

People & Places Board

Agenda

Thursday, 18 June 2015
11.00 am

Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, Local
Government House, Smith Square, London,
SW1P 3HZ

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People & Places Board
18 June 2015

There will be a meeting of the People & Places Board at **11.00 am on Thursday, 18 June 2015** Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ.

A sandwich lunch will be available at 1.00pm

Attendance Sheet:

Please ensure that you sign the attendance register, which will be available in the meeting room. It is the only record of your presence at the meeting.

Political Group meetings:

The group meetings will take place from 10.00 -11.00am. Please contact your political group as outlined below for further details.

Apologies:

Please notify your political group office (see contact telephone numbers below) if you are unable to attend this meeting.

Labour:	Group Office: 020 7664 3334	email: Labour.GroupLGA@local.gov.uk
Conservative:	Group Office: 020 7664 3223	email: lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk
Liberal Democrat:	Group Office: 020 7664 3235	email: libdem@local.gov.uk
Independent:	Group Office: 020 7664 3224	email: Vanessa.Chagas@local.gov.uk

Location:

A map showing the location of Local Government House is printed on the back cover.

LGA Contact:

David Symonds
0207 664 3107/ david.symonds@local.gov.uk

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The twitter hashtag for this meeting is #lgappb

People & Places Board – Membership 2014/2015

Councillor	Authority
Labour (5)	
Cllr Anne Western (Vice-Chair)	Derbyshire County Council
Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
Cllr Jennifer Mein	Lancashire County Council
Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
Vacancy	Labour Group
Substitutes	
Cllr Colin Lloyd	Crawley Borough Council
Cllr Leigh Redman	Somerset County Council
Conservative (11)	
Cllr David Hodge (Chair)	Surrey County 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 Neil Clarke MBE (Vice-Chair)	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Cllr Paul Diviani	East Devon District Council
Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
Cllr Kenneth Meeson	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Cecilia Motley	Shropshire Council
Substitutes	
Liberal Democrat (3)	
Cllr Heather Kidd (Deputy Chair)	Shropshire Council
Cllr Stan Collins	South Lakeland District Council
Cllr Simon Galton	Leicestershire County Council
Substitutes	
Cllr David Bill MBE	Leicestershire County Council
Cllr John Cordwell	Gloucestershire County Council
Independent (2)	
Cllr John Pollard (Deputy Chair)	Cornwall Council
Vacancy	Independent Group
Substitutes	
Cllr Chris Townsend	Mole Valley District Council

LGA People and Places Board Attendance 2014-2015

Councillors	16.10.14	15.01.15	12.03.15	
Labour Group				
Anne Western	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Vince Maple	Yes	Yes	No	
Jenny Mein	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Alan Rhodes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Eion Watts	No	Yes	Yes	
Conservative Group				
David Hodge	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Philip Atkins	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Roger Begy OBE	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Andrew Bowles	Yes	No	Yes	
Gillian Brown	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Paul Carter CBE	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Neil Clarke MBE	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Paul Diviani	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Mark Hawthorne MBE	No	Yes	Yes	
Michael Jones	No	Yes	N/a	
Chris Knowles-Fitton	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Ken Meeson	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Cecilia Motley	N/a	N/a	Yes	
Lib Dem Group				
Heather Kidd	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Stan Collins	No	Yes	Yes	
Simon Galton	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Independent				
John Pollard	Yes	No	Yes	
Diane James MEP	Yes	No	No	
Angela Lawrence	Yes	Yes	No	
Substitutes				
Colin Lloyd	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Leigh Redman	Yes	Yes	Yes	
John Cordwell	Yes			
Roy Perry		Yes		

Agenda

People & Places Board

Thursday 18 June 2015

11.00 am

Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Item	Page	Time
1. Welcome, introductions and declarations of interest		11.00
2. English Devolution and the new Government	1 - 6	11.05
An introduction to the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill and other relevant legislation announced in the Queen's speech.		
3. Devolution to non-metropolitan areas- Board discussion- Confidential session		11.15
Two part discussion:		
1) What could devolution deals look like in non-metropolitan areas? What additional functions could be devolved to a non-metropolitan area? <u>A report is attached at item 3a.</u>		
2) What governance arrangements could be appropriate for devolution deals to non-metropolitan areas? <u>A report is attached at item 3b.</u>		
a) Devolution Deals for Non-Metropolitan Areas	7 - 10	
b) Devolution in Non-Metropolitan Areas - Governance Options	11 - 14	
4. LGA Support Offer on Devolution	15 - 18	12.00
A discussion of how the LGA best supports areas to make progress on devolution.		

