

QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS - EDDINGTON

Governance

- Can local authorities work effectively in partnership to deliver transport outcomes or are new/reformed institutions necessary?
- What are the key behaviours required of local authorities to work in such partnerships? Would new institutional or contractual arrangements be needed to support them?
- Do the issues not considered by Eddington – particularly the potential benefits of aligning transport with other policy powers – alter the best overall design for governance arrangements?
- How could local government make use of any new bus powers in line with its broader role in promoting economic development?

Local authorities can and are successfully developing and delivering improvements in partnership.

The conflicts of interest, at a local, sub-regional or inter-regional level, will exist whatever administrative arrangements are put in place, and we need to work together within current and established frameworks, rather than waste time developing new ones. Existing regional assemblies should be able to provide the necessary arrangements to support the work to develop new transport outcomes, although it will need support at a national level, primarily through DfT.

The need for alignment with other policy areas is a long-standing and important one, but it should be possible within existing governance arrangements to ensure that the need to secure sustainable transport solutions that facilitate economic development is addressed properly.

The role of bus franchising needs to be considered in the three cities sub-area, especially in relation to any TIF funded improvements allied to road pricing, the revenue from which could be ploughed back in part to bus service support. The current TIF study for the area will seek to address this issue.

Funding

- How could current funding arrangements best be reformed to support cost effective and appropriate spending and investment decisions at sub-national level?
- What transport funding sources are most appropriately managed by local bodies? What would be the most appropriate incentives to encourage the adoption of demand management options at a local level?
- Local authorities currently retain the revenues from local road pricing schemes. How might further developments in this area affect the use of those revenues?

Existing funding arrangements through LTPs and the RFA are satisfactory, although the absolute levels of funding are inadequate to address the overarching outcomes within the Shared Priority for Transport.

TIF capital funding, alongside commitment to more robust demand restraint, will help to address this shortfall. Existing local authorities are best placed to manage local transport budgets, although consideration will need to be given to a sub-regional body if any form of bus franchising or other support is adopted as part of a TIF funded transport strategy delivery programme.

Government needs to start to actively and publicly support those local authorities who are investigating the role of robust demand restraint to local in the benefits of transport capital investment, as part of a balanced strategy. The retention of locally raised revenue through demand restraint is essential if we are to achieve public support for a strategy that includes the levels of demand restraint needed to lock in the benefits of investment.

QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS - BARKER

Governance

- What specific measures are needed to ensure that local planning authorities have appropriate flexibility over issues of solely local impact? Are there particular implications from the Review's recommendations on the use of green belt land?
- What different approaches could be taken to enable strategic decisions to be taken at an appropriate spatial level? Can local authorities work effectively in partnership across wider areas to do this or are new/reformed institutions necessary?
- What role should local authorities have in relation to a future independent Planning Commission, and how should they best work with local communities on their concerns and potential benefits?

We would generally support practical ideas to further reform plan making at local level so that plans can be delivered more rapidly. Specifically we agree that requirements for sustainability appraisal should be reviewed to ensure these are proportionate. In particular SA requirements could be relaxed for supplementary planning documents that do not introduce new development plan policy. Further consideration needs to be given to the issues and option stage, which perhaps should be condensed rather than scrapped altogether. There is also a need to introduce more flexibility into the later stages of the process, so that sensible changes can be introduced without having to revisit earlier stages.

The proposals for clearer statements of national policy and for an independent Planning Commission would have the benefit of speeding up key decisions on infrastructure of national importance. On the other hand this works against the general principle of devolving powers locally and could impose solutions which conflict with local policies and priorities.

The need for additional land releases in sustainable locations is supported, but there are concerns about the way the proposals to relax green belts have been presented and received. Green belts are already subject to review through the planning process. It is important that any changes to designations do not have an adverse impact on urban regeneration.

There are concerns over the proposal to relax the current requirement for off-centre retail schemes to demonstrate 'need'. This will inevitably lead to additional pressure for out of centre retail and eventually to adverse impact on town centres. It is very difficult for local authorities to prove that out of centre proposals will not have an adverse impact, particularly as the effects are often cumulative and occur over a long period of time.

Funding

- What would be the most effective and practical means of creating incentives for local authorities to support appropriate growth?
- How should the empty property relief in business rates be reformed? How should a charge on vacant and derelict brownfield land be introduced into the existing local land and property tax system? Would any local flexibility on such measures be desirable?

The recommendation to Government, in the context of Lyons, to consider fiscal incentives for the reuse of empty properties and the use of vacant or derelict land, is strongly supported. We would also support the recommendation that local authorities should have better incentives to support economic growth by sharing in its benefits.

The planning system is already heavily weighted in favour of approving development, subject to the provisions of the development plan, with about 90% of all applications approved. The proposal that there should be a presumption in favour of approval in cases where the development plan is 'indeterminate' is unnecessary, will not add any certainty and could result in some poor decisions being made.

QUESTIONS FOR STAKEHOLDERS - LEITCH

Governance

- With their new strategic leadership role, how can local authorities relate most effectively to a reformed Learning and Skills Council on 14-19 education issues? What are the merits of the different options for managing the division of these responsibilities?

Funding

- What implications for local authority funding do the Leitch recommendations or related proposals have?

More detail is needed on the role and responsibilities of the proposed Employment and Skills Board, as proposed in the recent Local Government White Paper.

Any new Commission for Education and Skills and local Employment and Skills Boards must support LSPs and Local Learning Partnerships (and not just through aligning funding to Local Area Agreements). There must be clarity about respective roles and responsibilities to avoid confusion.