

People & Places Board

Agenda

Tuesday, 12 January 2021
1.00 pm

Online via Zoom

People & Places Board
12 January 2021

There will be a meeting of the People & Places Board at **1.00 pm on Tuesday, 12 January 2021**
Online via Zoom.

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
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LGA Contact:

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Carers' Allowance

As part of the LGA Members' Allowances Scheme a Carer's Allowance of £9.00 per hour or £10.55 if receiving London living wage is available to cover the cost of dependants (i.e. children, elderly people or people with disabilities) incurred as a result of attending this meeting.

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The twitter hashtag for this meeting is #lgapp

People & Places Board – Membership 2018/2019

Councillor	Authority
Conservative (12)	
Cllr Kevin Bentley (Chairman)	Essex County Council
Cllr Morris Bright MBE (Vice Chairman)	Hertsmere Borough Council
Cllr Rachel Bailey	Cheshire East Council
Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcester City Council
Cllr Hilary Carrick	Cumbria County Council
Cllr Neil Clarke MBE	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Diane Marsh	Gravesham Borough Council
Cllr Eddie Reeves	Oxfordshire County Council
Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire County Council
Cllr Bradley Thomas	Wychavon District Council
Cllr Rob Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Colin Davie	Lincolnshire County Council
Cllr Jane Murphy	South Oxfordshire District Council
Cllr Barry Wood	Cherwell District Council
Labour (5)	
Cllr Simon Henig CBE (Vice-Chair)	Durham County Council
Cllr Sue Woodward	Staffordshire County Council
Cllr Leigh Redman	Somerset County Council
Cllr Kyle Robinson	Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
Cllr Doina Cornell	Stroud District Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Alan Waters	Norwich City Council
Cllr Peter Moss	Preston City Council
Cllr Rosanne Kirk	Lincoln City Council
Liberal Democrat (3)	
Cllr Heather Kidd (Deputy Chair)	Shropshire Council
Cllr Sarah Osborne	East Sussex County Council
Cllr Stan Collins	Cumbria County Council
Substitutes	
Cllr Allan Knox	Ribble Valley Borough Council
Independent (2)	
Cllr Bob Jennings (Deputy Chair)	Epping Forest District Council
Cllr Helen Grant	Richmondshire District Council

<i>Substitutes</i>	
Cllr Kevin Etheridge	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Cllr Geoff Knight	Lancaster City Council
Cllr Emily O'Brien	Lewes District Council

Agenda

People & Places Board

Tuesday 12 January 2021

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Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 16 March 2021, 1.00 pm, Venue TBC

Transport update

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

Lead members of the People and Places Board have requested an update on the sub-national transport bodies and work on decarbonisation of transport as led by the EEHT Board.

Recommendation/s

1. That the Board notes the report
2. That board members engage with the discussion and provide any comments for consideration by EEHT board in their future work.

Action/s

As directed by P&P board

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Background

1. The future of Sub-national transport bodies (STBs)

- 1.1. The ability to create Sub-national Transport Bodies to plan and prioritise long-term infrastructure investment in a specific region was created under the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 with an amendment to the Local Transport Act 2008. The Act gave the Secretary of State powers to establish a STB in any area outside London.
- 1.2. Our current understanding is that there are 7 sub-national transport bodies outside London:
 - England's Economic Heartland (EEH)
 - Midlands Connect
 - Transport East
 - Transport for the North
 - Transport for the South East (TfSE)
 - Western Gateway
 - Peninsula Transport
- 1.3. Whilst the Government had introduced powers to establish STBs, only one, Transport for the North, has been granted statutory status (April 2018). Government policy on STBs appears to have shifted in recent months to not wishing to grant statutory status. For example, in a letter to EEH and TfSE in August 2020 Baroness Vere reaffirmed that they would not approve any proposals for statutory status. Her letter further states: "We see STBs as partnerships of local authorities, providing a strategic vision across the area for the benefit of the whole region. Department for Transport funding should be used for delivering that strategic coordination function, producing and delivering their Transport Strategy and associated Area Studies rather than on lobbying."
- 1.4. However, in his letter to TfSE in October 2020 the Secretary of State says in reference to Baroness Vere's previous correspondence: "I would like to make it clear that did not mean that any proposal would not be considered but was a reflection of the fact that I am content with the relationship the Department currently has with Sub-national Transport Bodies and we are awaiting the outcome of a Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper."
- 1.5. More positively, further grant funding has been approved to both TfSE and EEH to undertake work to support their transport strategies, such as area-based studies, policy scenario modelling and work on environmental assessments. In her letter to TfSE, Baroness Vere has also asked her officials to ensure they have regard to TfSE's strategy when developing new policies. Consideration is also being given to pooling expertise in scheme development on a regional basis.
- 1.6. Our understanding is that there continues to be further dialogue between the STBs and DfT ministers. TfSE have said they will continue to work with Government to identify the best time to put forward their case for statutory status.
- 1.7. The EEHT Board would welcome any feedback from People and Places Board on this issue.