5.	Review of the Board	19 - 24	12.15
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An opportunity to consider how effective the Board has been over the past year and its strategic purpose within the LGA governance structure and priorities in the coming year.

A report is attached which is the Board Annual Review 2014/15.

6.	Minutes of the last meeting	25 - 28	12.30
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Date of Next Meeting: Monday, 19 October 2015, 11.00 am, Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

English Devolution and the new Government

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper is intended to support members' discussion of how to align the Board's work programme and lobbying with the new Government's commitments, particularly in light of the publication of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill. Broadly, the Devolution Bill responds favourably to many of the key proposals in the LGA's flagship report on devolution, [English Devolution: local solutions for a successful nation](#), as well as the proposals in our response to DCLG's consultation on combined authorities in the last parliament. The paper also sets out proposed next steps for members to consider and asks for a steer on issues such as a constitutional settlement.

Recommendations:

Members are asked to:

1. Provide a steer from the non-metropolitan perspective for the LGA's broader lobbying on the Bill
2. Comment on the proposed next steps set out in paragraphs 14 to 18.

Action

Officers to take forward as directed by members.

Contact officer: Ian Hughes
Position: Head of Policy
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English devolution and the new Government

Introduction

1. Following the Scottish independence referendum in September 2014, devolution within the United Kingdom shot to the top of the public policy agenda. Significantly, the Prime Minister specifically recognised the need to “empower our great cities” in his response to the vote. People & Places Board members agreed that their primary focus leading up to the general election should be to keep up the pressure on the Government to follow through on this commitment and ensure that devolution, but not just to the great cities, was a top priority for the next Government. Members also felt that it would be important to work closely with the City Regions Board so that the benefits of devolution could be extended to all areas, recognising the interconnectedness of city regions and non-metropolitan areas.
2. The general election campaign demonstrated how far the debate has come since 2010, with all of the major parties setting out commitments to devolve power and funding within England as key planks of their election manifestos. Whitehall officials were also clearly planning for a major programme of activity related to devolution and sought the LGA’s advice on their preparations on several occasions. These discussions and close consultation with the sector, including the District Councils’ Network and County Councils Network, fed into the development of the LGA’s propositions for progressing devolution.
3. The LGA’s flagship report, [*English devolution: local solutions for a successful nation*](#), was published on May 21st. Informed heavily by the discussions of this Board and the City Regions Board, the report sets out:
 - 3.1 Why devolution matters, including the benefits of devolution for the democratic process, long-term prosperity, savings for the public purse and outcomes for residents;
 - 3.2 Principles endorsed by local government leaders from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales to underpin the process, including subsidiarity, legal standing for local government and fiscal autonomy;
 - 3.3 A road map, including decisions to be taken in the first Queen’s Speech and Comprehensive Spending Review to help deliver reform; and
 - 3.4 Proposals on how councils can strengthen local accountability and governance arrangements in order to assume significant new responsibilities
4. Within a week of publication, our report had been downloaded almost 12,000 times. The LGA Chairman presented the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, with an advance copy at their first meeting on May 18th and copies have since been sent to key Ministers across Whitehall. Our work was also featured in the Times and trades press on the day of launch. The response from the sector has been very favourable.

5. The LGA press release¹ emphasised the needs of non-metropolitan areas, and this aspect was the subject of a major segment on the BBC evening news on 24 May.²
6. The importance of devolution to the new Government's agenda became apparent when the Chancellor of the Exchequer made devolution the topic of his first public speech in Manchester on 14 May, signalling that the first Queen's Speech would contain a "Cities Devolution Bill" which would provide for cities prepared to adopt directly-elected mayors greater control over local transport, housing, skills and healthcare. He also pledged to extend a form of the City Deals programme to cover counties and towns. This was rapidly followed up by the publication of what became a Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill. The rest of this paper summarises the provisions of the Bill, outlines additional commitments in the Queen's Speech as well as other relevant announcements, and sets out proposed next steps for members' consideration.
7. The next months are a critical time for local government. Devolution within England is being defined for a generation over the course of this Parliament. It is critical to maintain a clear and influential voice for non-metropolitan areas to ensure that all areas within England have the opportunity to be as ambitious as possible on behalf of their residents. It is proposed that devolution activity be supported by dedicated LGA officer resource over at least the next six months.

Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill

8. The Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill was published on 28 May. It provides new primary legislative powers to implement the devolution agreement with Greater Manchester announced in November 2014, which can also be applied to other combined authorities. The main components of the Bill:
 - 8.1 Allow for a combined authority to have a directly-elected Mayor;
 - 8.2 Provide for the Mayor of a combined authority to exercise the functions of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for the area (and where that occurs, allow the current PCC term of office to be extended until the mayor is in place.);
 - 8.3 Enable the Secretary of State to remove a council from the boundaries of a combined authority, if it is the only one that does not consent to establishing an elected Mayor;
 - 8.4 Allow a mayoral combined authority to levy council tax as a major precepting authority, similar to county councils or the Greater London Authority;
 - 8.5 Expand the potential remit of combined authorities from "economic development and regeneration" only to include any local government function; and
 - 8.6 Provides for combined authorities to take on the functions of other public authorities, e.g. government departments but not county or district councils.
 - 8.7 Extends the general power of competence to combined authorities in the same manner as it applies to local authorities.

¹ http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/7265593/NEWS

² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-32873204>

- 8.8 Allows combined authorities to borrow for any of its specified functions, apart from those specifically exercised by the mayor
- 8.9 Opens the door to local government reorganisation by enabling the Secretary of State to change local government structures for the area, provided that all constituent councils consent. The Bill specifies that changes could include mergers of councils, moves to unitary structures, or changing the democratic representation of the area with different electoral cycles and fewer councillors.
- 8.10 Establishes a scrutiny function for combined authorities and provides for an overview and scrutiny function to cover the mayoral office.
9. Generally the Bill is of an enabling nature, as the LGA called for in its English devolution report so that the legislation does not have to constantly catch up with developments on the ground. It responds positively to the proposals we set out in our response to DCLG's consultation on combined authorities in the last parliament, including expanding their functional scope, enabling them to borrow for non-transport purposes and extending the general power of competence to cover them fully. Whilst providing for combined authorities to have elected Mayors and specifying the process for their election, the legislation permits flexibility about the mayoral functions and model. On the face of the Bill, there is nothing restricting substantial devolution to combined authorities that adopt the directly-elected mayoral model.
10. The Bill does not in itself restrict devolution to particular kind of area. It also makes provision for 'simplifying' the local government structures, with agreement from all constituent councils, in areas where a combined authority is not appropriate. This is exemplified in the accompanying explanatory notes as where 'a single county, which may or may not be a unitary authority, covers a functional economic area which may be the basis for a Devolution Deal.' Further discussion of governance issues are contained in the accompanying governance paper.
11. The first reading of the Bill took place in the House of Lords on 28 May 2015. The second reading, and general debate on all aspects of the Bill, took place on the 8 June 2015 ahead of entering the committee stage. The LGA's media response to its initial publication was largely positive, recognising in particular that it had responded to our call for devolution to be extended to all places. The LGA circulated a [briefing](#) to peers ahead of the Second Reading debate. It is intended that further briefings on the detail of the Bill will be informed by the steers of City Regions and People and Places Board members.

Queen's Speech and other relevant announcements

12. The first Queen's Speech on 27 May contained two other Bills that are likely to be of particular interest to members:
- 12.1 A Buses Bill that will allow combined authorities with directly-elected mayors to take on responsibility for local bus services, promoting an integrated transport system. The legislation will provide the option to franchise bus services.
- 12.2 A Housing Bill that will extend the Right to Buy to 1.3 million housing association tenants. The legislation will also allow for 200,000 starter homes available for under-

40s at a 20 per cent discount. The Bill will introduce a statutory register for brownfield land and proposes to simplify the neighbourhood planning system.

The LGA produced an on-the-day [briefing](#) that looks at what each of the Bills means for councils.

13. Going back to the Chancellor's first speech in Manchester, there were two brief but encouraging statements that open the door to further reforms the LGA has been pressing for but that have not yet been followed up with any detail:

13.1 First, he indicated that "now it's time to think whether we could go further down the road of fiscal devolution. So that you take control of raising more of the money you spend."

13.2 Second, he mentioned that with some aspects of employment support already being piloted, he wanted to see if it might be possible to go further.

Proposed next steps

14. It is suggested that members focus their discussion on four areas:

14.1 Amendments and lobbying on the Bill;

14.2 Keeping up the pressure to make progress on the ground;

14.3 Examining governance options; and

14.4 Securing local government's position through a constitutional settlement

15. First, when it comes to the Bill itself, members may wish to make a distinction between the changes that need to be made to the Bill itself and how the public debate that the Bill generates can be used to influence delivery. With regard to the Bill itself, members agreed at their March meeting that we should be seeking for it to be enabling rather than prescriptive. As indicated in paragraph 8, on the whole it is enabling and takes into account the specific legislative reforms we called for with respect to combined authorities. There do appear to be three major gaps:

15.1 The Bill is largely silent on fiscal devolution, although it contains specific provisions on precepting and borrowing. Our report calls for specific financial reforms in the next Spending Review, including freedom to set council tax and 100 per cent retention of business rates. Members are invited to consider whether we should be pressing for amendments that enable these reforms.

