

People & Places Board

Agenda

Thursday, 29 September 2016
11.00 am

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

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People & Places Board
29 September 2016

There will be a meeting of the People & Places Board at **11.00 am on Thursday, 29 September 2016** Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ.

Tea and coffee will be available at 10:45am
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.

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

Location:

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

LGA Contact:

Eleanor Reader-Moore
0207 664 3383, eleanor.reader-moore@local.gov.uk

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People & Places Board – Membership 2016/2017

Councillor	Authority
Conservative (12)	
Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE (Chairman)	Gloucestershire County Council
Cllr Gillian Brown (Vice Chairman)	Arun District Council
Cllr Philip Atkins OBE	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Derek Bastiman	Scarborough Borough Council
Cllr Roger Blaney	Newark & Sherwood District Council
Cllr Paul Carter CBE	Kent County Council
Cllr Chris Hayward	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Daniel Humphreys	Worthing Borough Council
Cllr Kenneth Meeson	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr John Osman	Somerset County Council
Cllr Blake Pain	Harborough District Council
Cllr Ken Turner	Pendle Borough Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Philip Ham	Mendip District Council
Cllr Robin Howe	Huntingdonshire District Council
Cllr Chris Saint	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
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Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
Cllr Jennifer Mein	Lancashire County Council
Cllr Caitlin Bisknell	Derbyshire County Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Leigh Redman	Somerset County Council
Cllr Frank Radcliffe	North Hertfordshire District Council
Independent (3)	
Cllr John Pollard (Deputy Chair)	Cornwall Council
Cllr Chris Townsend	Surrey County Council
Cllr Amanda Martin	Council of the Isles of Scilly
Substitutes	
Cllr Helen Grant	North Yorkshire County Council
Liberal Democrat (3)	
Cllr Heather Kidd (Deputy Chair)	Shropshire Council
Cllr Stan Collins	South Lakeland District Council
Cllr Sarah Osborne	Lewes District Council
Substitutes	
Cllr David Bill MBE	Leicestershire County Council

Agenda

People & Places Board

Thursday 29 September 2016

11.00 am

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

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Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 1 November 2016, 1.00 pm, Conference Hall, Mary Sumner House, 24 Tufton Street, Westminster, London

Note of last People & Places Board meeting

Title: People & Places Board
Date: Wednesday 15 June 2016
Venue: Bevin Hall, Ground 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, Apologies and Declarations of Interest 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.	
2	Superfast Broadband Update 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">• The online speed test only worked if there was an adequate signal, which was a problem in some areas.• 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.	

- 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.

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 10th 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, informing members that it was expected local government business rates retention reform would be implemented by 2020. In the run up to this, the Government will also review it needs assessment and resource distribution methodology. The LGA was currently working closely with DCLG, including co-chairing an officer-level steering group and a number of technical working groups, in order to provide a forum where all parts of the sector could make their views heard by the Government. Officers were also currently considering what the impact of business rate appeals and business rate reliefs would be on local government under the new system.

A formal consultation on business rate retention was expected to be published in July. Business rates retention 'pilots' announced in the 2016 Budget were planned to be April 2017, followed by a consultation on needs and redistribution in 2018. It was expected that the full system would be in place by April 2020.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- The working groups should consider both what 'day 1' and 'day 1000' would look like, to ensure that the reform is sustainable for

local government in the future.

- Members asked what amount business rate income would approximately be and requested a fact sheet on the issue.
- It would also be useful to have a list of how much funding was being held back through top-slices within the current 50 per cent retention system and for what purposes.
- Members felt they needed a better understanding of the current 50% retention system.
- Members emphasised that they would welcome a special session on all the points covered in the item, supported by finance officers. Lead members would meet in September and review the situation on business rates.
- Members felt that the transition to the new system once the revenue support grant was withdrawn, including potential devolution of services such as attendance allowance, should be carefully considered to protect individual councils from a 'shock to the system' and differential pressure to increase council tax to set budgets.
- Members discussed the implementation of business rates retention reform for two-tier authorities. It was felt that the quantum for a whole area could be considered first and then a decision made on dividing business rates up.

Decisions:

1. Members **noted** the presentation.

Actions:

1. Officers to produce a factsheet on business rate income and provide answers to other queries as set out above.
2. Officers to circulate the presentation slides.
3. Officers to arrange a meeting between lead members in September.

8 Devolution Green Paper

Ian Hughes, Head of Policy, introduced the report, advising members that the paper sought to revise the debate on devolution and open a further discussion at the LGA Conference, where the paper would be launched. Issues considered included public service reform, fiscal devolution and public participation. Responses from members would contribute to a paper produced at the end of 2016.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- Issues resulting from proposals for mayoral governance models were discussed.
- Members asked what the deadline for comments on the paper was.
- There was concern that the paper did not discuss engaging with MPs on devolution enough, particularly when it was felt MPs still needed to be brought around to the idea of devolution. Government had to find a way of addressing this issue.
- The debate needed moving away from structures and to begin to emphasise that devolution could improve outcomes for residents. This could help convince MPs of devolution's benefits.
- There was no mention of double devolution in the paper and members asked if there was an opportunity to define this in the paper.
- Members commented that there had been delays receiving responses from DCLG after submitting documents on devolution deals. Local authorities needed a response within a reasonable time period to take deals forward - the paper could discuss this.

Decisions:

1. Members **noted** the report.

Actions:

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

Membership and Terms of Reference for 2016/2017

Purpose

For discussion and decision.

Summary

For members to note the membership and agree the Terms of Reference of the Board for 2016/17.

Recommendation:

Members note the membership of the board and agree the Terms of Reference.

Action:

Officers respond accordingly to members' direction.

Contact officer:

Eleanor Reader-Moore

Position:

Member Services Officer

Email:

eleanor.reader-moore@local.gov.uk

Phone no:

0207 664 3383

Membership 2016/2017

Councillor	Authority
Conservative (12)	
Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE (Chairman)	Gloucestershire County Council
Cllr Gillian Brown (Vice Chairman)	Arun District Council
Cllr Philip Atkins OBE	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Derek Bastiman	Scarborough Borough Council
Cllr Roger Blaney	Newark & Sherwood District Council
Cllr Paul Carter CBE	Kent County Council
Cllr Chris Hayward	Hertfordshire County Council
Cllr Daniel Humphreys *	Worthing Borough Council
Cllr Kenneth Meeson	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr John Osman	Somerset County Council
Cllr Blake Pain *	Harborough District Council
Cllr Ken Turner *	Pendle Borough Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Philip Ham *	Mendip District Council
Cllr Robin Howe *	Huntingdonshire District Council
Cllr Chris Saint *	Stratford-on-Avon District Council
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Cllr Michael Payne (Deputy Chair) *	Gedling Borough Council
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Cllr Jennifer Mein	Lancashire County Council
Cllr Caitlin Bisknell	Derbyshire County Council

<i>Substitutes</i>	
Cllr Leigh Redman	Somerset County Council
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Liberal Democrat (3)	
Cllr Heather Kidd (Deputy Chair)	Shropshire Council
Cllr Stan Collins	South Lakeland District Council
Cllr Sarah Osborne	Lewes District Council
<i>Substitutes</i>	
Cllr David Bill MBE	Leicestershire County Council

* Newly appointed to this governance structure for 2016/17 meeting year.