2. Decarbonisation of Transport update

2.1. The decarbonisation of transport has been the focus of much of the EEHT's transport related work. Transport is now the biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK and has lagged behind other sources in decarbonisation. The EEHT Board has led on LGA's work to support councils in their ambitions to decarbonise transport, and recent work has included:

- A [guide for councillors](#) to help them understand the current landscape for electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and engage with their officers, colleagues and the wider public and a report on the [economic benefits](#) of EV infrastructure,
- A programme of work to support councils in their local policy decision-making. We commissioned experts from the University of Leeds to deliver this work, which included [7 policy briefs](#) and webinars, on issues ranging from electric vehicles, demand management and online opportunities, land use planning, cycling, public transport, parking policy and setting ambition.
- On policy, the EEHT Board [fed into](#) the DfT's emerging thinking on the forthcoming transport decarbonisation plan (expected in Spring 2021). The Government's scoping document on the plan, Setting the Challenge, recognises the importance of place-based solutions and that a single solution will not be appropriate for every location.
- The LGA welcomed the Government's new vision for cycling and walking ([Gear Change](#)), and the £2 billion commitment to active travel, including the active travel fund. Gear Change included a commitment to fully implement Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act 2004, giving local authorities the powers to enforce against moving traffic offences – something that the LGA has long called for.
- On public transport the LGA continued to make the case for councils on funding and more influence and control over local bus provision. We submitted evidence to the Transport Committee enquiry on Reforming Public Transport after the Pandemic as well as Cllr Renard, Chair of the EEHT Board, providing oral evidence. Our submission also included our call for the Government to close the £700 million concessionary fares funding gap and a long-term settlement for local public transport.

2.2. We will continue to support councils on this agenda over the coming weeks and into next year. In particular to:

- Influence the forthcoming National Bus Strategy which we now expect to be published early in the new year. We have commissioned further research exploring the ambition of councils in different places in order to influence and inform the national strategy. The research will be published in January and there is a webinar on the findings on 19th January.
- Support local leadership on driving through disruptive change. New local cycling schemes have shown the importance of strong leadership in supporting new

measures. We are commissioning good practice research and guidance on how councils can best do this.

- Seek further support on councils' roles to promote and develop local EV charging infrastructure, moving away from a limited number of exemplar schemes, such as Go-Ultra Low cities, to an approach that supports mass adoption. This is even more important given the Government's decision to bring forward the ban of sales of new diesel and petrol vehicles by 2030. Councils need greater support on working with the EV charging marketplace, the technological model, and better access to independent advice. We will continue to raise with DfT and OLEV.

Rural Digital Connectivity

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper and separate confidential briefing provide members with an update on the Government's downgrading of its gigabit-broadband-for-all target in preparation for the visit of Justin Leese, UK Gigabit Programme Delivery Director, Building Digital UK (the broadband delivery arm of Government) to the Board.

Recommendations

Members are invited to:

- **Note** the latest gigabit-broadband development outlined in **paragraphs 2-4**.
- **Note** that a confidential briefing to support discussions with Mr Leese will be sent separately.

Action

- Officers will proceed as directed by members.

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Rural Digital Connectivity

Background

1. This paper and separate confidential briefing provide members with an update on the Government's downgrading of its gigabit-broadband-for-all target in preparation for the visit of Justin Leese, UK Gigabit Programme Delivery Director, Building Digital UK (the broadband delivery arm of Government) to the Board.

The Government's Broadband Announcement at the Spending Review

Broadband

2. Following the success of the local government-led Superfast Broadband Programme, last year the Government committed £5 billion to rolling out gigabit broadband to all premises by 2025, bringing forward the previous government target by eight years. However, at the recent Spending Review, it announced a downgrade of this target:
 - 2.1. It is now working with industry to target a minimum of 85 per cent gigabit-capable coverage by 2025 of which UK Gigabit Programme will deliver 5 percentage points (alongside delivery in the most commercial 80 per cent of the country).
 - 2.2. It will spend over that time period £1.2 billion of the £5 billion that the Government has committed over the course of the programme. The Government has reconfirmed that the entirety of the £5 billion funding will still be available to the programme.
 - 2.3. In the period to 2025, BDUK will be focussing this funding on those premises that do not have access to superfast broadband, wherever possible.
3. From LGA officers interaction with councils on the ground, it was been clear for a while that the Government's original commitment was extremely ambitious. However, with the commitment made, and now downgraded, our member councils, rural councillors and their communities are disappointed and are seeking further clarity about future delivery of the programme
4. Justin Leese, UK Gigabit Programme Delivery Director at Building Digital UK will attend the January Board to address members on this latest development. This is an opportune moment for members to question Government on its current delivery timescales and secure a commitment for it to set out a revised timeline to achieving universal gigabit-broadband coverage for all.

Implications for Wales

5. Digital infrastructure policy is a devolved responsibility.

Financial Implications

6. The Board's activities are supported by budgets for policy development and improvement.

Youth employment and skills update

Purpose

For discussion and direction on the development of a youth participation policy.

Summary

The youth participation policy work is jointly developed by City Regions, People and Places and Children and Young People Boards to ensure read-across.

This paper provides an update on the development of a youth participation and employment and skills policy relating to young people.

Recommendation

That the Board note the report and consider the following to provide comments/steer:

1. Update and plans for progressing this policy.
2. Councils statutory responsibilities discussion paper Annex A
3. T Levels discussion paper Annex B.

Action

Officers to progress in line with Members' comments/steer.

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Improving youth participation

Background

1. Councils, alongside their role in helping economies to thrive, have several statutory duties relating to youth participation; to ensure all young people up to the age of 18 (25 for those with learning difficulties) participate in education or training. Despite having these responsibilities, councils have very few formal levers over commissioning or coordination of provision to meet them, resulting in a centralised and fragmented system.
2. In September 2020, the Board approved the publication of the improving youth participation report, which concluded our initial youth work, started last year. The report set out our vision and recommendations, providing us with the narrative and framework on which to base our discussions with government, parliamentarians, stakeholders and the sector.
3. This paper provides an update on how our ambition for young people is being progressed along with the wider youth employment and skills policy work.
4. The continued presence of COVID-19 and further national/regional restrictions has meant that young people, and those facing disadvantage, will be disproportionately impacted; therefore, it is important that the focus on this work remains a priority to ensure that relevant support is in place for these groups.

Youth participation campaign

5. The report [Re-thinking youth participation for the present and next generation: education to employment](#) was launched early October 2020 with a [press release](#) calling for COBRA-style action to save the 'lost generation' of young people. The publication received good traction. A number of stakeholders, including the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL), Employment Related Services Association (ERSA), Social Mobility Foundation and Youth Employment UK, have shown a particular interest in the contents and recommendations of the report. Consequently, the LGA was invited to present the report to the [Youth Employment Group](#) (YEG), which has over 170 member organisations. The LGA has also took part in an ASCL roundtable event in November 2020 to discuss the challenges and improvements to the system for supporting young people from education to employment. Therefore, **our youth ambition has reached a broad range of stakeholders and further work is in train to ensure better stakeholder alignment with the LGA position.**
6. To sustain the momentum on our youth campaign and shine a light on the work more widely, we are publishing a series of First articles from Autumn 2020 to Spring 2021. **The introductory feature appeared with a by-line from the Chairs of the three boards** (CYP, P&P and CRB), demonstrating the importance of a joined-up education and employment and skills policy. The [feature](#) (First November 2020 p11) highlighted the plight of young people and the job crisis. It set out the reports recommendation, including LGA's calls for a youth, employment and skills taskforce and a youth minister. The next article, a case study on Derbyshire County Council's 'I-Step up Re-engagement Programme', will be published in the New Year edition.

This case study also featured in our youth report to demonstrate how the Council has developed a programme to improve youth participation. The initiative addresses a gap in transition support and provides the wraparound provision for young people.

