

## Note of last People & Places Board meeting

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**Title:** People & Places Board  
**Date:** Wednesday 15 June 2016  
**Venue:** Bevin Hall, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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### Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest</b>  The Chair listed apologies and asked for any declarations of interests  Cllr Mike Jones advised the board that he was working as a consultant for a company with an interest in the broadband sector.  The Chair suggested that there should be a change in the order of agenda items. Item 4 (on skills and employment) would be moved before item 3 (end of year report), and item 8 (business rates oral update) would be moved before item 7 (devolution green paper).  The Chair congratulated Cllr Philip Atkins, who had been awarded an OBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours' List.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Superfast Broadband Update</b>  Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the report in the absence of Daniel Shamplin-Hall (Adviser). He outlined the key issues in the paper; highlighting recent work to shape the government's Universal Service Obligation (USO) and asking members for a steer on proposals for future focus.  Hannah Berry, Campaigns and Marketing Manager, gave a presentation on Superfast Broadband and advised members that the Chair had written to the Culture Minister, Ed Vaizey MP, and a number of other MPs informing them of the campaign's objectives.  In the discussion which followed, members raised the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The online speed test only worked if there was an adequate signal, which was a problem in some areas.</li><li>• Although superfast broadband was increasingly available in rural areas, many residents were unaware of its availability. Members felt service providers could communicate service availability better.</li></ul>	

- There were concerns about individuals waiting several months to be connected, and about the increase in the cost of receiving superfast broadband, which meant some were denied access.
- Members emphasised that the USO should be rolled out promptly and there should be a minimum standard of broadband speed at peak times.
- There was concern on where the funds for the USO would come from. Members felt that local government might be expected to fund this and asked that these concerns be communicated to government.
- With reference to paragraph 4.3, members highlighted that there were examples of service providers offering to provide a particular speed when they had been unable to do so. This was misleading and should be stopped through tougher regulation.
- Members requested that minimum values were put in place for download speeds and that a timeframe was set for this.
- In reference to paragraph 13, members felt that Mobile Network Operators (MNO) should be encouraged to share their commercial roll out plans with councils to help address problems with inadequate broadband and signal provision..
- Opportunities for communities to work together on broadband provision were discussed, and it was emphasised that a local business plan could encourage service providers to progress with work.

**Decision:**

1. Members **noted** the update and **agreed** the future focus of the board's digital connectivity work as outlined in paragraph 17.

**Actions:**

1. Officers to talk to the website developers on the problem with taking the Up-to-Speed Campaign speed test if the signal in an area was inadequate.
2. Officers to take forward work as directed by members.

### **3 Leading Places Project Update**

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the paper. He outlined the Leading Places Project, advising members that it was being jointly managed by the LGA, Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Universities UK (UUK).

He explained that the project's aim is to strengthen relationships between councils and universities and to encourage both to play a more collaborative role in the leadership and development of places. The project

will run over the summer, concluding in early 2017 and will initially work with six pilot areas across the country.

In the discussion which followed, members raised the following issues:

- Relating to the project, an initiative had started in Lancaster where Vice-Chancellors on the Local Enterprise Partnership Board had set up a separate Collaboration Board which local councils were keen to engage with.
- Gloucestershire was the only rural area in the list of six pilots – more rural universities and rural areas should be included.
- Exeter was mentioned as an area potentially interested in participating in a future phase of the project.

### **Decisions**

1. Members **noted** the report

### **Actions**

1. Officers to reflect on how best to accommodate the concerns raised regarding the lack of rural participation.
2. Officers to consider how best respond to expressions of interest from areas outside the initial six pilots.
3. Officers to continue with work as directed by members and report back on progress at the next appropriate board meeting.

## **4 End of Year Report**

Eleanor Reader-Moore, Member Services Officer, introduced the report and advised members that it gave a synopsis of the board's work over the past year and looked forward to key issues that would be considered during next year's meeting cycle. She asked members for feedback and suggestions on additions/improvements (within the limit of 2 A4 sides) before it was submitted to the LGA Executive in July.

### **Decisions:**

1. Members **noted** the achievements against the board's priorities in 2015/2016.
2. Members **noted** the board's priority areas for 2016/17.
3. Members **agreed** to forward any suggestions for additions/amendments to MSO.