Terms of Reference: People and Places Board

- 1. The People and Places Board provides a forum for local authorities that are not metropolitan to debate economic growth and public service transformation in their areas.**

Remit

2. The People and Places Board brings together senior and authoritative elected members from non-metropolitan authorities (county, district/borough, and non-metropolitan unitary councils), and is reflective of those in Combined Authorities or seeking devolution deals.
3. The remit of the Board is to develop greater clarity on the role of non-metropolitan authorities in enabling economic growth for the long-term benefit of residents, including how devolution and transformation of public services can support this. The Board considers how planning and infrastructure provision, publicly-funded skills and employment programmes, digital connectivity and housing might be better-deployed in a non-metropolitan setting to drive growth, as well as how people services and health and care integration, together with greater use of pooled funding, might help to drive transformation in services.

Operational accountabilities

4. The Board will seek to involve councillors in supporting the delivery of these priorities (through Forums, policy grouping, Special Interest Groups (SIGs), regional networks and other means of wider engagement); essentially operating as the centre of a network connecting to all councils and drawing on the expertise of key advisors from the sector.
5. The People and Places Board will be responsible for:
 - 5.1 Ensuring the priorities of councils are fed into the business planning process.
 - 5.2 Developing and overseeing a work programme to deliver their brief, covering lobbying, campaigns, research, improvement support and events and linking with other boards where appropriate.
 - 5.3 Sharing good practice and ideas to stimulate innovation and improvement.
 - 5.4 Representing and lobbying on behalf of the LGA, including making public statements on its areas of responsibility.
 - 5.5 Building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders.
 - 5.6 Involving representatives from councils in its work, through task groups, Commissions, SIGs, regional networks and mechanisms.

5.7 Commissioning LGA officers and resources, where appropriate, to respond to specific issues referred to the Board by one or more member councils or groupings of councils.

6. The People and Places Board may:

6.1 Appoint members to relevant outside bodies in accordance with the Political Conventions.

6.2 Appoint member champion and spokespersons from the Board to lead on key issues.

Work Programme

7. The Board to set its own work programme which is agreed at the start of each meeting cycle in early Autumn.

Quorum

8. One third of the members, provided that representatives of at least 2 political groups represented on the body are present.

Political Composition

9. The composition by political party is recalculated each year and reflects the political proportionality of the wider group of councils from which their membership is drawn. The current composition is:

9.1 Conservative group:	12 members
9.2 Labour group:	4 members
9.3 Independent group:	3 members
9.4 Liberal Democrat group:	3 members

10. Substitute members from each political group may also be appointed.

Frequency per year

11. Meetings to be five times per annum.

Reporting Accountabilities

12. The LGA Executive provides oversight of the Board. The Board may report periodically to the LGA Executive as required, and will submit an annual report to the Executive's July meeting.



People and Places Board Work Programme 2016/17

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This report sets out a proposed work programme for the People and Places Board for 2016/17.

The work programme seeks to:

1. Reflect the broad remit of the Board and provide continuity.
2. Provide space for the Board to steer policy development on behalf of non-metropolitan areas on new issues in this Board cycle, such as the UK leaving the EU.

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment upon and agree the draft work programme for 2016/17.

Action

Officers to take forward actions in line with Members' steer.

Contact officer: Rebecca Cox
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone no: 020 7187 7384
Email: Rebecca.Cox@local.gov.uk

People and Places Board Work Programme 2016/17

Background

1. Established in February 2014, the People and Places Board represents the interests of non-metropolitan councils at the LGA. Its membership is drawn from the County Councils Network, District Councils Network and any non-county unitaries not represented by those two bodies.
2. To date, the work of the Board has covered devolution, skills, employment and welfare reform, digital connectivity and public service transformation, and has also input into the LGA's work on housing. The Board has worked closely with other relevant LGA Boards on shared organisational priorities (in particular the City Regions Board with which it develops the LGA's work on devolution) making strong representation for devolution to non-metropolitan areas.
3. Over the course of the last Board cycle, a number of new devolution deals, including deals in non-metropolitan, two tier areas, and extensions to existing deals were announced. More recently, preparations for the incoming directly-elected Mayors have begun to take shape and the design of a new business rates retention system has continued. Following the vote to leave the EU, a new Ministerial team is now in place and an Autumn Statement is expected on 23 November. New Government Departments to facilitate the UK's departure from the EU have also been set up and their work programme has begun.
4. It is in this context that the People and Places Board is asked to agree a draft programme for the year. **Members are asked to consider:**
 - 4.1. **Specific policy priorities based on the Board's remit.**
 - 4.2. **The balance and prioritisation of activity within the proposed work programme.**
 - 4.3. **Aspects of EU exit that will have a bearing on the Board's work** (Members will receive a late paper following steer from the Leadership Board on the LGA's future Brexit policy and lobbying direction.)

Suggested priorities and work programme for 2016/17

5. Since its inception the Board has bolstered the non-metropolitan voice within the LGA and played an important role developing the LGA's work and lobbying positions on devolution. The Board will have a particularly important role in influencing new Ministers on issues such as devolution, skills and employment support and digital connectivity. Members will also have a view on how the Board will want to engage with the implications of leaving the EU including on rural and digital issues.
6. The LGA's Leadership Board met earlier this month to discuss the LGA's priorities and work programme in relation to EU exit. Members will receive a scoping paper on this topic for further discussion.
7. The previous Board agreed to pursue more of a focus on digital connectivity and commissioned the LGA's Up to Speed campaign to raise the issue of those still not

connected to fast and reliable broadband speeds. The campaign has undergone a successful first phase launch and agenda item 6 updates the Board on recent activity, and present a proposed work programme for the 2016/2017 Board.

8. The board leads on the LGA's 'Leading Places' programme. Jointly with Universities UK and funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the pilot programme looks to strengthen the relationship between councils and higher education institutions. Item 7 updates on progress and asks for members' steer on proposals for a second phase of the programme.
9. The board also expressed a strong interest in continuing its work on employment and skills and agenda item 9 gives members the opportunity to proposals in this area more fully. Particular areas of focus are likely to include the Work and Health Programme, Apprenticeship Levy, and further devolution of skills and employment support.
10. The Board's research and lobbying work on devolution has been critical in keeping up the momentum on this important agenda. The LGA also provides a comprehensive programme of support for areas considering and implementing devolution deals. Further information, and proposals for the further development of the LGA's devolution programme, are included at agenda item 5.

