

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

Title: Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board
Date: Tuesday 19 May 2020
Venue: Westminster Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
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1 Declarations of Interest

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

No apologies had been received and there were no declarations of interest.

The Chairman outlined the key purpose of the Board meeting - to help develop LGA policy and instruct LGA officers on how to proceed, as the country entered the next phase of lockdown.

2 Decarbonisation of Transport

Kamal Panchal (Senior Policy Officer, LGA) updated members on recent work being carried out on its behalf by the University of Leeds and outlined details of the Government's scoping paper which set out the parameters under which it would develop its plan to decarbonise transport. and brought the previous work of the LGA into focus.

The Chair introduced guest speakers Professor Jillian Anable and Professor Greg Marsden, Institute for Transport Studies (IST), University of Leeds.

Members received a presentation updating them on current transport patterns under the pandemic; on the work done so far on addressing the climate emergency and mapping transport approaches and priorities. The latter included discussion on approaches under 'achieve-shift-improve'; where 'avoid' is about measures to reduce car use; 'shift' is about encouraging change from car travel to less carbon intensive travel, such as cycling, walking and public transport, and 'improve' is about where you cannot do 'avoid' or 'shift' then measures to reduce carbon emissions are considered, such as electric vehicles.

Key points noted were:

- More work was needed to tackle limited understanding of how to set targets by local authorities; this includes both the process of setting climate change targets and specific targets for transport emissions. t;
- Looking at overall opportunities to achieving carbon reductions from transport from workshop participants, the balance was 26% in favour of 'avoid' measures. 44% in favour of 'shift' measures and 30% in favour of improve.
- Future advice needs to contain a diversity of opportunity to reflect different local circumstances and focus on positive messages about what councils can get on with.

Professor Marsden stated that his team were predominately looking for a steer - both at a local and central level – of the levels of ambition at these levels. Members noted gaps in terms of ambition for both. He also referred to current travel patterns under the pandemic and future anticipated effects. An economic recession was anticipated which historically led to falls in road travel and a downward pressure on car use, although he stated that upward pressures around social distancing and use of public transport might initially lead to greater car use.

Members heard about changes being made to road space in order to enable alternatives to the use of public transport. Key issues for consideration were:

- Statistically, 2/3 of journeys were under 5 miles in length but only making up 18% of total mileage therefore more would need to be done with other car journey, beyond short trips, to make a significant impact on carbon output;
- As social distancing restrictions persist for office work, there may now be much greater opportunity to reduce commuting and business travel for an extended period and for much of this to stick in the long-term. The sale of SUVs would be also driving up emissions; in 2018, SUVs accounted for 21.3% of new passenger car sales in the UK compared to just 13.5% in 2015
- In order to reach net-zero emission targets, there needs to be longer-term commitment to public transport;
- Public funding should be used to stimulate different measures and towards maintenance and sustainable modes and home working;
- There needs to be greater clarity and understanding on the role of local authorities in freight carbonisation by national and local government.

The Chair invited questions and comments from the Board. Members made the following points:

- Specific differences between rural and urban areas were

highlighted - the LGA needed to look at the analysis around drawing on different transport choices;

- Covid19 would have long term effects on travel and a massive increase in homeworking and investment in technology. Was there any analysis on the impact of a reduction in commuting?
- Were there any views on how the drop off in fuel duty would affect local authorities?
- Looking at evidence from other countries and differences in social distancing rules, the extent of future homeworking and the provision of parking spaces needed to be quantified. The contents of the paper had been overtaken by events.
- The Covid-19 crisis represented a golden opportunity to reshape transport policy. The LGA needed to push forward the bus strategy and should also look at coordinating of equipment such as road signs etc;
- Concerns were raised about isolation in particular for residents of rural areas;
- Sharing of best practice was considered to be vital and members suggested a role for the LGA in pulling this together.
- Prior to lockdown, there was already a decline in bus use. Had any research been carried out into the reasons for this?
- Concerns were expressed about large old buses running half empty and the duty of local authorities to support those people who couldn't work from home.
- Provision of smaller sustainable buses and smart ticketing outside of London should be considered.
- The findings of the report echoed what councils needed to do and support needed to be given to colleagues in order to develop a more pragmatic approach both socially and financially. Consideration to developing of a cohesive framework that worked across the whole of the UK was needed.

Professor Marsden agreed that the cost of decarbonisation was very different in different parts of the country. He pointed out that bus numbers were declining, perhaps as a cost issue. Motoring had been getting cheaper whereas the cost of public transport had been increasing. He referred to social distancing and medical advice and guidance referring to enclosed spaces. He agreed that it would be difficult to convince people that public transport was safe and that there was therefore a need to commit public funding for the longer term as this would not be resolved quickly.

Professor Anable spoke about the work that Leeds University were involved with in researching the legacy impacts from COVID 19, including attitudes to motor transport and social distancing. In relation to buses – particularly in rural areas - there was potential for public transport to become one of the safest environments by which to travel. For example,

smart ticketing could include tracing apps. It was vital that that scope for working from home was properly examined – she felt it could be as many as 50 per cent of jobs.