7. We are working with colleagues in the media team to make the most of any future influencing opportunities.
8. The LGA Chairman wrote to several Ministers about the report, including Mims Davies, Minister of State for Employment, DWP; Gillian Keegan, Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills, DfE; Luke Hall, Minister of State for Regional Growth and Local Government, MHCLG. The Chairman has received a response from Mims Davies. Separately, the LGA initiated and organised a roundtable session in December with the Minister for Employment and P&P and CR Lead Members to discuss how local government could support DWP COVID-19 related employment support schemes. We are also exploring an APPG on Youth Employment with parliamentarians in the Spring. **A member steer is welcome on how best to progress our youth ambitions further with relevant Ministers.**

Collaboration with other organisations

9. Maintaining relationships with other organisations has been important to ensure the LGA youth ambition is embedded across the employment and skills sector. The LGA has continued to work closely with a broad range of stakeholders on this agenda, including:
 - 9.1. The Learning and Work Institute's (LWI) commission on education and employment opportunities for young people ([Youth Commission](#)). **The Commission will publish its final report in the New Year with a suite of recommendations for skills and participation.**
 - 9.2. YEG and its founding organisations [Impetus](#), [Youth Futures Foundation](#), [Youth Employment UK](#), [the Institute for Employment Studies](#) and [The Prince's Trust](#). The YEG recommendations [report](#), launched in September 2020, has some alignment with the LGA youth report.
10. We will continue to explore further opportunities to engage with influential research and policy development.

Councils statutory responsibilities

11. To enhance our youth participation work, we will be developing our policy relating to councils statutory responsibilities for young people and those not in education, employment or training (NEET). **We have drafted an initial discussion paper (Annex A) highlighting the current issues and challenges. The aim is to develop this further through discussion with the sector and stakeholders to form a policy position; inform the improvement project (see below for details) and dialogue with DfE officials. Members are invited to comment on it and provide a steer on further issues/challenges that should be included. Officers will amend its scope accordingly. Members can also provide comments by 31 January 2021 to bushra.jamil@local.gov.uk.**

Young People and NEETs

12. The [data release](#) in November 2020 was expected to show the number of NEETs rising but in fact **there was a slight drop from 765,000 to 757,000 young people (aged 16 to 24 years) in the UK who were NEET** in July to September 2020. A possible reason for this is that many young people, in response to COVID-19, have entered full time education, or are protected by the job retention scheme. **It is expected that there will be a sharp rise in young people who are NEET after the job retention scheme ends** and a fall in those in full time education, with a decrease in retention after the first term.
13. The next official ONS NEET UK data will be released in March 2021 and the DfE participation in education, employment and training for 2020 annual data release will not be until June 2021. However, we are working with the Department to see if any early unofficial data can be shared with the LGA. It is anticipated that these figures will show the real impact of COVID-19 on young people's education and employment opportunities and will be useful to develop appropriate support programmes.
14. Following the Ministerial roundtable in September 2020, Gillian Keegan MP, Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills, the Department for Education (DfE) was invited to the People and Places board. Unfortunately, due to time constraints, the Minister was unable to attend. However, the **Minister is keen to engage with the LGA and council representatives to learn about issues young people are facing and how that can result in becoming NEET, and solutions to address these.** The LGA and council/combined authority representatives have continued to maintain dialogue on young people and NEETs through regular meetings with officials. The first meeting took place in September 2020 and the discussion focussed on appropriate careers advice and guidance, relevance and sufficiency of provision and funding. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in January 2021.

Improvement work

15. Improving youth participation in education, employment and training (EET) as part of their statutory duties is key for councils. The COVID-19 crisis has had an adverse effect on young peoples' ability to transition into education or employment effectively. Therefore, the improvement support budget has been allocated to better understand the barriers/challenges for councils in fulfilling their statutory duties for young people, for instance, in relation to NEETs and to explore solutions. We commissioned a project in November 2020 and the successful bidder is York Consulting. **The project aims to support the sector (eight areas) through action learning to support the sector to deliver effective support for NEETs and those at risk of becoming NEET.** A report with case studies will capture the learning and a subsequent online resource will support councils to commission and deliver services and an enhanced offer for young people. We have had a good response from areas interested to be involved in the project. Twelve areas will be taking part in the discussions at an initial workshop in January 2021. **The report will be presented to the board at the March 2021 meeting.**

