

24 January 2019

People & Places Board – report from Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE (Chairman)

Post Brexit England Commission

1. In the last political Board cycle, the People and Places Board established the Post-Brexit England Commission to explore the issues and opportunities facing local areas outside England's major city regions; from large and small towns, to the coastal and rural communities in which 62 per cent of the English population live.
2. At the LGA Annual Conference in July 2018, the Commission published an interim report detailing its findings to date. [‘The Future of Non-Metropolitan England: moving the conversation on’](#) outlines the ‘perfect storm’ of social and demographic challenges facing rural and coastal communities and identifies seven key challenges which local government can address if given the requisite powers and funding.
3. To support the work of the Commission, a series of engagement roadshows have been held across the country to gather evidence on the challenges rural and coastal communities are facing, and the local policy levers needed to tackle them. Having already held events in the South West, East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England, South East, Yorkshire and Humber and North West, the Commission's final roadshow for the North East will take place in Durham on Tuesday 5 February. Members can register their attendance on the LGA website – www.local.gov.uk/events.
4. To further support the findings of the final report, external research has also been commissioned to identify the opportunities for local government to play an enhanced role in the reformed land management policy framework, and transitional and post-2024 successor arrangements to Pillar I of the Common Agricultural Policy.
5. The Commission's interim report was the first major milestone in its programme of work. Its publication, and the attention it has received to date, now provides a firm foundation on which the Commission has developed its follow up activity which will culminate in the publication of a final report at LGA Conference in July this year.

Industrial Strategy

6. The People and Places Board has continued to represent the interests of non-metropolitan areas in relation to the key place-based elements of the Industrial Strategy, specifically the Government's Review of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the introduction of Local Industrial Strategies and the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
7. Following ministerial correspondence relating to changes in geography arising from the LEP Review, the Board will continue to respond as appropriate to developments in this area, in particular looking at how council oversight and democratic accountability will be preserved following implementation of the review's recommendations.
8. Having secured a commitment from Government that all areas will agree a Local Industrial Strategy, the Board is committed to supporting the development of these strategies across non-metropolitan England. Specifically, the Board has provided input into the design of the LGA's Local Industrial Strategy improvement support offer, seeking to ensure that this

24 January 2019

addresses the specific needs of non-metropolitan authorities. Further information on this offer will be circulated through LGA communication channels shortly.

Rural Digital Connectivity Working Group

9. The Rural Digital Connectivity Working Group has refreshed its membership and will meet next month to agree its new programme of work. The Group plans to invite Openreach to their first meeting to discuss how the communications provider and local government can work together to ensure new builds are connected to future-proofed fibre broadband.

Skills and Employment – Work Local

10. Last year the City Regions and People and Places Boards agreed to establish an '**LGA skills taskforce**'. It was set up in recognition that employment and skills remain key priorities for the LGA and our members, and that our Work Local objectives are just as relevant now as they were when launched in July 2017 but more should be done to get it on the radar of opinion formers and decision makers. Co-chaired by Cllrs Sir Richard Leese and Mark Hawthorne, the Taskforce agreed a work plan in October and agreed to focus its work on establishing and / or deepening relationships with stakeholders, industry and sector representatives on key issues identified in Work Local by convening three themed roundtables.
11. The first roundtable, *Local coordination of a fragmented employment and skills system*, took place in December. It was well attended with stakeholders including Association of Colleges, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, LEPs, NHS Employers and Universities UK. This was the first time we had brought together so many different organisations. All attendees felt improvements need to be made to the way in which job search and skills interventions are designed and managed, that there is more that unites than divides us, and that we should explore efforts to coordinate activity around the Spending Review. An LGA Skills Taskforce [webpage is now live and includes a summary of discussions](#).
12. The **LGA hosted a skills conference** in November 2018 [Skills, employment and inclusive growth: Can we deliver the skills our local economies need?](#) . The event was well attended with extremely positive feedback. The sessions ranged from post-16 pathways to supporting age-friendly employment with keynote address by Dr Emran Mian OBE, Acting Director General of Higher and Further Education, Department for Education. We are now planning to host a series of events to explore some of the specific topics.
13. Following on from positive discussions in the summer with the Rt Hon Anne Milton MP, Skills and Apprenticeships Minister, we are also continuing to pursue a strategic DfE/LGA political and operational partnership on post 16 skills to benefit both devolved and non-devolved areas. This is in progress with Whitehall officials.

Trade and investment

14. As Britain prepares to leave the EU, we have continued to work in partnership with the City Regions Board to inform the LGA's policy work on trade and international investment.
15. To inform this activity, a survey of the LGA's membership was undertaken at the end of last year to highlight the depth and diversity of trade and other international links

24 January 2019

established between councils and global partners, with a view to strengthening the role of sub-national government in future trade and investment activity.

16. In January, the Board will seek to use the growing evidence base emerging from its work on trade and investment to establish a set of principles to help respond to national developments in the short term and to guide our work over the coming year. This will include including furthering our engagement with the Department for International Trade and building on the recommendation of the International Trade Committee that local government should have a voice in all aspects of the trade policy process and that the Government should set out how it plans to facilitate this.

Devolution

17. A commitment to develop a common devolution framework – interpreted as a mechanism to access local devolution in England outside of the Mayoral Combined Authorities governance model - was contained in the Conservative manifesto.
18. The Devolution Framework was expected to be published before Christmas. The People and Places Board agreed to write to the Secretary of State to influence the Devolution Framework before it has been finalised with some key asks for the sector that were felt were the most pressing priorities for the sector. It was also clear to ask for parity for those non-metropolitan areas that hadn't been afford the same freedoms as areas with a devolution deal.
19. The Devolution Framework has still not been published and there is currently no revised publication date.

Contact officer:	Rebecca Cox
Position:	Principal Policy Adviser
Phone number:	0207 187 7384
E-mail:	rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk