

Note of last People & Places Board meeting

Title: People & Places Board
Date: Thursday 26 January 2017
Venue: Rooms A&B, Ground Floor, Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street,
London, EC1M 5LG

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
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1 Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and listed apologies. There were no declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were **agreed** as an accurate summary of the discussion.

The Chairman updated members on the request for LGA Leadership Board to consider independent overview of the fairer funding proposals, advising members that Leadership Board would be asking the government to ensure there was independent scrutiny of this.

3 Sharon White, Ofcom Chief Executive and Broadband, Mobile and the Digital Divide

The Chairman introduced Sharon White, Chief Executive of Ofcom.

Ms White outlined Ofcom's priorities on the provision of mobile and broadband across the UK. She emphasised the need to reach a position where every household had a good level of broadband and mobile coverage, highlighting that only 60% of premises in rural areas were currently able to receive superfast speeds. On the Universal Service Obligation, she outlined the three potential specifications Ofcom had presented to Government for its decision – a basic minimum download speed only, a highly specified USO including other elements such as upload speed, or a guaranteed superfast download speed.

The following points were made:

- In response to a question about the inaccuracy of up to speed advertisements, Ms White recognised the frustrations of members and outlined two Ofcom authored Voluntary Residential and Business Broadband codes agreed amongst major broadband

providers to tackle the issue. However, it was emphasised that the codes only recommended providers release customers from a contract should their connection fall below the speed achieved by the bottom 10 percentile of similar customers.

- Ms White was questioned on the levers Ofcom would use to encourage mobile operators to roll out better mobile connectivity across the country. Members felt that mobile phone companies could provide better information on this and improve engagement with residents. Ms White outlined Ofcom's ability to fine mobile network operators (MNOs) for poor coverage with the money returning to HM Treasury. She also advised members that Ofcom were trying to reach a position where mobile coverage was more accurately captured for every premise in the country. A publication on this would be issued later this year.
- Ms White was asked to outline how Ofcom's plans to further separate BT and Openreach would secure better coverage for rural areas. In addition, many members outlined local issues with Openreach including with the poor quality of roadwork completion, the fixing of infrastructure faults and the missing of engineer appointments. It was felt that consumers had to be further empowered to be able to break a contract when a service was unreliable or failing. Members were assured that Ofcom would start to publish customer service league tables for all companies that used Ofcom and were working to impose tougher customer service standards.
- There was a brief discussion on the frustrations of being unable to find out if the installation of a mast would provide better coverage in an area, as this information was confidential. Members were advised that providers needed to balance consumer interests with confidentiality rules. However, new rules meant operators would be obliged to make telegraph polls available to other operators, whilst BT would also be asked to produce a database to show where underground ducts were, which could potentially reduce the cost of building new networks by 15-20%.
- Ms White was asked if Ofcom would have any role in regulating smaller, private providers. Although Ofcom would not be regulating these companies, they would spread best practise to all providers.
- Members raised concerns on plans to build new houses in areas with poor or no mobile or broadband coverage. The importance of ensuring that this was recognised and coverage provided in these areas was emphasised. Members were advised that Ofcom were analysing new build areas, and would welcome members sending information on specific examples.
- There was a point made on planning. Ms White shared the observations she had been passed by mobile operators that they were more likely to invest in an area if they thought the local planning system was more receptive to the placement or upgrading of mobile infrastructure.

The Chairman thanked Ms White.

Daniel Shamplin-Hall, Adviser, briefly updated members on the LGA's lobbying priorities on broadband and mobile. He also drew their attention to the Digital Connectivity Summit the LGA to be held in March.

- Members requested that it should be made clear that the USO apply to the whole of the UK. There was also a brief discussion on the reasons that BT were the only supplier who had signed up to the USO.

Decision

1. The board **noted** the presentation.

Actions

1. The LGA to continue lobbying government to improve broadband and mobile connectivity, working with Ofcom to achieve this. Officers to continue encouraging the sharing of best practise.
2. Officers to send details to members to enable them to submit examples of poor coverage to Ofcom.
3. Officers to continue to look into opportunities for sharing updates with members (e.g. through events).
4. Officers to liaise with Ofcom to obtain the document setting out consumer rights.
5. Officers to explore options for fines imposed on mobile operators being put back into funding connectivity.
6. Officers to explore plans for broadband access to be set under planning rules.
7. Officers to provide a further update at the next board meeting,

4 Autumn Statement

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the item. He discussed the announcements in the 2016 Autumn Statement which directly impacted on the work programme of the board. As a consequence of government priorities, it was suggested that the board pursue work streams on Brexit, Leading Places, Broadband and Digital Connectivity, Skills and Employment and the emerging Industrial Strategy.

Decision

1. The board **noted** the update.

Action

1. Members **agreed** that officers should take forward the suggested work streams.

5 Leading Places

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the item and updated members on the progress of Leading Places Project. He advised that initial work in support of a second phase of the project had now begun and that there were additional proposals for further joint work between the LGA and the higher education sector.

The following points were made:

- Members raised concerns that duplicate work was being undertaken by the LEPs in other areas, and that there needed to be awareness of similar projects across the country.

Decision

1. Members **noted** the update.

Action

2. Officers to take forward work in line with comments from members, and the specification for phase 2 to be written in line with lead members' steers.

7 Skills and Employment

Jasbir Jhas, Senior Adviser, introduced the item.

Decision:

1. The board noted the update.

Actions

1. The LGA's response to the green paper to be circulated to lead members for approval on the 8 Feb. Members were invited to submit comments on Appendix B by the 3 February.
2. Officers to update the careers paper to recognise the constant changes in the job market.
3. The draft careers paper to be circulated to lead members.
4. Members to email Jasbir Jhas with any comments on Appendix A – these will be fed into the paper for March's board meeting.

10 Constitutional Implications of Brexit

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the item.

Decision

1. The board **noted** the update.

Actions

1. The LGA to continue to engage with the government on Brexit, and ensure opportunities for local government are acted upon.
2. Officers to organise board member briefings on Brexit.
3. Officer to work with the events team on the inclusion of Brexit session at LGA conference.
4. Officers to propose that a joint Brexit discussion be included in the meeting between CRs and P&P LMs on 20 Feb.
5. Officers to provide a further update at the next board meeting.

12 Update - LGA's lobbying on the Digital Economy Bill and LGA Digital Connectivity Event

Decision

1. The board **noted** the report.

Action

1. Officers to take forward as directed by members.

13 The Work of the LGA Policy Boards

Decision

1. The board **noted** the report.

Action

1. Officers to share the briefing on the housing white paper with members when it becomes available.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Gillian Brown	Arun District Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Michael Payne	Gedling Borough Council
	Cllr John Pollard	Cornwall Council
	Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council
Members	Cllr Philip Atkins OBE	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Derek Bastiman	Scarborough Borough Council
	Cllr Roger Blaney	Newark & Sherwood District Council
	Cllr Daniel Humphreys	Worthing Borough Council
	Cllr Kenneth Meeson	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr John Osman	Somerset County Council
	Cllr Blake Pain	Harborough District Council
	Cllr Ken Turner	Pendle Borough Council
	Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
	Cllr Stan Collins	South Lakeland District Council
	Cllr Sarah Osborne	Lewes District Council
Apologies	Cllr Paul Carter CBE	Kent County Council
	Cllr Chris Hayward	Hertfordshire County Council
	Cllr Jennifer Mein	Lancashire County Council
	Cllr Caitlin Bisknell	Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Chris Townsend	Surrey County Council
	Cllr Amanda Martin	Council of the Isles of Scilly