

Item 1

Note of Meeting 17 November 2011

Title: Economy & Transport Programme Board
Date and time: 17 November 2011, 11.00am
Venue: Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Political Group	Council
Chairman	Peter Box CBE	Labour	Wakefield MDC
Vice Chair	Shona Johnstone	Conservative	Cambridgeshire CC
Deputy Chair	Mike Haines	Independent	Teignbridge DC
Deputy Chair	Roger Symonds	Liberal Democrat	Bath and North East Somerset Council
Members	Kevin Lynes	Conservative	Kent CC
	Tony Ball	Conservative	Basildon DC
	Neil Clarke	Conservative	Rushcliffe BC
	Andrew Carter	Conservative	Leeds City
	Martin Tett	Conservative	Buckinghamshire CC
	Mark Dowd OBE	Labour	Merseyside Travel / Sefton C
	Anne Western	Labour	Derbyshire CC
Substitutes	Tony Page	Labour	Reading Council
	Guy Nicholson	Labour	Hackney LB
	Heather Kidd	Liberal Democrat	Shropshire Council
Apologies			
Deputy Chair	Philip Atkins	Conservative	Staffordshire CC
	Richard Knowles	Liberal Democrat	Oldham MBC
	Roy Davis	Labour	Luton BC
	Claire Kober	Labour	Haringey LB
Substitutes	Gillian Brown	Conservative	Arun DC
	Paul Yallop	Conservative	Worthing BC
	Kevin Bentley	Conservative	Essex CC
	Peter Popple	Independent	Scarborough BC

In attendance: Ian Hughes; Philip Mind, Eamon Lally; Charles Loft; Nick Porter, Virginia Ponton (LGA); John Dowie, DfT.

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the Board meeting and invited all to introduce themselves.</p>	
1	Note of the previous meeting	
	<p>In relation to the note of the last meeting, the Chair said that a follow up on Blackpool would be provided at the next meeting. A letter to Lord Dubs has been sent following the road safety item at the last meeting offering to facilitate contact with regional associations.</p> <p>Members highlighted the issue of road damage due to winter weather as well as droughts. The Chair noted that this was discussed at the lead members' meeting.</p>	
2	Local Growth Campaign	
	<p>Ian Hughes updated members on the launch of the Local Growth Campaign and the first town hall meeting which would take place in Leeds. He highlighted the need for clear outcomes and proposed that the January Board meeting could be used to draft a green paper and review the campaign at the mid-way point. The context surrounding the green paper includes the CLG select committee's challenge to councils on growth, notional Government initiatives and the need for a national regeneration strategy, all of which the green paper could address.</p> <p>The Chair added that it is important to clearly articulate that local government does contribute to economic development and has a history of doing so. He urged councils to provide case studies of what the economy would be like without local government's contribution.</p> <p>Members discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the need to be more robust on what 'local' means and who should be involved• LEPs; members expressed concern about local accountability and representation, how partnership working can be successful and members called for outcomes from LEPs in order to address unemployment and growth now• the local growth campaign must ensure it addresses the Local Government Resource Review, business rates and central government regulation and press for more local powers to deliver growth	

- it must also consider workforce, skills and employment opportunities and reflect their interrelation.

Members were asked to write to Ian Hughes with contributions to the first draft of the green paper.

Action

- **Officers to build members' comments into the campaign plan.** **Officers**

3 Transport

The Chair introduced John Dowie, Director, DfT. Ian Hughes introduced the paper and John Dowie set the scene, acknowledging that the devolution debate had raised expectations but was now more silent, which is causing concern in local government. He highlighted the complex environment within which transport sits and assured members that the Government still has aspirations for change. The key areas of focus for change are buses, local major transport schemes, rail and trunk roads, the latter of which admittedly has not seen as great a focus as the other issues. John Dowie appreciated that accountability and transparency processes often cause delays and complications and told members to expect proposals on devolution in early 2012.

He said that Ian Hughes and Eamon Lally have been challenging the DfT on what the implications of devolution would be for local government and on the need to test how a new system might join up and empower authorities to make a difference. He urged members to be patient.

Members discussed the following issues:

- The importance of the link between infrastructure and economic growth was stressed. Members said that congestion on local roads is as important an issue as good bus and train provision. There was concern that this as well as delays in the NPPF might hinder future economic growth and employment.
- Members called for a more coherent and high level approach to how to improve important national roads, whilst also ensuring funding and improvement at a mid/local level.
- On funding, members highlighted that there are various groupings to which funding could be devolved. Cross-subsidy was seen as a good approach to improving infrastructure as a whole.

In response, John Dowie reiterated the complexities of transport issues. He said that a debate is needed on geography and groupings and on how to create a space for ownership of local issues, whilst set within the national context. He noted that a central, top-down system is able to distribute money well to projects which is not possible with a devolved system and that while devolution means that all authorities 'win', the amounts may not be meaningful enough to focus on larger projects. There is a need for a debate on whether both approaches can be achieved, for example through a consortia system.