Next steps

11. Members are invited to comment on and agree the Board's priorities and scope of the work programme as outlined above.

Financial implications

12. The draft work programme can be delivered within existing resources.



Devolution Update

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper describes activity in support of devolution undertaken by the LGA since the last meeting of the People and Places Board, sets out activities currently planned for early autumn and provides an initial overview of proposed priorities for the year ahead.

Recommendation

That members note the update, consider the planned list of activities and outlined priorities and comment, as appropriate, on the direction and substance of the proposed approach set out in paragraphs 12 – 16.

Action

Officers to take forward their work as directed by members.

Contact officer: Philip Clifford
Position: Senior Adviser
Phone no: 07909 898327
Email: Philip.Clifford@local.gov.uk

Devolution Update

Overview

1. This report provides members with an update on activity undertaken in support of further devolution since the last meeting of the People and Places Board in June, sets out those activities already planned for early autumn and outlines an indicative set of priorities for the year ahead.
2. Members are asked to note work which has been recently undertaken, consider the list of planned activities and outlined priorities and comment, as appropriate, on the direction and substance of the proposed approach.

Recent Activity

3. Since the last meeting of the People and Places Board on 15 June, the LGA has taken forward a wide-ranging programme of work in support of further devolution.
4. On 21 June the LGA hosted, [Devolution – a new type of leadership](#), which considered new and emerging forms of local leadership within the context of devolution to councils.
5. Between 5 – 7 July the LGA's Annual Conference saw the launch of a suite of publications related to devolution, including:
 - 5.1 A key note discussion paper - [What next for devolution?](#) which draws on ideas from board members and councillors across the sector to provoke a wide-ranging debate about the future direction and scope of devolution. The paper encourages councillors, government and others to respond with their views via the LGA's Devonext 'microsite' – www.devonext.org – and will be supported by public affairs and campaign activities over the autumn.
 - 5.2 A '[plain English](#)' [guide to combined authorities](#), developed in partnership with Shared Intelligence, which combines an overview of the relevant legislative provisions, with practical suggestions and advice on setting up a combined authority.
 - 5.3 [Professor Robin Hambleton's report on Executive Models of Governance](#), which examines international models of sub-national governance and highlights lessons for those establishing devolved governance structures in England.
 - 5.4 '[Don't Be left in the Dark](#)'- an accessible guide which provides answers to some of the key questions about devolution and what it means for councils, their residents and communities.
6. On 4 August, LGA officers from across the finance and policy directorate facilitated a day-long workshop attended by councils and officials from Communities and Local Government that explored the potential devolution of new responsibilities relating to employment and skills, that might arise from the government's proposal for the full retention of local business rates. The discussion from this event was used to inform the

LGA's response to Government, which was be considered by the Leadership Board in September.

7. On 9 August, LGA officers, supported by senior council representatives, attended a workshop facilitated by Communities and Local Government to identify key risks and opportunities to devolution arising from the outcome of the EU referendum. The outputs from this discussion have been passed to the Department for Exiting the European Union. In addition, the LGA will be working across Whitehall to ensure full consideration of the potential implications and opportunities for local government. A separate paper tabled for discussion at this meeting provides a more detailed account of the LGA's work planned for this area.
8. Throughout the summer the LGA has continued to develop and deliver a bespoke offer of support for a number of areas across the country. This has included working directly with Greater Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, and Tees Valley CA. Discussions are also currently underway to firm up the LGA's support offer to established combined authorities.
9. For reference, local support needs have included: implementation of deals, leadership development, governance, constitution development, completion of assurance frameworks, communications and civic and democratic engagement.

Actions planned for early autumn

10. A number of activities are already planned for early autumn, which aim to take forward priorities previously identified by members and maintain momentum on devolution in response to emerging developments. These include:
 - 10.1 Publication in October of commissioned research by the New Economic Foundation (NEF) that will help build the case for citizen participation and highlight a range of practical approaches taken by councils and combined authorities to engage citizens in devolution.
 - 10.2 Publication in October of two pieces of commissioned research by New Economy. The first draws on interviews, desktop research and first-hand experience in Greater Manchester to provide an overview of the potential 'lessons learnt' from the process of devolution so far. The second is an online 'tax and spend' tool that will allow individual areas to better make the case for devolution by providing an overview of public expenditure and fiscal revenue within their area.
 - 10.3 Hosting a communities and devolution event on October 17 that will explore the benefits of enabling citizens to influence local decision-making and service design in the context of devolution.
 - 10.4 Refreshing and significantly redesigning the LGA's Devolution Hub, providing more accessible and better tailored information and guidance, a clearer and more focused support offer and more regularly updated content on areas of key significance.
 - 10.5 Submitting written evidence to the Business Innovation and Skills Select Committee Inquiry into the Government's Industrial Strategy. This will

specifically highlight the role of local government in developing an effective sub-national approach to economic growth, stress the importance of continued devolution and the need to develop a place based approach to growth.

- 10.6 Pressing the case for further devolution through the LGA's submission to government in advance of the Autumn Statement on 23 November. Currently, subject to the agreement of members, it is proposed that our lines are broadly as follows:
- 10.6.1 National government should send a clear message that it will continue to support the existing deal-based approach.
 - 10.6.2 Government must be more transparent and flexible regarding its tests for devolved governance arrangements.
 - 10.6.3 Government should formally seek to shift its ambitions away from identifying and agreeing a series of licensed exceptions to national policy towards an approach that supports broad place based outcomes.
- 10.7 Facilitating the first meeting of an LGA supported combined authorities chief executives network, on 26 September, chaired by Martin Reeves, Chief Executive of the West Midlands Combined Authority.
- 10.8 Further formalising the LGA's devolution support offer, including brokering a tailored package of interventions with the Centre for Public Scrutiny and Local Partnerships and producing material setting out the resource available to councils.
- 10.9 Actively consulting key stakeholders on the LGA's Annual Conference publication and developing a response that seeks to identify and take forward emerging priorities.

Priorities for the year ahead

11. In light of the events of recent months, the LGA's key priority in relation to devolution will be to stress to government the need to maintain momentum on the deal process currently in train and provide greater clarity on new Ministers' approach to devolution and governance. In view of the limited progress made so far in agreeing devolution deals with non-metropolitan areas it is proposed that members of the People and Places Board request a meeting with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government and invite him to a future meeting of the Board to raise this issue directly.
12. We will also seek to ensure that the devolution of any new responsibilities through business rate retention supports local growth and strikes the right balance between devolved areas that have already made significant investments in governance and delivery capacity and those areas that have not.
13. As set out above, both the LGA's Autumn Statement Submission and our wider public affairs work will seek to push the case for greater devolution to local areas, particularly within the context of a new national industrial strategy and the creation of the Department for Exiting the European Union.