15.2 The Bill appears to give the Secretary of State a great deal of discretion to approve or turn down proposals, without any mechanisms to hold the SoS to account or for appeal. We are suggesting that a peer review process could be used to assess readiness, whilst others such as the City Growth Commission have called for an independent body to make that determination. Members may wish to consider whether we should be pressing for an amendment regarding assessment of capacity.

16. Second, although the Bill enables greater devolution within England, it does not in and of itself deliver it. Political will will still be needed to ensure that actual agreements with city and non-metropolitan regions match their ambitions. As members have noted in previous discussions, it is clear that many departments and civil servants have yet to buy into the devolution agenda. Members are invited to consider how the LGA can effectively maintain pressure on the Government to go further and faster, particularly in non-metropolitan areas. Finally, it is suggested that members consider how we can harness the business voice more effectively in our lobbying. Both the debate generated by the Bill and the party conferences in the autumn may present a useful platform for us.
17. Third, whilst the Board's broad position on governance is that "one size does not fit all", it may be timely to undertake a more detailed examination of governance models appropriate to non-metropolitan areas (please see separate paper). There is a key role for the Board to play in influencing the arrangements available to non-metropolitan areas wishing to agree devolution deals with Government.
18. Fourth, members may wish to consider pressing for the legal position of local government to be secured and enhanced. Our devolution report calls for a defined set of powers and responsibilities for local government that strengthens and clarifies their ability to design public services to meet local need. One option may be to press for an amendment to the Devolution Bill that calls for a Constitutional Settlement. There are other voices that are supportive of constitutional reform; for instance, Lord Purvis presented a Constitutional Convention Bill in the House of Lords on 1 June.

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LGA Support Offer on Devolution

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper sets out proposals for how the LGA can help councils access support to make progress on devolution.

Recommendation:

Members are asked to consider whether the proposals would be useful to the sector or if there are other forms of support we should be considering.

Action:

Officers to pursue the activities outlined in the light of member guidance.

Contact officer: Ian Hughes
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LGA Support Offer on Devolution

Background

1. The success of the LGA's sector-led improvement approach has been recognised by both central and local government. It is seen as being an effective way to drive improvement and support development of local government. As the LGA has been discussing its future improvement offer with councils, we have been encouraged to play a leadership role in helping councils to prepare and position themselves on the devolution agenda.
2. As councils have been getting to grips with the devolution agenda over the past year, requests for LGA support have been increasing. Initially, the requests were primarily related to understanding the policy context. In response, the LGA published a set of on-line resources in January 2015 that includes a devolution register that offers detail about what has been achieved through the city, growth and devolution deals; a planning tool that helps councils to consider key questions to address in their proposals; and information about governance models with updates on proposed schemes.¹ These tools have been very well-received by the sector.
3. Over time, demand for the LGA to offer more intensive and bespoke assistance to groups of authorities seeking to develop new governance pitches and proposals for devolution has steadily risen. Councils that are already in combined authorities report a similar increase in requests for advice and support. In addition to continued updates on policy developments and what other places are doing, there are three broad types of assistance being sought:
 - 3.1 Brokering, i.e bringing local authorities in a place together to scope out their options, as well as facilitating more sensitive discussions about governance arrangements;
 - 3.2 Strategic, i.e offering advice on how to negotiate with Government departments and local partners; and
 - 3.3 Technical, i.e helping authorities develop the business case and deliver the financial modelling for their proposals.
4. To date, the LGA has been managing requests for bespoke assistance on a case-by-case basis. Now that the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill has been published and the Government has extended the offer to negotiate with all places, we can expect the demand for support to ramp up even more. There is a small team at DCLG leading the work on combined authorities, and their capacity to offer support appears limited. LGA officers have written to the DCLG team to discuss how we could work together to ensure that places at different stages get the support they need.
5. Andrew Campbell, currently Acting Director General, Finance and Corporate Services at DCLG, is also about to join the LGA on secondment for eighteen months to support work offering LGA support to councils as they prepare for devolution deals, helping to bring Whitehall expertise to local negotiations. He is expected to work at the interface between councils, combined authorities and Whitehall, advising councils on the best way to

¹ http://www.local.gov.uk/devolution/-/journal_content/56/10180/6945767/ARTICLE

formulate their bids and supporting them in negotiations, as well as facilitating discussions between groups of councils on the structures and governance they may need to put in place in order to access deals.

6. The rest of this paper sets out proposals for how the LGA can help councils access support to make progress on devolution for members' consideration.

