

Note of Meeting 25 July 2013

Title: Economy and Transport Board
Date and time: 25 July 2013, 11.00am
Venue: Local Government House

Attendance

Position	Councillor	Political Group	Council
Chairman	Peter Box CBE	Labour	Wakefield MDC
Vice Chair	Tony Ball	Conservative	Basildon DC
Deputy Chair	Roger Symonds	Liberal Democrat	Bath and North East Somerset
Deputy Chair	Mike Haines	Independent	Teignbridge DC
Members	Martin Tett	Conservative	Buckinghamshire CC
	Ann Steward	Conservative	Norfolk CC
	Gillian Brown	Conservative	Arun DC
	Mike Whitby	Conservative	Birmingham City
	Phillip Bicknell	Conservative	Windsor & Maidenhead RB
	Joan Dixon	Labour	Derbyshire CC
	Colin Rosenstiel	Liberal Democrat	Cambridge City
	Heather Kidd	Liberal Democrat	Shropshire Council
Apologies	Andrew Carter	Conservative	Leeds City
	Philip Atkins	Conservative	Staffordshire
	Chris Roberts	Labour	Greenwich LB
	Claire Kober	Labour	Haringey LB
	Barrie Grunewald	Labour	St Helens MBC
	David Wood	Labour	Tyne & Wear ITA
	Tony Page	Labour	Reading Council

In attendance: Ian Hughes; Kamal Panchal; Piali Das Gupta; Rachael Donaldson; Charles Loft; Virginia Ponton (LGA); Graham Richards (ORR).

Item	Decisions and actions	Action by
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The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and noted apologies.

1 Notes of the previous meeting

Decision

The notes of the previous meeting were agreed.

2 Chair’s Report

The Chair highlighted that the local case for parking enforcement was well received by the Transport Select Committee. The Lord Heseltine plenary at the LGA’s Annual Conference had gone very well and the Chair stressed how councils have been demonstrating how they deliver growth and create jobs.

Cllr Tony Ball said that the Canadian guest at the Local Growth Campaign fringe session at Annual Conference had been particularly interesting. Cllr Ball recommended that the Board invite him to meet members when he is next in the UK.

Cllr Mike Haines noted that he had attended the Future High Streets Forum as well as the Centre for Public Scrutiny Annual Conference.

Cllr Roger Symonds urged local authorities to get involved with the Highways Maintenance Efficiency Programme (HMEP), which uses asset management to prevent potholes.

Cllr Heather Kidd said that attending the Local Growth APPG had been a useful opportunity to push local messages, which appeared to have been taken on board.

Action

- Invitation to be sent to the Economic development Agency for Edmonton, Canada to attend a future Board.

Russell Reefer

3 Local Economic Growth – Prioritising future work of the Board

Piali Das Gupta introduced the paper and asked for members’ feedback:

- Members agreed to continue a focus on skills; working with business and providers to ensure courses match local needs; maintaining the link between the Economy and Transport and Children and Young People Boards; and ensure a focus on skills outcomes.
- Members agreed to enlist business and other partners to help articulate to Government how councils deliver growth. Members were frustrated at repeatedly demonstrating councils’ role; case study evidence has been sent and a different approach is now needed to convince Government to trust local government, devolve powers, remove barriers and reduce delays in guidance and funding so that councils can drive growth.

- Members agreed to highlight the difficulties in engaging with the civil service and felt that local government should be more direct with Government, press Government to be more hands-on, to join up departments and hold Whitehall to account.
- There was also concern about the major disconnect between MPs and local government and members felt that they have a responsibility to get closer to their MPs and demonstrate what local authorities are doing.
- On the idea of a local treasury, members wanted to get a wider view from a range of different areas, develop the idea and demonstrate whether it could create savings and benefits.
- There are opportunities for business to benefit from EU Structural Funds but some are unaware of these and others feel the application processes are too cumbersome.
- Members highlighted the importance of local authorities responding to the New Homes Bonus consultation.