14. Looking ahead to the longer term, work is already in progress to develop a programme of commissioned research, events and wider support activity to assist councils in moving ahead with the practicalities of devolution as well as to shape the Government's thinking regarding the pace and trajectory of devolution over the coming months.
15. While not exhaustive, topics under consideration for inclusion are:
 - 15.1 Advancing the case for fiscal devolution.
 - 15.2 Highlighting and supporting the role of local government can and does play in securing international trade.
 - 15.3 Developing a coherent understanding of the challenges and emerging best practice around the use and governance of digital technology in public service delivery
 - 15.4 Reappraising the role of Local Economic Partnerships within the context of a newly emerging industrial strategy.
16. **Board members are asked to consider this list of potential priorities, reflect on the emerging context and comment on the direction and substance of the proposed focus. Specifically, they are asked to consider the proposal to seek a meeting with the Secretary of State to discuss current and future plans relating to devolution in non-metropolitan areas.**



Broadband, Mobile and the Digital Divide

Purpose

For discussion and direction

Summary

This paper sets out proposals for the Board's work programme on broadband, mobile and the digital divide for the 2016/2017 Board cycle.

Recommendation

Members to discuss the proposed work programme, and steer officers on the suitability of the actions suggested **in paragraphs 19 to 22.**

Action

Officers to take forward as directed by members.

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Broadband, mobile and the digital divide

Background

1. This paper is intended to set the context for a discussion on broadband, mobile and the digital divide in the UK, and asks for members' steer on a proposed programme of work covering the 2016/17 Board cycle.

National policy context

2. Members of the People and Places Board have made clear that access to fast and reliable digital connectivity is no longer a luxury, it is a necessity. It is something residents and businesses expect in their premises; a vital component for supporting growth in non-metropolitan areas, and an essential enabler of public sector digital transformation and wider public sector reform.

Broadband

3. Councils have strongly supported the extension of access to fast and reliable connectivity through the Superfast Broadband Programme. Indeed, many councils are aiming to extend provision beyond the Programme's national target (passing 95 per cent of premises) at their own local level by using funding from claw-back clauses in supplier contracts.
4. Over the past year, the Government reports that an extra 700,000 premises now have superfast broadband available as a result of the programme, bringing the total connected to over 4 million.¹ However, whilst the average national coverage figure rises, there are still underlying and profound inequalities in coverage and speeds between different areas. This sees some council areas where superfast coverage has reached over 95 per cent of premises compared to others where up to 30 per cent cannot achieve the same superfast speeds. In its latest digital infrastructure report, Ofcom estimates approximately 2.4 million premises (8 per cent) in the UK are unable to receive broadband speeds above 10Mbps.² The Government has also estimated that even taking account of existing public intervention and future commercial roll out plans combined, up to 1 million UK premises will not be able to access speeds of 10Mbps or higher by the end of 2017. Over half a million of these premises will be found in rural areas and more than 100,000 will be remotely rural.³
5. To enable at least some of these premises to be served, the Government plans to introduce a new broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO) via the upcoming Digital Economy Bill giving everybody the legal right to request a connection of 10Mbps. More information on the USO is provided later on in the paper under the Digital Economy Bill section.

¹ [Department for Culture Media and Sport – Broadband Performance Indicator – June 2016](#)

² [Connected Nations 2015, Ofcom - December 2015](#)

³ [Department for Culture Media and Sport - A New Broadband Universal Service Obligation Consultation](#)

Mobile connectivity

6. At the last Board, members made clear that reliable mobile connectivity is increasingly important for residents in non-metropolitan areas. Many face challenges both in terms of the quality of coverage they receive, the lack of choice of mobile network operator (MNO) locally, and the prevalence of not spots.
7. After the widely reported failure of the Government-funded Mobile Infrastructure Project, the extension of mobile provision across the country is now solely a commercial endeavour. However, in order to encourage the extension of mobile provision the Government secured coverage obligations from MNOs to deliver £5 billion of improvements to mobile infrastructure across the UK. These obligations also guarantee voice and SMS text coverage for 90 per cent of the UK landmass from each provider by 2017. Separately, after winning an auction of 4G spectrum in 2013, the operator O2 has a legal obligation to roll out 4G to cover at least 98 per cent of the UK population (when indoors) by 2017 at the latest. Ofcom has stated that other MNOs intend to match this coverage.
8. The Government also announced it selected the UK's largest MNO, EE, to build a new national mobile network for the Emergency Services, giving 300,000 critical emergency workers access to 4G voice and data for the first time. As part of the project, EE will build 500 new mast sites, expanding mobile coverage in rural areas. The project will provide those rural consumers on EE's network with a more reliable mobile connection – although the network will have the capability to afford network access priority to Emergency Services when needed.
9. The most recent Ofcom mobile coverage statistics report that 99.6 per cent of UK premises have outdoor 2G and 3G coverage from at least one operator and 97.8 per cent of premises now have 4G coverage available from at least one operator.⁴ When broken down by urban and non-metropolitan area however, a starker picture becomes apparent. Whilst 96.9 per cent of rural premises have 2G and 3G coverage from at least one provider, less than 70 per cent receive coverage from all four operators. Furthermore, indoor coverage in rural areas is particularly poor, with only 31 per cent of rural premises receiving an indoor voice service.⁵ For residents to feel a noticeable difference in the quality of signal, there will need to be coverage improvements across all operators in rural areas.
10. In light of these coverage statistics, councils have informed LGA officers of their concerns at the representative nature of Ofcom's mobile coverage data. In some instances, councils believe it is not reflective of the realities on the ground in rural areas. This is concerning considering it is this data that will be used to hold MNOs to account on their aforementioned coverage obligations. As such, it will be important the process by which

⁴ [Ofcom Communications Market Report August 2016](#)

⁵ There are difficulties in measuring the coverage of mobile signal indoors. In some circumstances, due to variations in construction materials and building geometries, there is no guarantee that the signal from outdoors will be able to penetrate inside all buildings. In many cases, wifi is increasingly being used to provide voice and high speed data services.

Ofcom verifies its coverage data to ensure accuracy, is clarified. More details on proposed LGA activity in this area are provided in the Future Activity section of this paper.