Proposals

7. Members are invited to reflect on the types of support that city regions may need to help them achieve ambitious devolution. Based on the nature of current demand, there could be three broad elements to the support offer:
 - 7.1 Peer support to provide assistance with brokering;
 - 7.2 Knowledge exchange to bolster the strategic case; and
 - 7.3 Access to technical advice.

Peer support

8. Our analysis shows that the majority of councils are in discussions about formalising sub-regional partnerships; most are still scoping out their options. The stage where places particularly seem to want help is to get from determining that they want to establish a formal partnership to working out just what that arrangement might look like. The LGA has recently arranged for a couple of places at this stage to get advice about how to proceed from members and senior officers already in combined authorities, which has been very well-received.
9. It is suggested that the LGA build on our existing peer support offer to pull together a roster of member and officer peers with first-hand experience of establishing combined authorities or other joint arrangements and negotiating with government to provide tactical advice to areas at a more formative stage. Peers could be matched to areas based on the specific issues that they are working through. By holding the ring on a peer exchange arrangement, the LGA could also help to ensure that demands on individual peers are kept at a manageable level and benefit from their feedback.

Knowledge exchange

10. We have also picked up on a strong appetite among councils to learn from each other when it comes to preparing for and delivering new responsibilities. One of the disadvantages of a process that focuses on bespoke negotiations can be that opportunities to share learning across the country can be missed, which is where the LGA could step in to assist. We could gather good practice and disseminate learning through on-line resources and events as places undertake their preparations and start to deliver on their devolution agreements. This would also give us the opportunity to track the outcomes that result from devolution, to help us strengthen the overall case.

Access to technical advice

11. Proposals for devolution will have to be backed up by detailed business cases. With the prolonged squeeze on council budgets also having led to an erosion of in-house expertise, many places are finding that they have to commission external analysis and financial modelling at significant cost. Last year, the LGA established a "Growth Advisor"

programme, which enabled local authorities to commission up to 14 days expert help to progress local economic growth initiatives. A broad range of advisors with expertise on a wide range of issues were and made available to councils. A similar initiative to enable councils to access technical expertise to develop their devolution proposals would likely be well-received.

Next steps

12. Members are asked to consider whether the above proposals would be useful to the sector or if there are other forms of support we should be considering. Based on members' steer and discussions with DCLG, officers will develop more detailed proposals for a programme of support. We would expect the sector's support needs to change over time so would also build in a review and evaluation process.
13. An update will be provided at the next meeting of the Board in October 2015.

People & Places Board Annual Review 2014-15

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

The People and Places Board first met in April 2014. In creating this Board, a new voice and resource was created for non-metropolitan areas within the LGA. After eighteen months of operation, the Board was asked to review its work and form.

The LGA Executive has also asked for a short report on the work of all of the Boards over the past year.

This report provides some issues for discussion to support members' review of the Board and sets out a summary of this year's work programme.

Recommendations:

- a) Members are asked to consider whether the Board meets the original purpose of providing a voice and a resource for non-metropolitan areas within the LGA.
- b) From this reflection, Members are asked for their views on how the People and Places Board should develop over the next year.

Action:

Officers to take forward as directed by members.

Contact officer: Ian Hughes
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People & Places Board: Annual Review 2014-15

Background

1. The People and Places Board was established in February 2014 alongside the City Regions Board and first met in April. Its purpose was to represent the interests of the non-city areas; develop greater clarity on the role of non-metropolitan authorities in driving economic growth for the long term benefit of residents; and give guidance on how transformation of public services and devolution to non-metropolitan England can enable that growth. At the end of its first eighteen months, it is appropriate to reflect on this purpose, work to date, and future direction.
2. This paper is offered not as a comprehensive review of the Board, but as a starting point to provoke discussion. Members' views are welcome on any issues which could strengthen the LGA's work for non-metropolitan areas.
3. Members may wish to consider the following issues in their reflections on whether the Board is meeting its original purpose: the continued need for a strong non-metropolitan influence within the LGA, areas for further development and the changing geography and governance of non-metropolitan areas.

Context

4. The Board was established following a review of the LGA's governance arrangements and with a need expressed by members for non-city areas to have a focused platform to shape LGA policy.
5. The Board was given a mandate by the LGA Executive to create its own work programme and play a greater influencing/advocacy role on behalf of non-metropolitan areas in England. The Board was also allocated specific staff and financial resources to support the delivery of its mandate.
6. The Board has been an authoritative voice for the non-metropolitan areas. Supported by the work of the influential Non-Metropolitan Commission, which it commissioned, the Board has made a strong representation for devolution to, and public service reform in, the non-metropolitan areas. This has balanced the case for additional powers to be devolved to the major cities of England that has to date been more widely accepted by Whitehall and has brought a broader perspective to the national and local debate about devolution within England. A full list of the Board's activities and achievements is included at Appendix A.