### **Action:**

1. MSO to include any additions/amendments in the report.

## **5 Skills and Employment Update - Next steps**

Jasbir Jhas, Senior Adviser, introduced the paper and advised the board that it had been developed after a meeting on employment and skills between City Regions and People and Places Board Lead Members on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016. Devolution of the Work and Health Programme and the Adult Education Budget was discussed, as was the relationship between local government and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). Members were asked to consider ways to influence strategy and create an accord between DWP and local authorities. The review of Job Centre Plus was raised and the need to produce research to create a local government vision for the employment service. Members were asked for input on defining the vision, as this would be useful when engaging with Whitehall and politicians.

The Work and Health Programme (WHP) was discussed, as this would replace the Work Programme in 2017. This would be worth £130 million a year and would be available in all areas without a devolution deal. The programme would support those with health conditions, disabilities or those unemployed for over two years. The best possible outcome would need to be achieved for these groups. Members were advised that discussions with Job Centre Plus and contractual obligations to work with councils should be considered.

The board was also advised that work with Shared Intelligence on growth related areas had been recommissioned and that a report on this would be published soon.

In the discussion which followed members made the following points:

- There had been some difficulties engaging with DWP and the relationship needed to be improved. Members highlighted that local authorities were already working with Local Enterprise Partnerships, employers, further and higher education and the careers service to improve skills, employment and job and training opportunities in their areas. Local authorities should be allowed to take over some of the responsibilities of DWP in this area.
- Members expressed concern with the retention of Job Centre Plus. It was emphasised that other successful projects, such as the troubled families programme, needed further support from Job Centre Plus. The approach for helping the unemployed needed to address root cause of unemployment, as it was currently perpetuating a failing system.
- In reference to paragraph 6, there was concern about joint working and those residents in non-devolution deal areas who would not be involved in the co-design / co-commission of WHP.
- Local authorities and local businesses were aware of the skills sets needed in their local areas, but problems with lack of progress in some devolution deals were preventing them addressing skills shortages.

- Members felt that the vision for the skills agenda could be improved, and that the LGA was well placed to influence this.
- There had been instances where sixth form colleges offering vocational qualifications had closed as not enough students had enrolled to make them viable. It was important to address this issue and consider it more widely.
- Members asked officers to continue to develop the evidence base on why the approach on skills and employment should be changed so that it could be used in our lobbying work.

**Decision:**

1. Members **noted** the update.

**Actions:**

1. LGA officers to capture members' comments and reflect these in the next stage of work on skills and employment.
2. LGA officers to continue to strengthen the evidence base underpinning our skills and employment lobbying work.

## **6 Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The board **agreed** the minutes of the last meeting.

## **7 Business Rates Oral Update**

Aivaras Statkevičius, Senior Adviser, introduced the item. He provided a synopsis of the key issues in the debate.

A discussion with members followed.

**Decisions:**

1. Members **noted** the presentation.

## **8 Devolution Green Paper**

Ian Hughes, Head of Policy, introduced the report and discussed the Devolution Green Paper.

A discussion with members followed.

**Decision:**

1. Members **noted** the report.

**Action:**

1. Officers to take forward work as directed by members.

**Appendix A -Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Gillian Brown	Arun District Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council
Members	Cllr Philip Atkins OBE	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Andrew Bowles	Swale Borough Council
	Cllr Paul Carter CBE	Kent County Council
	Cllr Paul Diviani	East Devon District Council
	Cllr Kenneth Meeson	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Roger Blaney	Newark & Sherwood District Council
	Cllr Chris Hayward	Hertfordshire County Council
	Cllr Mike Jones	Cheshire West and Chester Council
	Cllr John Osman	Somerset County Council
	Cllr Jennifer Mein	Lancashire County Council
	Cllr Caitlin Bisknell	Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Amanda Martin	Council of the Isles of Scilly
	Cllr Clive Woodbridge	Epsom and Ewell Borough Council
	Cllr Stan Collins	South Lakeland District Council
	Cllr Sarah Osborne	Lewes District Council
Apologies	Cllr Derek Bastiman	Scarborough Borough Council
	Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
	Cllr John Pollard	Cornwall Council
	Cllr Chris Townsend	Surrey County Council