11. Following councils' deep involvement in the provision of superfast broadband, many are exploring the role they can play in catalysing improvements in local mobile provision. To date, whilst some councils have developed and maintain their own strategic relationships with MNOs, the majority of interactions are via council planning departments regarding the placement of mobile infrastructure.⁶ Such interactions are likely to decrease following Government plans to extend permitted development rights for taller mobile phone masts of up to 50ft to be built or upgraded without planning permission. The LGA has urged MNOs to work with councils and communities rather than bypass them in order to identify and address coverage blackspots together. There is also further work to be done ensuring councils across the country are better placed to have more strategic level conversations with MNOs to fully understand their roll out plans and, where appropriate, help the extension of provision through the use of public infrastructure. More details on proposed LGA activity in this area are provided in the Future Activity section of this paper.

The Digital Economy Bill

12. In May 2016 the Government used the Queen's Speech to announce a new Digital Economy Bill. The LGA briefing on the second reading of the Bill can be found in **Annex A**. The Bill will enact a range of measures of importance to councils. These include:
13. **Confirming in legislation a new broadband USO** giving residents the legal right to request a broadband connection of at least 10Mbps.
- 13.1. The LGA have argued that a 10Mbps minimum download speed is a step in the right direction, but in the longer term, standards must keep pace with national average speeds and the expectations of households, especially at peak times. We have also argued that the USO should obligate providers to supply consistent uploads speeds and make available the option of a social tariff in order to prevent further digital exclusion. More details on the LGA lobbying lines on the design of the USO can be found in [our recent submission to Ofcom](#).
14. **Conferring new powers on Ofcom to obtain address-level data** on broadband line speeds and monitor the progress of 4G coverage across the country. This would allow Ofcom to use this data for monitoring speed prediction accuracy and for third party intermediaries to use to present comparisons to consumers.
- 14.1. The LGA has welcomed these measures which will promote competition in the telecommunications sector and provide consumers with the knowledge and power to find the best deal.
15. **The Bill amends the Electronic Communications Code** which permits operators to construct infrastructure on public and private land. The code aims to ensure property

⁶ In an LGA survey conducted last year, less than 50 per cent of councils surveyed had relationships with MNOs, locally. Of the 40 per cent that did not, 75 per cent were keen to develop.

owners will be fairly compensated for use of their land for mobile infrastructure whilst restricting their ability to profit from the public need for communications infrastructure.”

- 15.1. We support the revision of the Electronic Communications Code in principle as a way to simplify the process of installing or upgrading digital infrastructure in order to create an environment conducive to extending digital connectivity provision. However, the LGA has pushed commercial operators to work in partnership with councils to find the most viable locations for new infrastructure and ensure communities are properly engaged. The Government’s Impact Assessment of the reform of the Electronic Communications Code conservatively estimates that the communications sector is likely to see benefits of £1 billion over a 20 year period from decreased rental charges as a result of new measures. The LGA will seek clarity from Government on how it will ensure this money is pumped back into extending mobile provision across the country.
16. The Bill will continue to Committee stage next month at which point the LGA will be able to support and suggest amendments. It is expected to pass through the House of Commons by the end of Autumn and, once through the House of Lords, receive Royal Assent by spring 2017. For Members steer, officers propose a range of further activities to influence the Digital Economy Bill under Future Activity section of the paper.

Board activity to date

17. Over the past year, the People and Places Board has pursued a detailed work programme in these areas with its main focus on broadband. This has included:
- 17.1. Commissioning a [detailed survey of local authorities involved in the Superfast Broadband Programme](#) to guide the Board’s lobbying direction.
- 17.2. Hosting Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) Chief Executive, Chris Townsend, and questioning him on the performance of Superfast Broadband Programme and the Government’s Mobile Infrastructure Project.
- 17.3. Organising a national conference, in partnership with Government, for council officers and councillors to discuss how best to procure solutions to reach the final five percent of premises without broadband.
- 17.4. Commissioning a [national ‘Up to Speed’ campaign](#) to raise awareness of those businesses and residents still without adequate broadband speeds (to date the website has received over 5,000 page views with over 1,500 people having taken the speed test across over 65 per cent of council areas in England).⁷
- 17.5. Secured national media coverage supporting a range of our lobbying lines including:
- 17.5.1. The placement of mobile infrastructure, which received coverage in [the Daily Mail](#).

⁷ Members enquired how the Up to Speed website could be accessed by those with very poor speeds. Analysis has shown that when accessing the site on a speed of 1Mbps, the homepage loads within 3 seconds. Overall, our digital team concluded that this shouldn’t present a problem to users with slow speeds.

- 17.5.2. Broadband providers' advertising of misleading "up to" broadband speeds which was covered in [The Telegraph](#), [The Daily Mail](#), [The Sun](#), [The Daily Mirror](#), [the BBC online](#), on ITV's Good Morning Britain and BBC Radio 4's Today programme.
- 17.5.3. Calling on Government to [reaffirm its commitment to enacting the Universal Service Obligation](#) after reports of delays to the Digital Economy Bill receiving national coverage on [BBC online](#). As a result, the Government issued a response reiterating its commitment to the USO.
- 17.5.4. Calling for broadband providers to open up their household speed data to help consumers compare more accurate speed estimates, which received coverage from [BBC Online](#), The Daily Telegraph, The Daily Express, The Times and the i Paper.
- 17.6. With lead member steer, responded to the Culture Media and Sport Committee Inquiry into Establishing world-class connectivity throughout the UK inquiry

Future Board activity

18. This upcoming Board cycle is an opportunity for members to build on their work to date, influence Government policy on behalf of the sector, and increase focus on supporting councils to catalyse improvements to mobile connectivity. In this regard, members are requested to give their steer on the suitability of pursuing three areas of focus.

- 18.1. Providing political leadership and steer as the LGA seeks to influence the drafting of the Digital Economy Bill.**
- 18.2. Pursuing a stronger focus on mobile connectivity with the aim of supporting local government to play an impactful role in catalysing improvements to mobile provision in rural areas.**
- 18.3. Building on the success of the first phase of the Up to Speed campaign by developing a further a range of online resources to support councils extend provision to the final 5 per cent**

Digital Economy Bill

19. As part of the Board's activity, members will wish to influence the passing of the Digital Economy Bill, and steer the focus of officers' work. The Board's activities undertaken in this regard could be as follows:
- 19.1. Invite Sharon White, Chief Executive, Ofcom to the next Board on 1 November to discuss the outline of final report she will present to Government in December on the implementation of the Universal Service Obligation.⁸

⁸ Ofcom has been commissioned by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to provide technical analysis and recommendations to support the eventual design of the broadband USO after it is enacted in legislation. They will be providing final advice to Government by the end of 2016

- 19.2. Provide steer where appropriate on briefings for key stages in legislative process and draft amendments to the Bill, including for the upcoming Committee stage in October.
- 19.3. Maintain an overview of LGA media activity seeking to raise the profile of our key lines in the press.
- 19.4. Promote our key lines at Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative Party Conference and at other key events. (The Chair and Vice Chair are already speaking at the Conservative and Liberal Democrat conferences on broadband and the Digital Economy Bill.)

