

LGA Local Growth Campaign: supporting council's ambition for local economic growth

Purpose of report

For noting and discussion.

Summary

This report updates the Board on progress of the LGA's Local Growth Campaign.

Recommendation

The Board is asked to comment on the paper.

Action

Officers to build the Board's comments into the campaign plan.

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Background

1. The Board began a Local Growth Campaign in November 2011 to develop an LGA lobbying approach to promote the role of councils driving economic growth. Since we began, we have held events in London, Leeds, Wakefield, Cambridge, Gateshead, with further debates in Devon and Lincolnshire scheduled in the next few weeks. The output from the campaign will be our own Green Paper on growth which sets out the local government offer on growth, identifies continuing barriers to local economic development, and highlights what additional powers local government requires to effectively support national recovery.
2. The Campaign has now passed the half-way point in the series of Town Hall debates taking place across the country. Last month, the Campaign published its interim findings, reporting the main themes that have emerged from the debates and the on-line essays which have been presented by council leaders, think tanks and business leaders, amongst others. This report is **attached** for members' comment.

Messages from the campaign meetings

3. We are "just doing it": One consistent message heard at the Town Hall debates from civic leaders is that councils are 'just doing it'. Numerous example of council innovation (contained in the interim report) have been presented on-line and in debates. Councils continue to drive economic development and have been doing so for over a century. Thus one emerging objective from the local growth campaign is to highlight councils' proud tradition, and ongoing work in economic development.
4. Skills: At both the Birmingham and Cambridge debates, the link between skills, education and innovation were discussed in depth. In Cambridge, we examined the role of higher education in driving business innovation at a local level. Given that our work in this area seems weaker than other developed nations, work needs to undertaken to develop HE/local economic development collaboration.
5. Transport: In Leeds the discussion focused on how transport can be used as an instrument of growth. Evidence was heard from colleagues in Scotland and the Netherlands about how transport programmes were devolved and assessed under economic and employment objectives, enabling transport systems to be a

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lever for growth. The transport paper at Item 2 on this Board's agenda provides more detail.

6. Spatial development: Our work with IPPR North (Institute for Public Policy Research), Centre for Cities and the Town Hall debate in Gateshead showed clearly that local economies are different and neighbouring towns such as York and Barnsley have very different needs. This challenges nationally driven programmes (for example, from the DWP) where a locally developed community budget for regeneration may be more effective.

Essays and think tank work

7. In addition to the Town Hall debates, the LGA has invited think pieces from business and civic leaders, and has also offered councils a space to showcase the many good practice examples of councils work in economic development. For access to these and find out more about the Local Growth Campaign please see: <http://www.local.gov.uk/localgrowth>.
8. Work from think tanks, including Locals, IPPR and SQW are expected in the next month.

A challenge from young people

9. One of the original objectives of the Local Growth Campaign, was that any proposals developed had to be tested by young people themselves. On 14 February Cllr Peter Box, Cllr Shona Johnstone and Cllr David Simmonds (Chair, Children and Young People Board) met 40 young people assembled from all over the country at a Youth Summit (organised by LGA and British Youth Council). Youth unemployment is an issue of critical concern to councils. After listening to the concerns and ideas of young people themselves, which included earlier provision of careers advice and greater involvement of employers in schools, members presented some of the LGA's emerging ideas for tackling youth participation in a 'Dragon's Den' format. Of the various ideas presented, the one for giving young people a greater say over all funding and services in their area got the most support.
10. Feedback from young people will be built into the heart of the LGA's work moving forward. A report will be published in the upcoming weeks. This is a joint initiative between the Economy and Transport Board and the Children and Young People Board.

From debate to proposals

11. We have three further Town Hall debates scheduled: London (13 March), Devon and Lincolnshire. Thus we need to start drafting our Green Paper on

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growth which will be delivered at the conference. This Board is the last “open debate” on issues as a draft report will be brought to the next meeting in May.

12. Thus members may wish to raise any issues of concern and additional topics which need to be addressed in the campaign. Members may also wish to raise issues from the appended interim report.

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