

WEST YORKSHIRE PASSENGER TRANSPORT AUTHORITY

AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

DATE: 28 NOVEMBER 2006

AGENDA ITEM NO: **11**

SUBJECT: LOCAL GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER

Report of the Passenger Transport Executive

1. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

1.1. The recently published Local Government White Paper.

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1. The Local Government White Paper (Strong and Prosperous Communities) was published on 26 October 2006. The White Paper is available from the PTA office and from the internet (www.communities.gov.uk/).
- 2.2. Ruth Kelly (Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government) said that the proposals 'aim to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives'.
- 2.3. The paper contains a number of proposals to strengthen involvement at a local area and neighbourhood level and seeks to strengthen the role of local councillors which should be 'champions for their local community'.
- A core proposal is to strengthen leadership and accountability of local authorities. The White Paper proposes that every council will have to choose one of the following models:
 - a directly elected mayor;
 - a directly elected executive of councillors;
 - a leader elected by their fellow-councillors with a clear four year mandate.
- 2.4. In every case the leadership term will be four years (at present Leaders can change whenever there are local elections which is every 1-2 years).
- 2.5. Two-tier authorities (such as North Yorkshire) will be invited to seek unitary status although this will not be mandatory.

- 2.6. There has been debate in government about the role of City Regions (such as the Leeds City region which includes West Yorkshire, York, Barnsley, Selby, Harrogate and Craven districts). Some ministers such as Ruth Kelly favour the City Region model whilst others, such as John Healy (Treasury Minister), appear to be more cautious.
- 2.7. The White Paper makes no firm proposals for City regions, but refers to developing 'Multi-Area Agreements' which cross local authority boundaries. Government will encourage stronger leadership models for City Regions including mayors or directly elected executives where such arrangements are supported locally.
- 2.8. There is a significant omission in that the White Paper discusses powers for local authorities but not funding, which is the subject of the review being conducted by Sir Michael Lyons. There is also a feeling that the paper focuses on governance arrangements more than significantly reversing the trend of more central Government control.

Implications for PTAs and PTEs

- 2.9. The White Paper states that the Department for Transport (DfT) will propose 'a package of reforms for PTAs and PTEs to strengthen leadership' and enable a more coherent approach to transport in our biggest cities.
- 2.10. The White Paper suggests that powers will be devolved to local authorities across the country to ensure that communities have the bus services they need. It is expected that this aspiration will be reflected in the current review of the policy framework for local bus services.

Proposals in the Queen's Speech

- 2.11. The Queens Speech included reference to a bill to provide for reform of Local Government in addition to a draft bill to tackle road congestion and to improve public transport. This latter bill includes proposals to reform Passenger Transport Authorities and Executives to enable a more coherent approach in major English cities. As indicated in the Local Government White Paper, this will include more powerful local authority representation on the Passenger Transport Authorities. A press statement is included as Appendix 1.

3. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. None as a result of this report.

4. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. None as a result of this report.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. None as a result of this report.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1. That the report be noted.
- 6.2. That the Audit and Governance Committee further considers the implications for PTA/PTEs as a result of the proposed changes.

**Clerk and Chief Financial Officer
West Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority**

Draft Road Transport Bill proposed in Queen's Speech

Date: Wed, 15 Nov 06

Type: Government Press Release

Analysis

The Prime Minister's Office has announced details of the draft Road Transport Bill that was proposed today in the Queen's Speech.

The draft Road Transport Bill aims to cut congestion and improve public transport through sustained investment, better management of the existing network and looking into developing a national scheme for road pricing.

The draft Bill would: update the existing powers that allow the development of road pricing pilot schemes; enable local authorities to improve the standard of bus services in their areas; and reform Passenger Transport Authorities and Executives to enable a more coherent approach in major English cities.

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BACKGROUND NOTE ROAD TRANSPORT BILL (DRAFT)

"A draft Bill will be published to tackle road congestion and to improve public transport."

The draft Road Transport Bill, to be published next year, would support the Government's efforts to cut congestion and improve public transport, particularly in the major cities outside London.

In a strong and growing economy, people want to travel more. In the absence of further action, congestion could increase by 25 per cent by 2015; two thirds of that congestion would be in major towns and cities. This presents a threat to future economic growth, the environment and quality of life.

The Government's strategy for tackling congestion is based on three elements. First, sustained investment, adding road capacity where appropriate; second, making the most of the existing network through better management; and third, exploring the scope for developing a national scheme for road pricing.

Alongside this, the Government has announced that up to £200 million per annum will be made available through the Transport Innovation Fund, which comes on stream in 2008-09, to help support innovative local transport packages that combine demand management measures such as road pricing, with measures to encourage transport mode change and better bus services.

The draft Bill would:

- update the existing powers that allow the development of road pricing pilot schemes. It would give greater freedom to local authorities to implement schemes whilst ensuring that schemes in different places are consistent and inter-operable. Pilot schemes would tackle congestion where it is already a problem, or is predicted to be, and would support the Government's work to explore the potential for a national system of road pricing.
- enable local authorities to improve the standard of bus services in their areas. Ministers have closely examined successful services and intend to set out proposals on future policy shortly.
- reform Passenger Transport Authorities and Executives to enable a more coherent approach in major English cities.

As indicated in the Local Government White Paper, this will include more powerful local authority representation on the Passenger Transport Authorities.