Mobile Connectivity

20. Members made clear at the last Board they would like to increase focus on mobile connectivity and the role that local government can play on behalf of residents, championing improvements to service quality and coverage. In this regard, the Board activities over the coming year could be as follows:
 - 20.1. Inviting representatives from mobile operators to present to members on their plans for rolling out improved coverage – for instance, members might ask EE to present on their work building an Emergency Services Mobile Network.
 - 20.2. Hosting a national conference on mobile connectivity inviting key stakeholders from the mobile sector, Ofcom, Government and local authorities to discuss how to improve coverage going forward.
 - 20.3. With member and council officer steer, produce guidance for councils on how they can best liaise with MNOs at a local level to discuss roll out plans and influence the placement of mobile infrastructure.
 - 20.4. Seek to explore with Ofcom how coverage data, especially from MNOs, can be independently verified, potentially through crowdsourced data, to assure it is reflective of the situation on the ground.

Broadband and the Up to Speed Campaign

21. Members may also wish to build their work on broadband to date and further develop the LGA Up to Speed Campaign. This could take the form of:
 - 21.1. Collating best practice case studies relating to council's efforts to extend digital connectivity. This could include examples of innovative funding approaches, use of new technology, and separately funded community initiatives.
 - 21.2. Using the campaign as a platform to inform the sector and public of our lines on the Universal Service Obligation using a range of resources including FAQs and summary documents.
 - 21.3. Utilising data from speedtests to design an infographic/build a "councillors' map of broadband speeds" across England or create another equivalent engaging design.



21.4. Monitoring further opportunities for the campaign to feature in local and national media.

Timescales

22. Once members have provided a steer, officers will look fully scope out timescales of the above outputs.

Next steps

23. **Members are invited to comment upon, and agree, the draft work programme for 2016/17.**

Local Government Association Briefing

Digital Economy Bill

House of Commons, Second Reading

13 September 2016



KEY MESSAGES

- **Part 1, Clause 1:** The Government's proposed creation of a broadband Universal Service Obligation ('USO') as a safety net for those residents and businesses not connected is a positive development. Access to fast and reliable digital connectivity is a necessity for households and businesses in the UK and is a major driver behind growth, jobs and the emerging creative industries.
- A 10Mbps minimum download speed is a step in the right direction, but in the longer term standards must keep pace with national average speeds and the expectations of households, especially at peak times.
- Download speed should only be one of a basket of indicators USO must meet. The USO specification should obligate suppliers to provide consistent uploads speeds at a minimum of 2Mbps with the aim of doubling that figure over the next 10 years.
- We would like to see a new clause in the Bill to include a reporting function which would compel the Government to report annually on the progress, success and take up of the USO.
- In order to prevent further digital exclusion, the Government should put in place a social tariff, in a similar manner to the telephony USO, for those who would face undue hardship having to pay for broadband services.
- **Part 1, Clause 2:** We support the Government's ambitions to empower consumers to more easily switch providers to help reduce household bills and encourage price competition in the market. As part of this, Ofcom should explore the viability of collective switching initiatives in the communications market.
- **Part 1, Clause 3:** We welcome moves to allow consumers to receive compensation when their broadband services are below standard. The compensation process should be as simple as possible and the ultimate obligation to resolve issues should be on providers. To prevent residents and businesses suffering from long term broadband outages, the Bill should be amended to include a specific obligation for providers to fix faults with connections within appropriate timescales.
- **Part 2:** We support the revision of the Electronic Communications Code to simplify the process of installing or upgrading digital infrastructure. It is important commercial operators work in partnership with councils, who maintain the best overview of local areas' digital connectivity needs, to find the most viable locations for new infrastructure and ensure communities are properly engaged.
- The Government's Impact Assessment of the reform of the Electronic Communications Code conservatively estimates that the communications sector is likely to see benefits of £1 billion over a 20 year period from decreased rental charges as a result of new measures. We will seek clarity from the Government on how it will ensure this money is re-invested into extending mobile provision across the country.

Briefing

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Access to digital services (Part 1)

The Universal Service Obligation (Clause 1)

Clause 1 clarifies the Government's powers to include broadband within the scope of the Universal Service Obligation ('USO'). This would give all citizens the legal right to request a broadband connection, similar to the way the existing USO operates to request a telephone line or arrangements for the installation of utilities. The Bill's explanatory notes highlight the Government's ambition to give people the legal right to request a broadband connection with speeds of 10Mbps by the end of the Parliament. The Government intends to set out this minimum download speed, along with other specific USO performance requirements, separately in secondary legislation.

The LGA welcomes the Government's proposed creation of a broadband USO. Access to fast and reliable digital connectivity is a necessity for households and businesses in the UK, enabling them to utilise online services such as bill payments and online shopping, to access public services such as telehealth care and filing electronic tax returns. Excellent digital connectivity is also a major driver behind growth, jobs and the emerging creative industries and is particularly important to rural communities.

The USO will underpin the Government's ambitions to deliver more services online at less cost including major transformation programmes like Universal Credit and Troubled Families and to make the NHS paperless by 2020. It will also be vital for the public sector workforce and elected representatives to operate more effectively and productively while working remotely.

Councils are best placed to understand the digital needs of local areas and have strongly supported the extension of access to fast and reliable connectivity through the Superfast Broadband Programme. Many councils are aiming to extend provision beyond the Programme's target of passing 95 per cent of premises and, in some places, are hoping to achieve closer to 100 per cent by using funding from claw-back clauses in supplier contracts. Despite this, there will inevitably be some premises, mainly from remote rural areas, that won't be reached by the current tranches of work. As such, the LGA welcomes the creation of a broadband USO as a safety net for those residents and businesses not connected.

A 10Mbps minimum download speed is a step in the right direction, but in the longer term this should increase in line with national average speeds. Over the next five years, commercial roll outs in our towns and cities (such as Virgin Media's Project Lightning) will almost certainly see national average download speeds rise sharply. By 2020, it is likely that over 60 per cent of residents will be able to access services of 300Mbps and faster, with over 95 per cent of premises being able to access at least 30Mbps. For this reason minimum standards must keep pace with national average speeds and the expectations of households, especially at peak times.