Maintaining a strong non-metropolitan voice in the LGA

7. In creating the Board, there was a clear desire for a strong and distinct voice within the LGA which would cast a non-metropolitan lens on priority work. There was also a desire to ensure that LGA's positions on important issues such as devolution reflected those at the cutting edge of policy rather than the collective capacity of all councils.
8. Over the last year, the Board has been asked to lead a number of important policy issues on behalf of the LGA. For example, our recent devolution report reflects a clear steer from this

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Board and recognises the needs for LGA advocacy to reflect councils working at very different paces. This demonstrates a change of approach within the LGA.

9. If we look to the future, bespoke local deals will drive the devolution agenda and there is a risk of the sector appearing fractured. There has been strong pressure on the LGA and this Board to continue to pull together a united voice for councils, especially given the unprecedented financial constraints that are expected. In developing the recent devolution work, the People and Places and City Regions Boards have demonstrated that they are able to act collectively and unite behind a common set of propositions which reflect different geographies when local government's collective voice needs to be heard. Members may wish to consider those policy areas where there needs to be more joint working with the City Regions Board and those where specific advocacy on behalf of non-metropolitan areas is needed. This will be particularly important in the context of the devolution debate, where there remains some uncertainty about Government's offer to non-metropolitan areas and the governance arrangements that might be required.

Working with other Boards

10. Over the course of the year, there has been some duplication of work with other Boards, particularly the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board. This has led to members receiving a preponderance of update reports, limiting the scope for value-added debate and decision-making. As we move forward, members might like to consider how to shift the Board's emphasis towards developing a work programme, with the Cities Regions Board where appropriate, that focuses on wider strategic issues and avoids duplicating work being undertaken in other Boards.

Changing nature of non-metropolitan areas

11. In designing the original membership of the Board, it was recognised that the political geography of non-metropolitan areas needed to be reflected in the composition of the Board. Thus the Board's membership is drawn from the County Councils Network, District Councils' Network and other non-metropolitan unitary authorities. The Board's political proportionality reflects non-metropolitan councils, differing from other LGA policy boards whose make-up reflects the political proportionality of the Association as a whole.
12. The political geography of non-metropolitan areas in England has continued to evolve. There are now three non-metropolitan areas¹ moving forward at pace to form combined authorities, with work also well underway in Cornwall and discussions taking place in many more areas. Members may wish to consider how combined authorities and other new bodies should be reflected in the membership and the ongoing work of the Board.

¹ In Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset

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APPENDIX A

The work programme

1. During the year, the Board has focused on the following priorities:
 - 1.1. Public service reform;
 - 1.2. Housing;
 - 1.3. Planning and infrastructure to support growth (in particular rural broadband);
 - 1.4. Jobs and skills; and
 - 1.5. Devolution and the report of the Non-Metropolitan Commission
2. The Board has been keen to see English devolution high on the new Government's agenda and has worked closely with the City Regions Board to that end, but recognised the need to provide balance to the government focus on devolution to city regions alone. As such the Board asked Sir John Peace to lead an independent Commission to examine the prospects for economic growth and the future of public service in non-metropolitan England. The Commission's final report was published in March 2015 and complements the work of the Cities Growth and Finance Commissions. In addition the Board has contributed to the development of an LGA paper on English Devolution, which, building on the work of the three Commissions, is designed to inform the Government's programme for devolution in England.
3. At its March meeting, the Board welcomed Viscountess Cobham, Chairman of Visit England, who was a Member of the Commission and embraced the Commission's final report, which was published early in March. At its October 2014 meeting, the Board also received the report on the Review of Local Authorities' Role in Housing Supply by the joint authors Natalie Elphicke and Councillor Keith House.

Independent Commission on Economic Growth and the Future of Public Services in Non-Metropolitan England

4. The independent Non-Metropolitan Commission was established in May 2014. It was led by Sir John Peace, Chairman of Standard Chartered Bank and Burberry and also Lord Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire, supported by senior figures from the voluntary and community sector, health, academia, tourism, environment, transport and housing. It met six times and received evidence from over 60 contributors. The Commission published an interim report in November 2014 and a final report, [*Devolution to Non-Metropolitan England: seven steps to growth and prosperity*](#), in March 2015.
5. The Commission decided to focus on just seven clear recommendations for reform designed to shape the way economic growth and public service transformation are supported in the future. The recommendations were specifically designed to be readily adoptable and deliverable by any new government early in its term in order to give the country a further boost along the road to recovery. The Commission noted that they were also as applicable to city regions as to non-metropolitan areas.
6. The recommendations covered prosperity (skills and foreign direct investment); infrastructure (planning and transport, housing, digital connectivity and investment in infrastructure); and governance. The Commission was very clear that they considered the way we take decisions in England is holding us back.

