

Note of last People & Places Board meeting

Title: People & Places Board
Date: Thursday 12 March 2015
Venue: Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Welcome, introductions and declarations of interest The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and also Lady Cobham, who was attending for the item on the Non-Metropolitan Commission in her role as one of the Commissioners. Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Vince Maple and Diane James.	
2	Non-Metropolitan Commission: Final report The Non-Metropolitan Commission, chaired by Sir John Peace, launched its final report on 5 March 2015. It made seven recommendations for reform around prosperity, infrastructure and governance that a new Government can take and implement early in its term. A report was considered on this at the LGA Executive on 5 March 2015. Lady Cobham addressed the Board. She stated that the commission had deliberately confined itself to just seven recommendations, which were as applicable to cities as to the non-metropolitan areas to give the next government clear targets to aim at. In this regard, she welcomed the Board's role in helping to bring the recommendations to fruition. She commended the report as a useful contribution to local governance in 2020 and was particularly keen to show how the report's recommendations would be progressed. The Chairman thanked Lady Cobham for her contribution and she agreed to stay in touch with the LGA in order to hear about progress with delivering this report. Board members raised the following points in the discussion that followed:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The report was very concise and clear and this provided a foundation for collaboration in a number of areas, including infrastructure, delivering economic growth and digital connectivity. It must be used to shape the future.• We needed to highlight that there are currently 124 "pots of money" and this should be streamlined.	

- It was important that skills and vocational training should be highlighted and that the workforce should be built for the future. This was a top priority. In addition, with a growing population, the health element was key.
- Emphasis should be made towards apprenticeship and how LEP's can support SME's. These were very important across Councils.
- The recommendations on Housing were important and should not be centrally imposed but based on local needs. The housing requirement cannot be met under current rules.
- The transport and digital recommendations were welcomed as being essential, amongst other things, for the growth of skills and employment.
- All the recommendations were linked and did not stand alone and should be linked to the Finance Commission report.

Decision

The Board noted the report.

3 Final report of the Independent Commission on Local Government Finance

The Independent Commission on Local Government Finance published its final report "Financing English Devolution" on 18 February 2015, which provided a summary of the Commission's conclusions and recommendations.

Eamon Lally presented the report to the Board and stated that it represented a wholesale reform of the local government finance system and local public spending. The report suggested a move towards fiscal devolution of existing taxes and new taxes such as a tourism tax. The report set out proposals for achieving greater self-sufficiency across the local government sector and for the sector itself to take on a greater role in equalising resources at a sub-national level.

Board members raised the following points in the discussion that followed:

- If we are to depend on the Government for funding local authorities, we need multi-year settlements.
- Equalisation as referred to by the Finance Commission is a key point, which needs close examination.
- Local authorities need fiscal independence that would come from beyond just the retention of business rates.
- The levels of Social Care funding needed to be addressed.

- The Government remained cautious on devolution and one area for financial devolution which would be welcomed was in relation to health. Public health commissioning had improved since being taken over by Councils from the NHS. If Councils could take control of other elements of the NHS budget so much more could be achieved.

Decision

The Board agreed:

- The recommendations of the Independent Commission on Local Government Finance in the context of the Executive's broader work on devolution in England; and
- How the Local Government Association can promote the Commission's recommendations with member authorities, MP's, civil servants and other stakeholders, as it seeks to influence the policies of the next Government; and
- To request that the Chief Executive submit a future paper which addresses how equalisation as proposed by the Commission could work in practice.

4 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2015 were agreed.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr David Hodge	Surrey County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Anne Western	Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Neil Clarke MBE	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council
	Cllr John Pollard	Cornwall Council
Members	Cllr Jennifer Mein	Lancashire County Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Eion Watts OBE	Bolsover District Council
	Cllr Philip Atkins	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Roger Begy OBE	Rutland County Council
	Cllr Andrew Bowles	Swale Borough Council
	Cllr Gillian Brown	Arun District Council
	Cllr Paul Carter CBE	Kent County Council
	Cllr Paul Diviani	East Devon District Council
	Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Christopher Knowles-Fitton	Craven District Council
	Cllr Kenneth Meeson	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Cecilia Motley	Shropshire Council
	Cllr Stan Collins	South Lakeland District Council
	Cllr Simon Galton	Leicestershire County Council
Apologies	Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
	Cllr Diane James	Waverley Borough Council
	Cllr Angela Lawrence	Vale of White Horse District Council