

Note of Meeting 22 March 2012

Title: Economy & Transport Board

Date and time: 22 March 2012, 11.00am

Venue: Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Political Group	Council
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
	Martin Tett	Conservative	Buckinghamshire CC
	Philip Atkins	Conservative	Staffordshire
	Roy Davis	Labour	Luton BC
Via telephone conference	Richard Knowles	Liberal Democrat	Oldham MBC
Apologies			
Chairman	Peter Box CBE	Labour	Wakefield MDC
	Andrew Carter	Conservative	Leeds City
	Mark Dowd OBE	Labour	Merseyside Travel / Sefton C
	Claire Kober	Labour	Haringey LB
	Anne Western	Labour	Derbyshire CC
Substitutes	Kevin Bentley	Conservative	Essex CC
	Tony Page	Labour	Reading Council
	Guy Nicholson	Labour	Hackney LB
	Heather Kidd	Liberal Democrat	Shropshire Council
	Gillian Brown	Conservative	Arun DC
	Paul Yallop	Conservative	Worthing BC
	Peter Popple	Independent	Scarborough BC

In attendance: Ian Hughes; Philip Mind; Eamon Lally; Charles Loft; Rachael Donaldson; Nick Porter; Virginia Ponton (LGA), Matthew Lugg and Huw Jones, ADEPT

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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Cllr Shona Johnstone chaired the meeting, giving apologies from the Chair, who was meeting with Secretary of State for Communities, Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP in Wakefield. Cllr Johnstone welcomed Cllr Richard Knowles who joined the meeting by phone and sent best wishes to him from the Board. She also welcomed Matthew Lugg, President, ADEPT and Huw Jones, Chairman of Planning and Regeneration Committee, ADEPT and asked them to contribute to the agenda. Cllr Johnstone apologised for having to leave at 12pm.

1 Note of previous meeting

Members confirmed that Cllr Tony Page, not Cllr Tony Ball is the LGA Olympic and Paralympic Games Task and Finish Group. Ian Hughes gave a brief update of the last Task and Finish Group meeting, which discussed transport and business logistics during the Games. As a result, the LGA is working with the British Chambers of Commerce to brief LEPs and businesses on key issues.

2 Transport Devolution LGA/DfT Pilot Work

This item also picked up para. 4 of Item 9. Eamon Lally introduced the item and outlined the key issues discussed with the Secretary of State for Transport, Justine Greening MP in February: devolution, Highways Agency reform; the capacity of local government; the relationship between DfT and local government; potential demonstration projects; and currently emerging findings/learning.

Members discussed:

- some of the case studies further - These are successful projects, not pilots, which highlight the ability to make good decisions locally and support the case for devolution. Members identified potential capacity issues for local authorities and saw the importance of building political and corporate competence and capacity. Resources need to be devolved to underpin.
- the need for a shift in culture of DfT, the Highways Agency and National Rail as well as a change in the relationship between them and local government. Leadership as key in creating change and dealing with reduced resources. Huw Jones, ADEPT, added that partners must establish trust and that it is important to look at how works are costed and delivered on the ground.
- the capacity of local authorities to deal with TMA powers. Members saw a need for capacity building within DfT.
- getting feedback from TAG about the pilot approach detailed in

para. 13.

- the importance of ensuring there are a range of demonstration projects to represent local differences and geographies and avoid one-size-fits-all approaches. Cllr Johnstone highlighted the pressure on demonstration projects to deliver what local government says it can and questioned what opportunities there are to deliver faster than would have been possible before.
- Matthew Lugg, ADEPT, offered his technical support to the Board, including on pilots schemes.

Ian echoed the importance of cultural change, the need to deliver effectively on the ground and make local transport a whole package. It is important to work with DfT and demonstrate barriers as well as what local government can do.

Decision

Members agreed the approach laid out in the report.

Action

- Officers to continue with the next steps, taking into account members' comments and ensuring a clearer outcome is assigned to the programme.

Officers

3 LGA development offer for councils – driving local economic growth

Kamal Panchal introduced the report which captures improvement work across the LGA. Members discussed:

- the need to join up and communicate with all local growth partners to avoid duplication of work; ensure information and best practice is shared; increase the capabilities of local government; and create cultural change.
- the need to work with the private sector and education providers to identify skills gaps and feed this into the education system.
- linking with the Environment and Housing Board on housing as part of growth and a continued link with the Children and Young People Board on Hidden Talents.
- improving peer support so more members and officers can access it
- that paras. 9.5 and 10.4 of the report could be important for the outcomes and positioning of local government in the space of local regeneration partners. This area provides strong links to localism, housing and asset management. Members asked for officers to come back with a thought piece on this area.
- ensuring LGA best practice on finance, includes how to lever more money and consider the rural economy and SMEs.

