

## Note of last Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board meeting

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**Title:** Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board  
**Date:** Tuesday 2 December 2014  
**Venue:** Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>  The Chair opened the meeting with introductions and noted the apologies which had been received.  No declarations of interest were made.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Chair's Report</b>  The Chair introduced the report, which was for information, without further comment. The report summarised work undertaken by the Chair, Lead Members and the Board since the previous meeting.  <b>Decision</b>  The Board noted the report.	
<b>3</b>	<b>The Lyons Housing Review</b>  The Chair introduced Sir Michael Lyons, who had been invited to address the Board following publication of his recent housing review. The review placed councils at the centre of supporting good quality and sustainable housing development, and supported the LGA's proposals for a reform of the Right to Buy, locally set planning fees, broader compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers and powers to incentivise sites with planning permission to be built on.  Sir Michael explained the housing issues which he had identified as part of his review, which included making more land available for development, making sure communities get the homes they wanted and where they needed them, gaining a wider range of commissioners and builders, investment in infrastructure, building affordable homes and securing investment for both housing and infrastructure.  Councils would have a key role as developers for communities alongside	

the private sector, and identify and lead housing growth areas. The Board noted that the review had recommended that the Right to Buy should be reviewed to assess if it was meeting policy objectives, and also that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) borrowing cap should not be lifted. Sir Michael highlighted that the Treasury should consider using existing borrowing more effectively and extending individual borrowing caps on a case by case basis within the overall borrowing envelope.

Sir Michael also highlighted the announcement that Bicester in Oxfordshire had been chosen as the site for a second new garden city by the government. Up to 13,000 new homes would be built there, and a pilot project was already underway at Northstowe, a former RAF base in Cambridgeshire, with the capacity for 10,000 homes.

In the discussion that followed Sir Michael's presentation the Board made a number of comments, including:

- Borrowing for housing was a prudent investment.
- More housing powers should be devolved to growth deal areas.
- Small scale urban extensions would create pressure without additional funding for infrastructure to support new housing developments. There was a shortfall in funding available locally for infrastructure. Sir Michael highlighted that planning for small or large scale urban extensions should aim to take advantage of existing infrastructure.
- Local authorities would need to find a balance between 'Right to Grow' and green belt land.
- Many compulsory purchase order (CPO) powers were out of date and contradictory and therefore required modernisation. Sir Michael highlighted that the Law Commission had stated that CPOs were out of date over ten years ago and should be reviewed.

The Board thanked Sir Michael for his informative presentation. Cllr Keith House also commented that the review of local authorities' role in housing supply, which he and Natalie Elphicke (Chair of Million Homes, Million Lives) were leading was due to be published later in December 2014.

### **Decision**

The Board noted the report and agreed that the LGA's present housing policy should be developed following publication of the Lyons Housing Review and the review of local authorities' role in housing supply (due to be published later in December 2014).

## **4 Transport and Funding Devolution**

The Chair introduced a report which included a number of areas for

discussion on funding devolution for transport and updated the Board on progress with the agreed priorities which included roads reform, bus reform, active travel and winter weather resilience.

Kamal Panchal, Senior Advisor, highlighted that in 2010 there had been a welcome consolidation of capital funding for local transport. The delivery of funding through the Local Growth Fund (LGF) had led to unpredictable outcomes at local level. Concerns highlighted by councilshad included:

- All funding for local authority major transport schemes and local sustainable schemes up to 2020/21 would only be included within the Local Growth Fund.
- The LGF process had increased demand on the workload of local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).
- The emphasis on capital spend had skewed capital priorities.
- Councils should have had greater involvement in the negotiation process, and were often unclear as to why particular projects had not received capital investment.

The Board noted that the LGA had formally responded to a consultation on future highways maintenance allocation. They had reiterated concerns expressed by councils that funding should be allocated on a basis which gave maximum certainty at local level, further resources to tackle the backlog of road repairs, and asking that the government have a shared responsibility for funding emergency repairs.

In response to the recent Cycling Delivery Plan discussion paper, the LGA had proposed to the government that it should follow the lead of councils in adopting a more cross-departmental approach to active travel.

The Chair highlighted that an announcement on roads investment had been made by the Secretary of State for Transport on the previous day. The government would be investing £15 billion in 100 new major road schemes over the current and next parliaments. The Board agreed that councils, in conjunction with Local Enterprise Partnerships, should request to be consulted on how this investment would be spent.

In the discussion which followed, members made a number of comments, including:

- Transport was essential for devolution, and this had been shown in city deal negotiations.
- There should be consideration given to the different nature of transport needs in urban and rural areas. LGA policy on transport devolution should consider all varieties of area.
- There should be more work done on community transport, especially in rural areas where elderly people could easily become isolated without regular bus services, as they were often unable to

walk long distances or cycle.

- The NHS had a role in provision of community transport, specifically regarding non-emergency patient transport.
- Devolved transport powers, such as those devolved to Transport for London, and Oyster card style schemes in city regions should be strongly encouraged.

The Chair confirmed that a meeting with John Hayes MP, Department for Transport minister, had been offered to discuss local transport issues including the relationship with the strategic roads network.

The Board also agreed that a new Task and Finish Group on Community Transport, allied to the work on buses, should be formed.

### **Decision**

Members noted the report.

The Department for Transport should consult councils, in conjunction with LEPs, regarding investment in major new road schemes.

A Task and Finish Group on Community Transport to be formed. Members to include Cllr Deborah Croney and Cllr James Lewis.

The Chair / Lead Members to meet with John Hayes MP (Department for Transport) to discuss local transport issues, including relationship with the strategic roads network.

### **Action**

Cllr Roger Symonds, Cllr Deborah Croney, Cllr Julian German and Cllr Brenda Arthur to be appointed to the Task and Finish Group on Active Travel.

Political Groups to make appointments to Task and Finish Group on Community Transport and first meeting to be arranged.

## **5 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Members agreed the notes of the meeting held on 2 October 2014 as correct.

### **Action**

Lead members to consider a focus on Economy and Environment matters for the next meeting

Notes of the most recent WRAP meetings to be circulated to Board members.

**Appendix A -Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Peter Box CBE	Wakefield Metropolitan District Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Mike Jones	Cheshire West and Chester Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr John Northcott	Mole Valley District Council
Members	Cllr Brenda Arthur	Norwich City Council
	Cllr / Dr Joan Dixon	Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr James Lewis	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Timothy Moore	Liverpool City Council
	Cllr Tony Newman	Croydon Council
	Cllr Ed Turner	Oxford City Council
	Cllr Deborah Croney	North Dorset District Council
	Cllr Jim Harker OBE	Northamptonshire County Council
	Cllr Steve Count	Cambridgeshire County Council
	Cllr Ann Steward	Breckland Council
	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Geoffrey Theobald OBE	Brighton & Hove City Council
	Cllr Keith House	Hampshire County Council
	Cllr Roger Symonds	Bath & North East Somerset Council
	Cllr Julian German	Cornwall Council
Apologies		
In Attendance		
LGA Officers		