The Government will outline the USO's performance requirements in secondary legislation. The LGA have argued that download speed should only be one of a basket of indicators the Universal Service Obligation (USO) must meet. In our view, it will be imperative that the USO has specific obligations on upload speed. Fast and reliable upload speed is a growing requirement for rural businesses which utilise cloud services, video conferencing and send large data files. However, a survey conducted by The Federation of Small Businesses found over half of businesses (61 per cent) were dissatisfied with the upload speed they were

receiving from their connection.¹ With this in mind, the USO specification should obligate suppliers to provide consistent uploads speeds at a minimum of 2Mbps with the aim of doubling that figure over the next 10 years.

To prevent residents and businesses suffering from long term broadband outages, there should be a specific obligation within the USO for Universal Service Providers (USPs) to fix faults with connections within appropriate timescales.

In order to prevent further digital exclusion, the Government should put in place a social tariff, in a similar manner to the telephony USO, for those who would face undue hardship having to pay for broadband services. Research commissioned by Ofcom in 2014 demonstrated “marked relationships between socio-economic deprivation and [poor] broadband availability in cities”.² Our members also report similar correlations in rural areas potentially signalling that demand amongst the low income demographic could be high.

We would like to see a new clause in the Bill to include a reporting function which would compel the Government to report annually on the progress, success and take up of the USO. The annual report should include information on the number of premises that have been supplied with 10Mbps+ connections as a result of the USO including the number of premises that have been required to cover some of the cost of connection and the average cost of connection per premise.

Switching providers (Clause 2)

Clause 2 gives Ofcom the power to obligate communications providers to make the switching process easier, especially in cases where they have bought bundled packages, for example broadband, mobile and television combined. We support the Government’s ambitions to empower consumers to more easily switch providers to help reduce household bills and encourage price competition in the market.

As part of this, Ofcom should explore the viability of collective switching initiatives in the communications market. This would aggregate demand across consumers to negotiate with suppliers on their behalf. By using such initiatives in the energy market, local government was able to save residents an average of £232 on household energy bills following council-led collective switching auctions.

Consumer compensation (Clause 3)

Clause 3 allows consumers to be automatically compensated when things go wrong with their broadband service. The LGA welcomes moves to allow consumers to receive compensation when their broadband services are below standard. The compensation process should be as simple as possible and the ultimate obligation to resolve issues should be on providers. To prevent residents and businesses suffering from long term broadband outages, the Bill should be amended to include a specific obligation for providers to fix faults with connections within appropriate timescales.

Digital infrastructure and the Electronic Communications Code (Part 2 and Schedules 1, 2 and 3)

Part 2 of the Bill, and related Schedules, amends the Electronic Communications

¹ Federation of Small Businesses, [A two-speed digital economy](#), January 2015

² [“Impact analysis of socio-economic factors and broadband availability”](#), Final report for Ofcom, May 2014

Code which permits operators to construct infrastructure on public land and grants rights to install equipment on private land. The code pre-dates the introduction of mobile networks and is widely considered to be in need of reform. Part 2 reforms the underpinning rights that communications providers have to acquire land, moving to a “no scheme” regime that ensures property owners will be fairly compensated for use of their land but restricts their ability to profit from the public need for communications infrastructure. This will put the telecommunications sector on a similar footing to other public utilities, including electricity and water, and should reduce overall costs of providing communications infrastructure.

Building the physical infrastructure required to support excellent mobile coverage across the country is key to ensuring all residents have access to 21st century digital connectivity, especially in some of the country’s most rural areas. To accelerate the roll out of mobile coverage, we support the revision of the Electronic Communications Code to simplify the process of installing or upgrading digital infrastructure. However, it is important commercial operators work in partnership with councils, who maintain the best overview of local areas’ digital connectivity needs, to find the most viable locations for new infrastructure and ensure communities are properly engaged.

The Government’s Impact Assessment of the reform of the Electronic Communications Code conservatively estimates that the communications sector is likely to see benefits of £1 billion over a 20 year period from decreased rental charges as a result of new measures, which the Government says will “create an environment significantly more conducive to investment.”³ We will seek clarity from Government on how it will ensure this money is pumped back into extending mobile provision across the country.

Online pornography (Part 3)

Clause 15 restricts the availability of online pornographic materials to people under the age of 18 by requiring online commercial providers of pornography to put in place age verification controls. Councils have a responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people living in their area. There is growing concern about the exposure of children to inappropriate online material and the LGA welcomes Government action aimed at preventing children from accessing online pornography.

Digital Government (Part 5)

Public service delivery, civil registration, debt owed to the public sector, fraud against the public sector, sharing for research and statistical purposes

Part 5 provides the necessary legal framework to enable data sharing for a public benefit. It provides a single gateway to enable public authorities to share personal information where its purpose is to improve the welfare of the individual or a household in question. Part 5 contains a number of powers to make regulations to specify the objectives of information sharing and with whom information may be shared. All will require a more detailed code of practice to provide more guidance on data disclosure, processing and use.

Clause 29 provides a power to specify by regulation the objectives under which information may be disclosed. In the Bill’s Explanatory Notes the Government outlines its intention to make regulations relating to the Troubled Families Programme, identifying vulnerable people who may require assistance with re-

³ [Electronic Communications Code Impact Assessment](#), May 2016

tuning television equipment and assisting people living in fuel poverty. County councils and district councils in England and London boroughs have been identified as organisations which may disclose or receive information using the data sharing gateway. The Bill should be amended to include Combined Authorities in this list of organisations.

Effective sharing of information is essential for the delivery of better, joined-up public services. Local authorities are one of the key local service providers working across multiple agencies to deliver services and to support vulnerable and disadvantaged people. This legislative framework will provide some legal framework for sharing data, the lack of which often leads to uncertainty in local authorities about what can and cannot be shared.

Ofcom reports (Part 6)

Part 6 of the Bill provides Ofcom with broader information collection and reporting powers that the Government envisages could be used to obtain address-level data on broadband line speeds and monitor the progress of 4G coverage across the country. This would allow Ofcom to use this data for monitoring speed prediction accuracy and for third party intermediaries to use to present comparisons to consumers. Clauses 69 and 70 grant Ofcom new powers to help consumers access better information and enable them to act on that information through easier switching of communications provider, especially in cases where broadband service is part of a bundled package.

At present, broadband suppliers do not provide open access to their address-level data on broadband line speeds. This means there is no single place that consumers can compare side by side estimates of the broadband speeds that could be supplied to their home. Consumers can only get a true assessment of the speed their premise will achieve by conducting a line speed test on a broadband provider's website. This makes it much harder to choose the best package as it does not provide a simple view of the market.

The LGA welcomes Government action which would promote competition in the telecommunications sector and provide consumers with the knowledge and power to easily switch providers and find the best deal. Ofcom should look to share all its data publicly by default and abide by appropriate open data standards to allow third parties utilise the data in new and innovative ways.

