businesses to ensure a positive growth.

The Board agreed that interaction between councils and new businesses would be vital to supporting local employment opportunities.

The Chairman thanked Mr Woodcock for his presentation.

**Decision**

*Members noted the discussion.*

**Action**

Officers to continue the relationship with UKBI and follow up ways in which Councils can help small businesses set up and thrive.

Philip Mind

## 2 Local Enterprise Partnerships

The Board noted a presentation from Phillip Mind which updated them on developments and Ministers' consideration of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) submissions.

Members referred to the letter from Cllr Harker to the Minister outlining the Group's concerns about issues vital to future local economic growth such as transport planning and infrastructure.

Members:

- Expressed concern about the lack of clarity from the government on what would become of RDA assets and key functions;
- Expressed concern about the lack of clarity on what if any sources of funding would be available to LEPs;
- Expressed concern about loss of current skills within RDAs;
- Noted that there was a continuing debate about the right scale for LEPs, with business groups in particular raising concerns that some of the original proposals were too small-scale;
- Agreed that unemployment and creating new employment opportunities was a vital element of the local economic agenda;
- Highlighted the importance of skills to local economies and the likelihood that many local enterprise partnerships would seek to drive skills development in their areas.

The Board agreed that the Group's priority should be lobbying in support of LEPs' bids for devolution of both powers and funding.

### **Decision**

*Members asked that the Group's priority should be lobbying in support of LEPs' bids for devolution of both powers and funding.*

### **Action**

Lead members and officers to take forward lobbying in support of LEPs' bids for devolution of both powers and funding.

Officers

## 3 Investment in Roads

The Board was updated on the LGA's proposed lobbying position on investment in roads to support jobs and economic growth.

Members agreed that finding methods for raising revenue for investment was key and said that:

- LGA lobbying needs to continue to emphasise the

importance of investing in road maintenance and addressing the £9 billion backlog. This should take priority over building new roads;

- Consideration needs to be given to alternative ways of raising revenue for essential investment, such as tolling trunk roads;
- Proper incentives need to be in place to encourage adoption of residential roads in urban growth areas;
- Damage to roads from utility companies is a major problem – councils need to be able to ensure that utilities companies carry out repairs and reinstate roads to acceptable condition following works at their own cost;
- The Highways Agency also needs to engage more with Local Authorities in carrying out improvement works;
- Funding needs to be directed towards priorities for improvement locally. There is a sense that currently strategic network projects are given preference over local road projects which does not result in best value for money;
- The environmental impacts of building new roads should be highlighted;
- LGA lobbying should include mechanisms for contribution to road maintenance from foreign freight and commercial vehicles;
- LGA policy should reflect the situation in rural areas, for example, the damage caused by agricultural vehicles;
- Emphasis should include the cost to the economy of congestion and should look at ways of encouraging private investment.

### **Decision**

*Members noted the report and asked that the points made in discussion should be taken forward through the LGA's lobbying programme; they also sought further clarity on funding mechanisms for road maintenance for their next meeting and suggested that the Leader of Surrey be invited to join that discussion.*

### **Action**

Officers to take forward Members' comments in lobbying on transport and inform Surrey CC of outcome.

Caroline Green

Officers to submit a further report on the LGA policy position on roads, covering the issues raised by members and covering tolls and charging at the next meeting, and invite Cllr Povey to the next Board meeting.

Caroline Green

## **4 Work Programme and Skills**

Officers updated Members on the work of the LGA in lobbying for councils to have a role in commissioning the new Work

Programme.

Members noted the LGA's case study publication, *Councils' role in tackling unemployment: stories from around England* and endorsed the key lines; although members noted that there was a balance to be struck between ensuring that local communities and councils did not suffer from the Work Programme's being designed in an over-centralised way, and, on the other hand, committing council support to an initiative about which some had serious doubts.

**Decision**

*Members supported the principle of a document positioning local government in relation to the Work Programme, subject to changes in the document's tone reflecting the comments made in discussion.*

**Action**

Officers to reflect Members' comments in taking forward priorities on the new Work Programme and document.

Philip Mind

**5 Economy Update**

Members discussed the current economic situation and its implications for councils.

They agreed the importance of pushing for engagement between councils and Job Centre Plus, and requested further information on youth unemployment and the group's "Hidden Talents" work.

**Decision**

*Members noted the report and agreed that future Board papers should reflect our work on youth unemployment.*

**Action**

Officers to ensure that future Economy Updates keep members informed about the LG Group's work on Hidden Talents and youth unemployment.

Phillip Mind

**6 Transport Update**

Members noted the update and made the following points:

- They supported the devolution of bus subsidies and requested that a meeting be sought between Lead Members and Philip Hammond to pursue this;
- The LGA submission to the Spending Review and lobbying work following the publication of the LGA publication *Funding and planning for infrastructure needs*

to emphasise that funding for transport infrastructure is critical to economic recovery;

- The LGA response to the consultation on Formula Grant Funding and lobbying should argue for funding for Concessionary Fares to be channelled through a Special Grant so that we can ensure it is sufficient to meet the costs of the scheme.
- A simpler methodology for reimbursement of operators is key; however whether savings can be delivered within the new guidance from DfT remains to be seen.
- Members agreed on the importance of collaboration between CCN and District Councils Network and the Board to ensure a consistent Local Government message on concessionary fares.

**Action**

Officers to pursue devolution of subsidies, concessionary fares and investment in infrastructure when they meet with Norman Baker.

Caroline Green

Officers to arrange for collaboration between CCN and District Councils Network and the Board to ensure a consistent local government message on concessionary fares.

Laura Caton

**7 Revenue Support Grant and supporting improved performance and assessment**

Members noted the report.

**8 Membership of Outside Bodies and Feedback from Members**

Members noted the report and agreed that Lead Members would provide nominations for appointments to the Outside Bodies for 2010-11.

**Action**

Officers to seek nominations from Lead Members and notify organisations of new contacts.

Laura Caton /  
Fatima de Abreu

**9 Membership, Terms of Reference and Meeting Dates**

Members noted the report and agreed to consider holding one meeting outside the office as an opportunity to showcase a local authority.

**10 Note of Last Meeting – 22 July 2010**

The note of the last meeting was agreed.

**Date of next meeting: Thursday 18 November 2010, Local Government House**