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7. The Commission's work has played a key role in building the evidence base for the LGA's lobbying for devolution to be extended to all corners of England.

Skills, Employment and Welfare Reform

8. At the end of March, the LGA put forward the case for groups of councils to have the power, funding and responsibility to integrate and commission employment and skills provision to plan employment and skills investment across places to get more people into work, help low paid people progress in work, and address the skills demand for achieving local growth.
9. Championed by the chairs of the City Regions, People and Places and Children and Young People Boards, the recommendations in [Realising Talent: a new framework for devolved employment and skills](#) set out how a localised system of employment and skills provision might work. It is the final in a [series of three reports](#) commissioned to the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion to analyse the skills and employment challenges to be faced by an incoming or returning Government, and offer a proposed localised solution. As a result, the LGA is now in a strong position to try to influence decisions about the re-commissioning of the Work Programme in 2016.

Broadband

10. The Board has kept broadband high up on the Government's agenda and set out a clear way forward for new Ministers. Digital connectivity is as important as electricity, planning, housing and transport for living and doing business in the twenty-first century. Members have emphasised the critical need for the mainly rural communities who are already lagging behind in the publicly funded broadband and Wi-Fi rollout to get access to fast and reliable digital connectivity as soon as possible. Broadband is also an essential enabler for wider public service reform which involves staff, residents and businesses communicating, sharing information, accessing services and working online.
11. Members have strengthened our ability to influence Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) by forging a productive relationship with the new Chief Executive, Chris Townsend. Mr. Townsend spoke at LGA Annual Conference and visited councils across the country to get a better understanding of their concerns. As a result of LGA lobbying, councils in the Superfast Broadband Extension Programme benefitted from additional local flexibility over funding. Members set out a compelling vision for the importance of digital technology to driving economic growth and service transformation in our response to the Government's consultation on Future Digital Communications Infrastructure Needs and Select Committee responses throughout the year. The Non-Metropolitan Commission report reinforced the Members' view that we need a radical overhaul of the current funding and commercial model for broadband that promotes competition and recognises the investment potential of rural connectivity. In response to Members' steer, the Planning Advisory Service produced a guide for councils on BDUK's Mobile Infrastructure Project to assist with the rollout and balancing economic and social benefits with the environmental impact.

Other Issues

12. On housing, in addition to receiving the report on the Review of Local Authorities' Role in Housing Supply, the Board, in conjunction with the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board focused on:

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- 12.1. Modelling the impact of a locally led approach to housing;
 - 12.2. Pressing for financial flexibilities to enable local authorities to build housing directly and in partnership;
 - 12.3. Developing case studies and sharing good practice that demonstrates the role councils play in increasing housing supply.
13. The Board agreed that the public service transformation strand of the Board's work programme had two objectives:
- 13.1. To set out a way forward for the transformation of public services in the geographies represented on the Board; and
 - 13.2. To ensure that the future momentum of service transformation is locally and democratically led.
14. In order to progress these objectives, in conjunction with the City Regions Board, it commissioned independent research from Rand Europe to develop further an evidence-based way forward for public service transformation and what can be achieved for residents through a community budgeting type approach at the local level. It also agreed an input to the Independent Service Transformation Panel. Both of which added weight to the argument for devolution and for reform of the way we deliver public services.
15. The Board considered the final report on the Independent Commission on Local Government Finance and amongst other things emphasised that local authorities needed fiscal independence that would come from beyond just the retention of business rates.

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

LGA location map

Local Government Association

Local Government House
Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Tel: 020 7664 3131

Fax: 020 7664 3030

Email: info@local.gov.uk

Website: www.local.gov.uk

Bus routes – Millbank

- 87** Wandsworth - Aldwych
- 3** Crystal Palace - Brixton - Oxford Circus

For further information, visit the Transport for London website at www.tfl.gov.uk

Cycling facilities

The nearest Barclays cycle hire racks are in Smith Square. Cycle racks are also available at Local Government House. Please telephone the LGA on 020 7664 3131.

Public transport

Local Government House is well served by public transport. The nearest mainline stations are: Victoria and Waterloo: the local underground stations are

St James's Park (Circle and District Lines), **Westminster** (Circle, District and Jubilee Lines), and **Pimlico** (Victoria Line) - all about 10 minutes walk away.

