

17 March 2017

Update on Other Board Business

Purpose of report

For information and comment.

Summary

Members to note the following updates:

- Ministerial meeting with the Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey MP
- Northern Energy Task Force
- Bus Services Bill
- Congestion and Air Quality

Recommendations

Members of the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board are asked to:

1. **Note** the updates contained in the report.
2. **Provide oral updates** on any external meetings they may have attended on behalf of the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board since the last meeting.
3. **Propose** good practice examples in tackling congestion from their own councils for consideration for inclusion in this work.

Action

As directed by members.

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Update on Other Board Business

Ministerial meeting with the Rt Hon Dr Thérèse Coffey MP

1. Cllr Tett met with the Rt Hon Thérèse Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Life Opportunities following a previous meeting in November. The meeting was focussed on discussion of urban recycling rates and how they can be improved. Cllr Tett and the Minister also discussed issues raised by Board members in preparation for the meeting. Further meetings between Cllr Tett and the Minister are planned for the coming year.

Northern Energy Task Force

2. The Northern Energy Task force has been established to oversee an ambitious programme of work over the next 18 months that will develop an energy strategy for the Northern Powerhouse. This project is supported by IPPR (Institute of Public Policy Research) staff in a research and secretariat capacity. They have identified local authorities as being key to implementing a Northern energy strategy and have contacted the LGA to discuss their research further.
3. Cllr Judith Blake has been put in contact with the project lead at the IPPR to discuss their research on the challenges and opportunities facing the sector in the North of England.

Bus Services Bill

4. The Bus Services Bill had its Second Reading in the House of Commons on Wednesday 1 March and will now pass to Committee Stage in the House of Commons. The Bill introduces much needed improvements to simplify and make franchising more accessible, strengthening partnership opportunities and new requirements on open data. Several MPs spoke about the importance of ensuring the Bill helped local areas to improve passengers' journeys and better integrate local transport schemes. Transport Secretary Chris Grayling firmly indicated the Government would look to amend the Bill in the House of Commons to ensure automatic franchising is only extended to Mayoral combined authorities, and prevent new municipal bus companies from being formed. It is imperative the Bus Services Bill progresses in the House of Commons, and becomes an Act of Parliament. The LGA has published a [briefing](#) which offers a way forward for all councils on bus franchising, acknowledging the Government's policy.
5. Where it is appropriate, some local areas may wish to bid for bus franchising powers to improve local transport services. Mayoral combined authorities should have automatic and immediate access to these powers. We want to ensure that all Government decisions on franchising for other areas are transparent, timely and achievable. The LGA will be working with the Department for Transport (DfT) to ensure the secondary legislation is clear about the process for accessing franchising powers, in order to secure the best deal for all councils, including those in non-mayoral combined authority areas.

6. The LGA intends to submit written evidence to the Public Bill Committee inquiry. The Bill Committee will probably begin next week and will conclude on Tuesday 21 March. The Bill will move to Report Stage and Final reading at the end of March. Based on these dates we anticipate Royal Assent likely to be mid-April in order for the powers to be available for the new Combined Authority Mayors to access when they are elected in May.

Tackling congestion

7. Congestion is repeatedly cited by councils as a key concern. The DfT is forecasting up to 55 per cent increase in traffic and by 86 per cent in congestion levels by 2040. The British Social Attitudes Survey has revealed that concern about congestion has risen significantly. The percentage of people seeing congestion in towns and cities as a serious or very serious problem rising from a low of 39 per cent in 2012 to 55 per cent in the latest survey. The specialist traffic data company INRIX also estimates the cumulative cost of jams across the UK will hit £61.8 billion by 2025.
8. Relatively simple changes could make a large difference as TomTom Traffic Vice President, Ralph-Peter Schaefer, said “If only 5 per cent of us changed our travel plans, we could improve traffic congestion on our main roads by up to 30 per cent.” Therefore the LGA has focussed on how the further roll out of existing powers and relatively small scale interventions could improve the situation.
9. This issue has received more attention in the press and amongst policymakers over the last year. In the last few months the London Assembly and the Transport Select Committee have both undertaken investigations into congestion. The LGA submitted evidence to the Transport select committee and we await their conclusions.
10. The media has also increasingly reported on the links between rising traffic congestion and the 40,000 deaths annually that are linked to air pollution.
11. The Secretary of State for Transport Chris Grayling has repeatedly signalled his desire to tackle congestion. In October whilst setting out his department’s priorities he said “On the roads our focus should be congestion busting for both the public and business users”. In November in a speech to the County Council Network he stated that “in some cases, devolution will be part of the solution” to congestion.
12. The LGA has well established policy positions aimed at combating congestion:
 - 12.1 Highways England should mitigate the impact of their road improvement programme on local networks.
 - 12.2 Local authorities transport budgets should enjoy the same long term funding certainty that Highways England and Network Rail are given by the Government.
 - 12.3 The sector would benefit from considerable simplification of the transport funding regime.
 - 12.4 All local authorities should have access to the full range of powers to manage streetworks including lane rental.

- 12.5 All authorities should be able to use powers to introduce the work placed parking levy which has been successful in Nottingham.
- 12.6 The Government should pass the necessary secondary legislation that would give all authorities to power to enforce traffic offenses.
13. All of these asks have formed part of our submissions to Government consultations, our press work and other opportunities presented to influence Government policy and support for local action. However, presenting them as a package and combined solution, together with a range of examples of existing local authority best practice, to the problem of congestion will help:
- 13.1 increase the impact of our work to influence Government policy and support for local action, such as national reviews on tackling air quality and streetworks.
- 13.2 serve as a practical good practice guide to tackling congestion to council leaders.
- 13.3 provide a foundation of evidence to support LGA work to influence government policy on legislative reviews, such as tackling air quality, post the enactment of the Great Repeal Bill, in relation to Article 50.
14. LGA officers have started to put out a sector wide call for best practice to illustrate what can be done to curb congestion. We will be producing a best practise guide to showcase the work that councils have already been doing to curb congestion. This guide will be a practical resource to show councils what steps can be taken using the powers they already have.
15. An update on this project will be brought to the May board meeting. Officers will also seek high impact media opportunities to promote key messages from this work as well as a Ministerial meeting.