

Note of Meeting 6 July 2011

Title: Economy & Transport Programme Board

Date and time: 6 July 2011, 5.30pm

Venue: Cornwall Council, County Hall, Truro

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Political Group	Council
Chairman	Peter Box	Labour	Wakefield MDC
Vice Chair	Jim Harker	Conservative	Northamptonshire CC
Deputy Chair	Richard Knowles	Liberal Democrat	Greater Manchester CA / Oldham MBC
Members	Shona Johnstone	Conservative	Cambridgeshire CC
	Kevin Lynes	Conservative	Kent CC
	Mark Dowd	Labour	Merseyside Travel / Sefton C
	Roy Davis	Labour	Luton BC
	Heather Kidd	Liberal Democrat	Shropshire Council
	Philip Atkins	Conservative	Staffordshire CC
	Andrew Carter	Conservative	Leeds City
Apologies	Andrew Cooper (Deputy Chair)	Independent	Kirklees MBC
	Kevin Bentley	Conservative	Essex CC
	Antonia Bance	Labour	Oxford City
	Zulfiqar Ali	Liberal Democrat	Rochdale MBC
Substitutes	Tony Ball	Conservative	Basildon DC
	John Walsh	Conservative	Bolton MBC
	Tony Page	Labour	Reading Council
	Ranjit Banwait	Labour	Derby City
	Isobel McCall	Liberal Democrat	Milton Keynes Council

In attendance: Ian Hughes; Philip Mind; Eamon Lally; Virginia Ponton (LG Group); Kevin Lavery; Tom Flanagan; Sandra Rothwell; Terry Grove White; Nigel Blackler; Cllr Mike Eathorne Gibbons; Cllr Mark Kaczmarek (Cornwall Council); Chris Pomfret (Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP).

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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Cllr Box (Chairman) welcomed members to the meeting.

1 Welcome and introductions

The Chairman welcomed Cornwall Council to present and take as long as necessary in order that LGA Members can learn from Cornwall and share best practice with the rest of the sector.

2 Note of previous meeting 24 May 2011

Members approved the note of the last meeting.

3 Presentation from Cornwall Council and discussion

Kevin Lavery, Chief Executive, Cornwall Council played a DVD which detailed Cornwall's challenges, areas of success and key messages.

He outlined the problems that Cornwall faced. The council was performing poorly, had reputational issues, faced challenges with the transition to unitary council status and with a change in political control in the first unitary elections, a large proportion of councillors were new to local government.

Cornwall Council responded to these problems with good strategic planning and budget management, successful rationalisation of services and contracts, swift and sustainable improvement to service performance, investment in training and development, driving new ways of working with open plan offices and hotdesking including for chief officers and cabinet members and using new technology in practical ways.

Cornwall is keen to deliver a reduced budget successfully and to ensure a reinvestment in order to achieve their ambitious objectives. Cornwall is also keen to achieve a 'double devolution' whereby the council could take a lead on transport or health issues.

Kevin Lavery outlined key areas with which the LG Group could help:

- Rail and road localism – including:
 - the desire for a new rail franchise, secured for the long-term so that the bid winners could improve services for the future
 - removing branch lines from the rail franchise and developing a local light rail solution
 - transport and detruncking roads – how to do in practice rather than in theory, with a particular link to the localism agenda
- EU funds - in particular assistance in moving from a convergence to a transition region
- Best practice for dissemination

- Start-up funding for LEPs – a challenge for Government
- Challenging the level of subsidy compared to Scotland
- Renewable energy – including commercialising renewable energy and assistance with government subsidies and licensing for geothermal energy production.

The Chairman invited Chris Pomfret to talk on the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP.

Chris Pomfret outlined the details of the LEP which comprises 5 members from the public sector and 6 from business.

Cooperation with the council has been exceptionally good and one of the key messages is the importance of partnership. He outlined some challenges including the need for:

- independent resources in order that the LEP can be seen to be independent rather than relying on council resources and therefore being seen to deliver for the council (or any other dominant local industry)
- funds in particular start-up funds
- an independent audit process
- parties to be open to challenge. He acknowledged that despite inevitable conflicts at some point, he felt all sides have so far been welcome and open to challenge.
- joined-up thinking between public sector and business perspectives
- improvements in bids writing – which is an area where the LEP can add expertise and value.

Members then discussed the following with Cornwall Council:

- using the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP, despite its unique geography, as a model for other areas
- how the LEP is engaging with further and higher education providers on skills and sustainable energy issues
- the need for start-up funding, where this will come from, how to go forward and how to secure funding for work programmes, which again highlighted the need to write an impactful business cases and bids
- There was a strong discussion around skills, in particular:
 - the danger of squeezing funding into one-size-fits-all national skills products which may not suit Cornwall
 - ensuring learning and training opportunities are demand-led not supply-driven by providers
 - the importance of retaining skills in the area, especially in the creative industries where graduates are often lost to other parts of the country (though it was acknowledged that improvements in broadband might help this)
 - Cornwall's USP is aiming for carbon neutrality and linking to wider areas such as the marine sector and aviation.

- There was a wide debate on housing including:
 - improving energy efficiency standards
 - how to put funding for social housing to the best use
 - how to link with the LEP on this agenda. Chris Pomfret said that housing should form part of the renewable energy programme and the localism agenda and suggested a bold statement that only energy efficient houses are built.
 - a successful programme of work in Cornwall with colleges on retro-fitting houses to make them more energy efficient.
- adding value to the docks, ship building and fishing industries in Cornwall and promoting quality of life in the area
- challenges around wind farms and the associated pylons necessary, as well as the conflict in creating a living landscape but through sensitive development
- Members questioned the accountability of the LEP to which Chris Pomfret stressed the importance of partnership working, communicating to the public, holding meetings in open forums and instilling public confidence. He said that LEPs should explain what they are doing to elected bodies and ensure councillor representation on the LEP.

The Chairman thanked Cornwall Council for presenting and for hosting a fascinating meeting. Members looked forward to the site visits the next day, 7 July 2011.

Decision

It was agreed that the Board would take these issues forward and report on progress.

Action

- Officers will write up the visit to Cornwall Council and disseminate learning to the rest of the sector.

Officers

4 Supporting Council's Ambition for Local Economic Growth

Decision

Members noted the report and agreed to email any comments to officers to progress.

**Members and
Ian Hughes /
Philip Mind**

5 Economic and skills development funds from Europe

Decision

Members noted the report, agreed to email any comments to officers to progress and asked officers to develop a draft programme.

**Members and
Nick Porter**

6 Oral Feedback from Members

No feedback was noted.

7 Transport Lobbying

Decision

Members noted the paper.

Action

- Officers will progress.

**Eamon
Lally/Charles
Loft**

8 Economy Update

Decision

Members noted the report.

9 Correspondence with Ministers

Decision

Members noted the correspondence.

Provisional date of next meeting: 8 September 2011, LGH