Cllr Johnstone left at 12 noon. Cllr Roger Symonds chaired the rest of the meeting.

Decision

Members agreed the recommendations.

Action

- Officers to feed members' comments into the development support programme, which will be launched in June at the LGA conference.

Officers

4 ADEPT (Association of Directors of Environment, Planning and Transport)

Matthew Lugg thanked the Board and outlined the pothole review which is set in the context of high profile media coverage, a backlog of maintenance and the ability and willingness for DfT to work differently. The key findings showed a lack of money for maintenance, the need to repair roads properly the first time, shift to a more preventative, proactive and targeted maintenance approach and better asset management. The public need better mechanisms for reporting problems and confidence that they will be addressed. Case studies are included in the report and there is a review panel of broad stakeholders, including the LGA, who they hope will support the report. Matthew invited the Board to make people aware of this work and share the ideas and best practice. He said he could come back and explain how the Highways Maintenance Efficiency programme is progressing.

Members welcomed the report and found the technology and utilities section particularly useful. Discussions focused on:

- the need for a plan of maintenance investment to enable efficiencies and sharing of good practice
- the absence of recommendations for regulators to set obligations on effective workmanship
- difficulties defining standards, for example for utility company maintenance
- the possibility of engaging with regulators and utility companies
- a link to the Traffic Management Act.

Matthew agreed with the importance of articulating the economic benefits of highway maintenance to DfT and said he would take members' comments on board for the report. He said that the Highways Agency can recall in cases where road maintenance does not meet specifications and Huw Jones linked this back to repairing roads properly the first time.

On engaging with the regulators and utility companies, Ian Hughes took members' comments on board and, since there is no single regulatory body for roads, said he would bring a proposal to the next board on how to feed members' comments into road campaigns. Members were keen to ensure their strong messages in this area are considered.

Action

- a proposal to the next Board on how to feed members' comments into road campaigns.

Officers

5 Post Offices

Cllr Mike Haines gave an update on a Post Office/Local Government Strategic Engagement Forum meeting on 8 March, saying that it is positive that the Post Office Limited (POL) are seeking local authority views and looking at new models rather than post office closures. Proposals focus on the need for increased commercial viability. 25 local authorities are engaged and nearly all attended the meeting, along with Westminster City Council and 4 pilot councils who reported back on their engagement so far. The forum is at its early stages but there are some case outlines which provide a new range of models and a rural dimension. Meetings will continue and the group are awaiting the government's models on mutualisation. POL are due to attend the LGA Conference and the pilot outcomes are expected in early autumn.

Members' comments focused on:

- the importance of post office services for rural areas. Members discussed locating services in small local businesses such as farm shops, linking the agenda to rural transport issues as well as impact on the environment from car usage.
- the representation of local authorities by the 25.

Philip Mind said that the list of 25 authorities had been discussed with POL, who were keen to emphasise they are open to other local authority engagement. He echoed that communication between local authorities and POL is positive and that improved commercial viability could happen in part through doing more business with local authorities.

6 Hidden Talents

Philip outlined that the key challenge lies in young people's services being fragmented. The LGA Hidden Talents report has been picked up by the press. He asked members to provide a steer on the activities in paras. 16.1 – 16.2 and in particular engaging government and being more effective in strong partnerships.

Members discussed:

- agreed that fragmentation is the main challenge
- partnership working is crucial, with local government as a key influencer, and real engagement is needed from all partners, including local authorities, education providers, LEPs and businesses
- government must be persuaded through a coherent and evidence-based strategy that local authorities see this work as a priority and can deliver it locally. One challenge to

government could be to change funding for post-19year olds which currently goes directly to education providers.

- the importance of challenging education providers to be forward thinking, to work with businesses and local authorities in identifying skills gaps and to provide appropriate training
- the need to improve careers advice, address the issue of children having to make career choices at a young age and establish that there are different ways of learning and training
- links to the troubled families work
- opportunities to use community budget youth programmes

Philip said he would take on board members' comments for the next steps outlined in paras. 16.1 – 16.5. He said there is scope for a debate with government to discuss strategic issues and highlight local ambition. Building an evidence base is important.

7 High Streets

Ian updated members on the continuing debate since the publication of the Portas Review.

8 Local Growth Campaign

Ian updated members that work is in progress and that new areas of work have been drawn out, with pressure from the sector to focus on these.

9 Transport Update

Members discussed the outside bodies nominations and agreed that these should be reviewed, potentially with one member from the Board being appointed to take an agreed agenda to each outside body meeting and report back.

Cllr Richard Knowles added that information on rail utilisation and the use of different technologies would be helpful.

A review of outside bodies will be taken at a future Board meeting.