- Members discussed localism, highlighting that local services would be more attractive if they were coordinated locally. The development of local rail provision could ease road congestion, but it was not clearly on the Government's agenda.
- Members favoured stronger collaboration and trust between local authorities and DfT and voiced concern that ministerial changes cause difficulties and delays and that the DfT are too risk-averse. Competency at local level is questioned and the role of local authorities and their understanding of infrastructure and future proofing are not recognised. Members felt the letter from Norman Baker MP regarding Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act on the enforcement of moving traffic contraventions was weak.

John Dowie said that there is an open door for members to demonstrate an appetite for the powers contained in Part 6 to be enacted.

He assured the Board that ministers are aware of the competency of local authorities for devolution. He appreciated that there are some tensions, adding that local authorities and DfT represented different parts of one system and that effective collaboration is key.

The Chair thanked John Dowie for attending.

Action

- **Officers to continue to work with DfT.**

Officers

4 Adult Skills

Philip Mind introduced the item and asked for the Board's direction in a spectrum of options.

Members highlighted the lack of continuum between school and adulthood, questioned at what age adulthood begins and saw the need for a more holistic approach. Discussions focussed on the role of providers and issues around underemployment:

- There was concern that providers do not assess local needs or current priorities. Members saw an opportunity for providers to work with businesses and LEPs to identify future skills gaps and align education provision to produce future workforces. There is a need for greater accountability and responsibility from providers.
- Support is needed for the underemployed, who are low wage earners but do not qualify for learning support and may not be able to fit learning around work patterns in order to improve their skills and prospects. There is also an issue with the rights of employees on rolling contracts.

Decision

Members agreed the next steps at paragraphs 12, 13 and 14 of the paper.

Action

- **Officers to take forward the next steps and incorporate members' comments.** **Officers**

5 EU funding

Nick introduced the item, outlining that the debate focuses on what local government wants to protect and what it should ask for. A core concern is that the Government favours centralised projects. Nick proposed that the Economy and Transport Programme Board could focus on Whitehall and the European and International Programme Board on the EU and that both boards communicate with each other across the debate.

Decision

Members endorsed and agreed the programme of activity as outlined at paragraphs 10 and 11.

Action

- **Officers to take forward the next steps as agreed.** **Officers**

6 Transport update

Ian Hughes introduced the update paper.

Members discussed:

- the issue of longer lorries and their impact in local areas. Members asked whether the issues with satnavs could be raised again in order, for example, to prevent large vehicles being directed to small local roads. The importance of good signposting in improving driving and navigation was also noted.

- the letter from the Chair to Norman Baker regarding the Traffic Management Act was not appended. Officers will circulate.

Charles Loft updated members on the local sustainable transport fund CoP and asked for members' views on the rail industry's Initial Industry Plan which ORR is consulting on.

Decision

Members noted the update and agreed with the next steps.

Action

- **Officers to take forward the programme of work as agreed. Officers**

7 Youth engagement

Philip Mind outlined that the events for the "Hidden Talents" youth engagement programme have been arranged and the programme is gathering momentum. Members should expect a report in January.

Members said it was important to engage with young people for a purpose and with some hope that consultation will result in outcomes. The Chair asked for authorities to share ideas and members were interested to hear what other authorities are doing and what can proactively be done. The issue of underemployment was raised, especially in rural areas where small companies find it difficult to create apprenticeships.

The Chair said that outcomes will be borne out of the joint work between the Economy and Transport Programme Board and the Children and Young People Programme Board.

Decision

Members noted the report and agreed with the next steps of the programme.

Action

- **Officers to take forward members' comments. Officers**

8 Economy and transport communications update

Ian Hughes outlined the communications update paper.

Decision

Members noted the report.

9 Post Offices

Philip Mind introduced the paper, outlining that the LGA has lobbied for stronger participation with Post Office Limited (POL) and that

they in turn have lobbied for local government to put more council transactions through the post office counters. A positive can be taken from the invitation by POL to 25 local authorities to form a strategic partnership and provide local government views.

The Chair added that members of the Board represented some of the 25 authorities in partnership with POL and asked for members to give direct feedback to the Board.

Members discussed:

- the need to consider urban and rural differences
- concern about whether the compensation packages will keep local branches open and maintain the shop not just the post office branch
- concern that only one rural authority featured on the list of 25 authorities.

The Chair said that the allocation of these 25 authorities to the partnership could be raised with POL.

The Chair thanked all for attending.

Decision

Members noted the report and provided comments.

Action

- **Officers to take forward members' comments for the meeting with Ed Davey MP and the consultation response on mutualising Post Office Ltd.** **Officers**

Date of the next meeting: Thursday 19 January 2012, Local Government House