Action

- Officers to take on Board members' comments and bring another paper on 2013/14 priorities to the September Board.
- Officers to provide a brief on the detail of the single pot when announced and secure relevant press statements.

**Ian Hughes/Piali
Das Gupta**

4 Transport Update

Charles Loft introduced the item.

Members discussed difficulties for Local Transport Bodies due to last minute changes of criteria by Government and the need for clarity on the transport funding contained in the single pot.

Graham Richards, Deputy Director of Railway Planning and Performance, Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) presented to the Board on ORR's draft determination and engaging with local government, LEPs and passengers. The review of National Rail looks at economic aspects as well as health and safety and asset management. Railway enhancements focus on reducing the reliance on public subsidy, creating a more efficient system and improving transparency and local accountability. ORR wants operators to engage better with National Rail. Members discussed:

- concern over the increases to freight charges and subsequent increases in freight vehicles using roads. There was also an example of freight trains being unable to access entire lines due to low tunnels.
- concern that where operator user charges are set to increase, passenger fares will rise as a result.
- improving track points to be more resilient against weather conditions, in order to decrease disruption.
- how ORR ensures operators deal with increases in capacity and overcrowding.
- whether 92% punctuality of trains is good enough. Members pointed to international evidence of greater train punctuality and asked whether there is any research on how late rush hour trains

affect the UK economy.

- frustration where the rail system is not flexible enough to meet local needs.
- what accountability and duty stations have to ensure they maintain a pleasant environment; litter and graffiti can affect the appearance of a town or high street and affect the local economy.

Graham said that the consultation and decision information on freight charges can be shared with members and that Network Rail are taking the opportunity to carry out improvement works, for example for freight access, at the same time as other planned works.

On punctuality, he said that this is a key issue for Passenger Focus but that evidence points to passenger satisfaction only diminishing at a certain percentage point, i.e. lower than 92%. Network Rail build their plans around DfT's capacity metrics and ORR check the feasibility of these. ORR can impose sanctions for poor performance such as fines or recovery plans for non-delivery and licence breaches.

ORR's environmental focus tends towards carbon reduction but Graham understood that the focus on station environment could be stronger. He urged members to send any examples of issues or good practice.

The Chair thanked Graham for an interesting discussion.

Action

- Email to be sent to members on the review of the Local Transport Act 2008.
- Item to be added to the September Board to discuss the reform of the Highways Agency.
- Information on increased freight charges; performance; and overcrowding on trains to be circulated to members.
- Members' comments to be sent to Graham Richards at ORR.

Charles Loft

**Eamon Lally /
Charles Loft
Virginia Ponton**

Virginia Ponton

5 Supporting councils to deliver growth

Kamal Panchal introduced the item and welcomed Brian Reynolds, Head of Productivity, LGA.

Brian asked members' for feedback on the growth support offer to councils, in particular the new Economic Growth Adviser programme. The programme is open for bids for funding and he urged local authorities to take part. The programme covers all regions and types of authorities and can assist councils which already have firm ideas or those who are at an earlier stage.

The Chair asked how the programme links to local partnerships and alliances especially with businesses and whether these partners could act as wider advocates of local government and the work the sector is doing to promote growth.

Members praised the peer challenge offer, which provides an invaluable objective view for local authorities as well as giving peers good practice and challenges to take back to their own authorities.

Brian said that there is a diverse group of advisors, including from the Federation of Small Businesses and the National Park Authority, for a rural dimension. He took the comments on board to feed into the programme.

Ian Hughes said that officers are also in dialogue with the British Chambers of Commerce to see how to link with them and potentially involve them in peer challenges.

The Chair thanked Brian for attending.

Action

- Officers to take on board members' comments.

**Brian Reynolds /
Kamal Panchal**

6 Annual Review of the Year

The Chair highlighted the Annual Review of the Year which provided a good reflection for the Board and which had been well received by the LGA Executive.

The Chair closed the meeting.