

# Problems shared

**Wendy Wang** and **Tanzeel Zia** report on a one-day event which covered a great swathe of issues affecting the highways and transport sector



As part of the 'National share and support campaign' for transport and highways, and in partnership with *Surveyor*, the director of Amnick Social Enterprise, John David, arranged an event to help pull together all key stakeholders from the highways and transport sector.

Initially, this event – which follows a series dating back 18 months – featured seven presentations from key speakers on a range of current topical issues, which included:

- *social enterprises, how they can help make the difference* – Uday Thakker, director, Red Ochre
- *partnerships – how SE7 is leading the way* – Jason Russell, head of change, Surrey CC
- *business processes re-engineering – why this is critical to ensure efficiencies are harnessed* – Greg How, director, Mouchel
- *the 'Share and support' campaign (what this is about and the benefits)* – John David, director, Amnick
- *losing staff – the best way of managing and supporting them out of local authorities* – Andy Cook, director, Hay Recruitment
- *future funding – the areas that we need to ensure we do not miss* – Duncan Fern, director, supporting Amnick
- *leadership and personal development – how critical this is now (more than ever)* – Malcolm

Horwill, director, The Common Purpose Group.

The event was initially designed to be held at Brent LBC, through the support of Tim Jackson, head of transportation. However, the event blossomed from an initial 16 spaces to 65 within weeks.

Due to this phenomenal demand, a new venue was sought – Harrow College – to support the event. Even then, to manage demand, the forum was broken down into two sessions.

This one-day event had attracted high-calibre

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presenters from the third parties, private sectors and local councils. It has provided a new insight of thinking, working and sharing between these different sectors.

The event raised questions such as what would be public sector future strategies, and how local authorities might co-operate more effectively and efficiently with commercial firms to tackle the coming budget cuts.

It also provided a fresh picture of how to design a better collaboration between different

sectors, and where and when social enterprises can make their contribution.

Mr David gave his long-term vision on supporting local government during its business transformation, saving and efficiencies, training and work placements, and also supporting local authorities with the green agenda.

Mr David also identified the problems local authorities are currently facing, including budget cuts, engineering skills shortages, and unemployment. He also highlighted some of the work he had been doing to address these issues, for example, the creation of a think-tank with the Greater London Authority, the Department for Work and Pensions, and Transport for London, as well as universities and colleges; the creation of 971 new jobs as part of the Future Job Fund initiative last year; and how he was now leading on the National share and support campaign which aims

to support local authorities on breaking silos, and to work jointly by sharing their best practices, ideas, resources, training, social events, and work experience schemes. Details can be found at [www.uktsc.co.uk](http://www.uktsc.co.uk)

He explained that Amnick was also setting up the first community training hub in Harrow College – going live on 3 May.

Mr Thakker then talked about how social enterprises could help retain funds, staff and skills within local authorities – while still de-



living cuts. By presenting the case study of Sandwell Community Caring Trust, he argued the benefits and challenges which working as a social enterprise might create.

For example, having a community-owned social enterprise could allow the profit being better reinvested with higher employee motivation. However, on the other hand, the risks of transparent governance and longer-term succession still remained. Possible solutions to improve the drawbacks were by providing the right toolkits to entrepreneurs, such as professional support, efficient business model and better management.

Mr Russell discussed the concepts of partnerships and described the creation of South-East7 (SE7).

This is a joint council venture to create a strong joint client group which will share information, identify opportunities and develop sustainable solutions, to improve performance and reduce costs.

Mr Russell explained there were great opportunities to be gained by working together and sharing data. Within SE7, the partners had formalised their strengths, and the strongest of these would be taking the key lead in terms of procurement, performance, and sustainability.

Mouchel's Mr How focused on business processes re-engineering (BPR), and how this could 'make us do more for less'.

From analysing the status quo in the high-

ways and transport sector, forward planning was the key.

He said that in order to get better support from business partners, outsourcing and shared service – knowledge, were possible options. He also explained how to involve contractors, consultancy firms, suppliers, educational organisations with local government.

The three key elements to BPR were leadership, skill sets delivery in a different timeframe, and visible corporate governance. During his presentation, he also argued that in order to achieve a real value-added BPR, timing was another issue of how to implement quickly and efficiently as well.

Mr Fern who was a director at a major consultancy firm is now supporting Amnick and the National share and support campaign. He presented his creative thinking on 'infrastructure fundraising – a checklist of areas of finance 'that we should not miss'. In order to attract interest from infrastructure fund managers and deal-makers, the local authorities had to understand the characteristics of a good infrastructure investment project when designing a new business case, which included investment valuations, and core assets and management.

In his conclusion, he explained options were available through the regional growth fund (RGF), the Green Investment Bank (GIB), and tax incremental financing (TIF). A thorough

understanding on the project was the key for local authorities to raise valuable funds.

During the day, Hays Recruitment's Mr Cook, covered another important issue of organisation staff retention. He provided a successful example on how Camden LBC overcame staffing problems with an online communication programme to its employees who were facing career transition.

Flexibility and employee credit systems were implemented during the process. With the public spending cuts, in order to keep the efficient workforce, the best way to transit people from the organisation was by giving them the right tools and support. And this was the focal point during his presentation.

Finally, Mr Horwill, offered a quick overview on leadership and personal development. He explained why we needed quality leaders and how we could develop our own leadership skills.

The one-day event proved highly successful, and feedback has been excellent. A follow-up forum is being planned.

Mr David is keen to hear from others if they would like to host this type event in their organisation? This invite is open to all stakeholders including local authorities, consultancy firms, contractors, and suppliers. E-mail [john.david@amnick.com](mailto:john.david@amnick.com) or 07886837410

• **Wendy Wang** and **Tanzeel Zia** work for Amnick