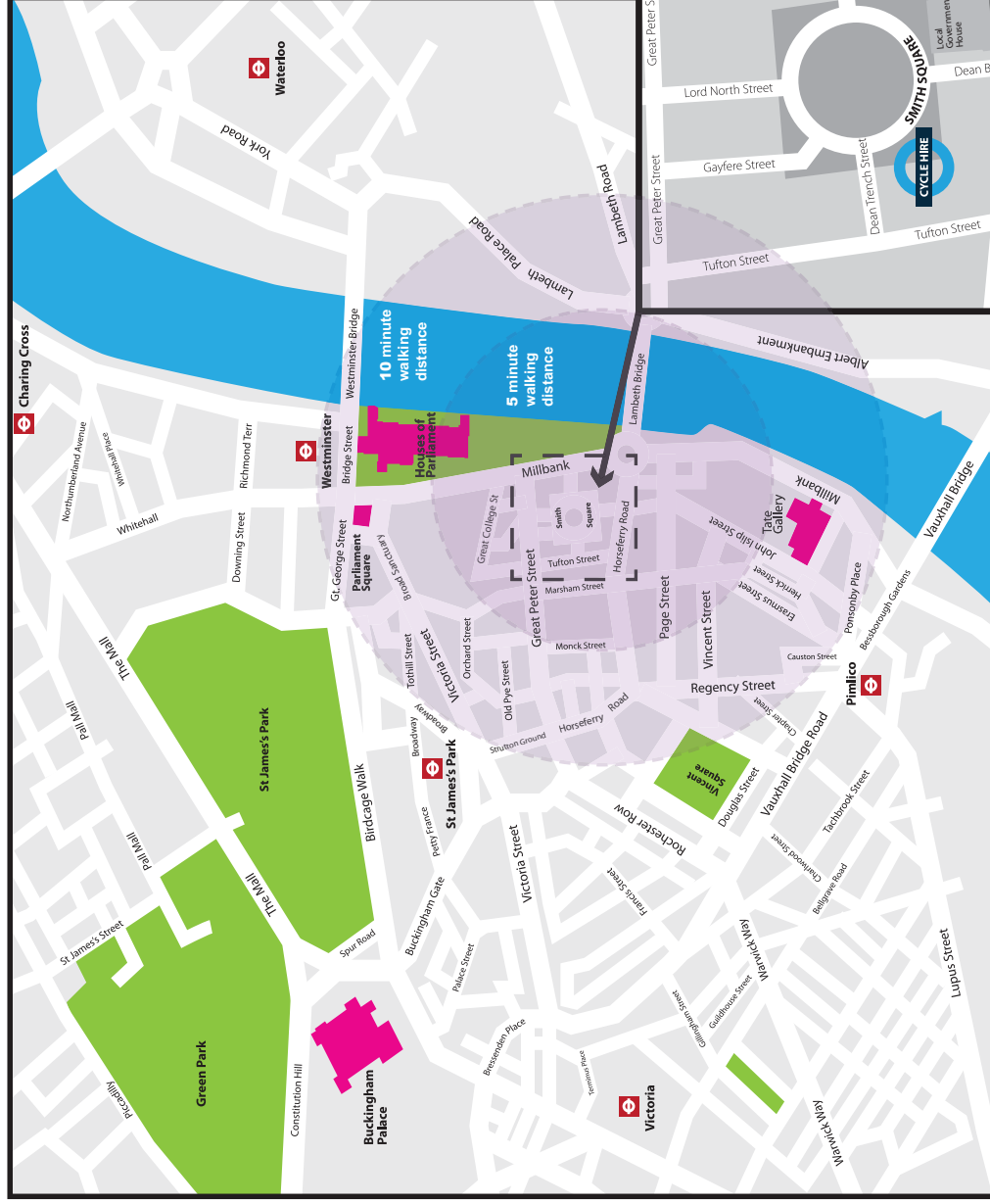
Buses 3 and 87 travel along Millbank, and the 507 between Victoria and Waterloo stops in Horseferry Road close to Dean Bradley Street.

Bus routes – Horseferry Road

- 507** Waterloo - Victoria
- C10** Canada Water - Pimlico - Victoria
- 88** Camden Town - Whitehall - Westminster - Pimlico - Clapham Common

Car parks

- Abingdon Street Car Park (off Great College Street)
- Horseferry Road Car Park
- Horseferry Road/Arneway Street. Visit the website at www.westminster.gov.uk/parking



Central London Congestion Charging Zone

Local Government House is located within the congestion charging zone.

For further details, please call 0845 900 1234 or visit the website at www.cclondon.com