The Chairman thanked Professors Marsden and Anable for stimulating an interesting debate and said that it should help enable both the LGA to develop its policies on decarbonising transport as well as practical advice to councils.

Decision

Members of the Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board:

- endorsed the recommendations made in paragraphs 19 to 29 of the report
- noted that the work programme may need to be further reviewed and developed.

3 EEHT Key issues paper

Eamon Lally, Principal Policy Adviser, gave members a brief overview of the various key issues set out in the paper. He then invited his colleagues to highlight specific points from their areas of work:

Housing and planning: Jo Allchurch reported that in addition to the information in the report:

- There was positive news on flexibility around publicity for planning applications. This was currently only temporary but that the LGA was lobbying for it to be made permanent.
- virtual hearings and submissions were going ahead, and plans were being made publicly available online.
- There needed to be local discretion around planned flexibilities on construction working hours.

Members then raised the following points:

- There was not capacity for local authorities to house evicted people – a further period of extension of protection should be sought.
- House builders would need public money to get the industry moving. There was potentially an opportunity for training/retraining and apprenticeships. Quality of builds needed to be fit for the future and not just to get economy moving.
- Could quick wins and lobbying positions be pushed through by the LGA?
- Local authorities needed to be really proactive in protecting high streets and local people during the recovery.
- Planning processes needed to be sped up. There was a need for more flexibility about revised use of office space with more people working

from home.

Homelessness: Priya Thethi, (Adviser LGA) summarised the key issues in the report around the Everyone In cohort.

Members then raised the following points:

- Experiences had generally been positive but there were situations where individuals' behaviour had been unacceptable or people had chosen not to engage.
- Problems around buy-to-let properties and paying for rehabilitation were cited. It was suggested that intervention in the market-place was needed in order to avoid even greater homelessness.

Environment: Hilary Tanner introduced the report summarising key issues

Members raised the following points:

- Members spoke about best practice examples – including appointment systems for waste centres and tips. It was recommended that this be shared via the LGA's Chief Executive bulletin.
- Members pointed out that now was a good opportunity to seize the opportunity and embed climate change issues in councils' work. Work was needed to continue encouraging carbon target work on top of immediate environment issues.

Transport: Andrew Jones, Adviser LGA, updated the Board on the release of the funding formula from the Department for Transport, and the need for them to make processes quicker.

Members asked whether London was eligible. Andrew confirmed that this had not yet been resolved. London Councils were pushing for clarity, but the assumption was that they would not be.

Concern was expressed by members about the difficulties in responding to the Government's 5pm briefings. They asked for consensus and structure to the responses. Eamon agreed to take this issue forward with senior management in the LGA.

Economy: Eamon introduced this section of the report

The Chairman noted that economic recovery would be a significant focus of work for the Board

Members raised the following points:

- That key infrastructure projects that were in the pipeline and needed to be unlocked.
- There were concerns about the shift of risk on infrastructure projects to councils.

Members noted the latest letter from the Chairman of the LGA to MHCLG.

Decision

Members of the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board noted the key issues report.

4 LGA Headline Work and Key Asks

In conjunction with the discussion on agenda item 3, the key points from the LGA's latest Headline Work and Key Asks paper in relation to the work of the Board were highlighted and noted.

Decision

Members of the Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board noted the LGA Headline Work and Key Asks document.

5 EEHT Board Priorities and Work Programme

Eamon Lally introduced the proposed EEHT Board priorities and work programme up until December 2020 and asked members for feedback.

The following points were raised:

- Clearer points on timescales for climate change were requested.
- A strong focus on local economies and the high street.
- Covid-related work and lobbying should take priority on the work programme.

Decision

Members of the Environment, Economy, Housing & Transport Board agreed the updated priorities and work programme, subject to the comments above.

6 Minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 February 2020 were approved.

7 Any Other Business

There was no other business and the meeting was closed.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr David Renard	Swindon Borough Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Darren Rodwell	Barking and Dagenham London Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Adele Morris	Southwark Council
	Cllr Linda Gillham	Runnymede Borough Council
Members	Cllr Peter Butlin	Warwickshire County Council
	Cllr Mark Crane	Selby District Council
	Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Patrick Nicholson	Plymouth City Council
	Cllr Nicholas Rushton	Leicestershire County Council
	Cllr Linda Taylor	Cornwall Council
	Cllr Amanda Serjeant	Chesterfield Borough Council
	Mayor Philip Glanville	Hackney London Borough Council
	Cllr Ed Turner	Oxford City Council
	Cllr Rachel Blake	Tower Hamlets Council
	Cllr Michael Mordey	Sunderland City Council
	Cllr Christopher Hammond	Southampton City Council
	Cllr Peter Thornton	Cumbria County Council
	Cllr David Beaman	Waverley Borough Council
Apologies		
In Attendance	Professor Jillian Anable	University of Leeds
	Professor Greg Marsden	University of Leeds