The potential commercially sensitive nature of some data sets, for example the planned roll out of mobile infrastructure, should not preclude local government – as the main representative of communities – from having access in some form. Councils are best placed to understand the digital needs of local areas and access to such data would help inform local digital strategies and interventions going forward.

Councils also remain concerned at the representative nature of Ofcom's mobile data – often mobile connectivity data shared by Ofcom is not reflective of the situation in many rural areas on the ground. Any measures to improve the frequency of the data is shared, and the quality of mobile data sets, would be welcomed.



Leading Places Project Update

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper updates members on recent activity of the Leading Places project, advises on planned future activity and suggests principles the board may wish consider in advance of a second phase of the project.

Recommendation

That members note the update and suggest, where appropriate, areas they would wish to see addressed in future activity as per paragraph 24.

Action

Officers to take forward their work as directed by members.

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Leading Places Project Update

Overview

1. This report provides members with an update on the Leading Places Project, a programme of innovative action learning partnerships aimed at strengthening collaborative leadership between councils and the higher education sector.
2. It briefly introduces the project, outlines recent activity, sets out immediate next steps and asks members to reflect on progress to date within the context of currently planned activity and the potential for a second round of the project beginning in April 2017.

Leading Places Project Outline

3. Leading Places is a joint project which has been developed in partnership between the Local Government Association (LGA), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Universities UK (UUK), that aims to encourage councils, universities and other anchor institutions to work together to better drive growth, re-design public services and strengthen civic participation.
4. It arises following a number of conversations between leaders from the higher education and local government sectors and a growing recognition of the potential for councils and universities to actively collaborate in the civic and economic success of their areas. The first, pilot phase of the project currently underway has been supported by grant funding from HEFCE of £48,000.
5. The project's design draws extensively on research undertaken by the project's consultants, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE). This suggests there remains work to be done to strengthen operational working between councils and universities. It also sits within the context of a greater focus on the role of place-based partnerships in leading public service reform and the forecast of a substantial capital investment programme by the higher education sector.
6. Launched in May the project is now underway in six pilot areas with partnerships formed by a range of institutions:
 - 6.1 **Newcastle** – Gateshead Council, Newcastle City Council, University of Newcastle and Northumbria University
 - 6.2 **Manchester** – Greater Manchester Combined Authority and New Economy Manchester
 - 6.3 **Coventry** – Coventry City Council, Warwick University and Coventry University
 - 6.4 **Gloucestershire** – Gloucestershire County Council, University of Gloucestershire and the Royal Agricultural University.

- 6.5 Bristol** – Bristol City Council, the University of the West of England and the University of Bristol
 - 6.6 Brighton** – Brighton and Hove City Council, Brighton University and University of Sussex
7. These participating areas have access to expert facilitation services provided by LFHE and are being supported through a process of ‘action learning’.
8. Broadly, this process entails the following steps:
- 8.1 Creation of a joint senior leadership group in each area, formed of council leaders, chief executives and university vice chancellors.
 - 8.2 Identification and agreement of a local priority challenge theme.
 - 8.3 Establishing a joint team to rapidly develop an innovative approach to tackling this challenge.
 - 8.4 Participation in an immersion event and a peer challenge event with the other project areas to share learning and strengthen the collective relationship between local government and the higher education sector.
9. The project is scheduled to finish in March 2017, at which point individual areas will be asked to evaluate progress against each of their priority challenges.

Recent Activity

10. Since the project launched, much of the initial effort has been focused on establishing partnerships within each area, identifying senior and project leads and putting in place a framework for action learning, facilitated by the Leadership Foundation.
11. Progress has been slower than anticipated, largely owing to the impact of the summer period, the exceptional political events of recent months and the generally significant pressures on the diaries of senior leaders.
12. However, all six partnerships are now underway and senior leads have been identified in each area. Gloucestershire, Greater Manchester and Newcastle have now all held a meeting of their senior leadership group and the remaining three areas are currently expected to have held their meetings by the end of September.
13. An outline of proposed themes is as follows:
- 13.1 Newcastle** – the project will focus on public health and community engagement through an innovative research tool centred on healthy eating.
 - 13.2 Manchester** – Developing a science and innovation capabilities map for Manchester.

- 13.3 **Coventry** – Healthy communities (town and gown) within Coventry and Warwick.
 - 13.4 **Gloucestershire** – Development of a 2050 and beyond vision and agreement on a range of strategic, economic initiatives to transform Gloucestershire.
 - 13.5 **Bristol** – focus on engaging communities through the office of the newly elected Mayor.
 - 13.6 **Brighton** – improving health and wellbeing in communities.
14. These are expected to be confirmed in the coming months as challenge teams are established to take forward delivery.

Planned Next Steps

15. It is anticipated that the next stage of the project will move forward swiftly.
16. Following an article in the September issue of First Magazine by the Chair of the People and Places Board, we have now launched an LGA-hosted microsite for the Leading Places project – www.local.gov.uk/leading-places/ - creating a public facing communications platform and a source of information for those interested in learning more about the project.
17. Once all of the project areas have held their senior leadership group meetings, they will establish a local challenge team and participate in a local immersion event ahead of a wider peer challenge event on 21 November. This event will provide an opportunity to share progress and learning and will include the participation of an international expert in public leadership. It will also provide a hook for a range of communications activity and the potential to invite local partnerships to participate in a second round of the project.
18. Following this event, each challenge group will continue to develop their priority project theme in anticipation of a national event in March 2017. The November event will also provide a clear milestone against which to evaluate progress and to make an early assessment the value of this approach to strengthening collaborative leadership between councils and universities.
19. As the project develops officers from the LGA will continue to monitor progress, draw on the experience of participating councils to evaluate the project's methodology, look for opportunities to highlight successes through the media and report back activity to members, as appropriate.

Future Project Rounds

20. The Leading Places Project has attracted a significant amount of interest from councils and universities. In addition, officers at the LGA have become aware of similar forms of collaboration already starting to emerge between universities and local authorities outside the project's pilot areas.

21. It has previously been suggested that if this interest is maintained and the project proves capable of demonstrating its value in strengthening collaboration between local government and the higher education sector that a second round of the project might be commissioned, with an anticipated start date of April 2017.
22. If a second round were to be commissioned, it is expected that the LGA would play a more significant role in funding and in establishing the parameters of the project. Given the strong interest from members of this board in the past it would seem appropriate to provide an opportunity for the board to advise on some of the broad principles that might underpin future activity.
23. For example, these might include closer consideration of area geography, requirements relating to the strength of existing partnerships, a greater focus on the type of support offered or on the overall outcomes expected from the project. **While thinking regarding a second round is still at an early stage, any steer members were able to offer on these or other subjects would be appreciated.**

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LGA location map

Local Government Association

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 Fax: 020 7664 3030
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 Website: www.local.gov.uk

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

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.

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

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