A coherent offer of all post-16 options

16. The increased focus on apprenticeships and the roll-out of technical levels (T Levels) provides young people with more options for their career pathways. Having greater choice is positive, but it is vital for young people to have a coherent picture of all available pathways and how they relate to the world of work or further learning. This is essential to improve participation in education and training, particularly for disadvantaged young people or those with special educational needs and disability SEND or complex needs.
17. To progress our post-16 policy work and to support councils and combined authorities plan for a post-16 local offer, so young people have a coherent picture of locally available options, we have developed a **T Levels discussion paper (Annex B). This paper sets out the guiding principles for making T Levels implementation a success for young people, employers and the economy.**
18. **Members are invited to provide comments and a steer on the issues and guiding principles: a) are there any further issues that should be included? b) are the guiding principles, right? c) is there any further intel from local areas?**
19. **Members can also provide comments by 31 January 2021 to bushra.jamil@local.gov.uk**

Post-16 SEND

20. Last month the LGA published a [report](#) on planning, commissioning, funding and supporting post-16 high needs students. The report was commissioned by the LGA children and young people's (CYP) team along with the Association of Colleges (AoC) and Natspec. (The CYP board has an interest in this issue and responsibility for those with SEND or complex needs.) The purpose of the review was to provide a better understanding of how local authorities and providers can work together to manage an increased demand for support for high needs students with limited resources. **The findings of the report conclude that the system is overly complicated**, resulting in young people, their parents, councils and colleges facing challenges which have a detrimental impact on those students in further education with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). **It also suggests that a more radical re-working of the whole system** is required, including changes to the funding model so that councils can plan provision more effectively for young people within their local area. Key findings and recommendations from the fieldwork include:
 - 20.1. Strategic planning - Each local authority should take a strategic view of emerging needs for post-16 provision and the providers best placed to meet these and develop its provision accordingly in anticipation of identified future needs.
 - 20.2. Development of new provision – Through improved strategic planning, identified areas where new provision is needed, local authorities should play a more active, innovative and creative role with providers, existing and new, in the development of that provision.

20.3. Transitions into post-16 provision - Securing better transitions between life stages and settings, including from secondary to further education should be a key focus.

21. Members are invited to give their view and steer on how post-16 employment and skills and SEND policy should be developed.

Employment and skills update

22. The [latest ONS labour market statistics](#) (UK) released in November 2020, show a fall in youth employment, with **youth unemployment level now at 14.6 per cent compared to 4.8 per cent of all age groups**. Though it is a varied picture across England, as the effects of the pandemic is felt differently in different parts of the country. The Centre for Cities have developed a useful tool [UK unemployment tracker](#) that show how the Coronavirus pandemic is affecting unemployment, including youth unemployment, in large cities and towns. This highlights that local solutions are needed to tackle local youth unemployment challenges. **Members are invited to highlight any specific issues/challenges contributing to youth unemployment in their localities.**

Enhanced Youth Offer

23. In view of rising youth unemployment, the LGA have maintained a dialogue with DWP officials to influence the planning, coordination and delivery of initiatives for young people, along with other measures. The DWP enhanced youth offer commenced in September 2020. Essentially, the youth offer has three elements:

23.1. **Youth Employment Programme**, a 13-week programme with referral to the most appropriate support: a traineeship, work experience, mentoring circles, careers advice, Kickstart or an apprenticeship.

23.2. **Youth Hubs** provides young people access to up to six months of wider support to meet any skills gaps to bring them closer to the labour market. These are co-located and co-delivered with local partners, including local government. **The programme aims to deliver a hundred new Hubs**. These are being rolled out nationally and where this is not possible due to COVID-19 restrictions a virtual service is currently being offered. **Many of the key elements of the Hubs (for example, collaborative culture, data sharing) resemble previously 'trialed and tested' local models**, including Suffolk County Council's MyGo and Liverpool City Region Youth Employment Gateway. At DWP's request, many local authorities have been asked to find suitable physical premises to host Youth Hubs locally and act as accountable bodies. The sector backs more targeted support for young people, but new physical centres are not always necessary, and in some cases are hard to find and require investment.

23.3. Our youth report called for an integrated youth employment and skills service with local government having a central role. **It is vital that councils/combined authorities are able to influence the planning and delivery of Youth Hubs in local areas.**

23.4. **Youth Employability Coaches** focus on young people who have significant complex needs and barriers and offer flexible support to help them move into and sustain employment.

24. **The Kickstart Scheme**, Government's £2 billion work placement programme for young people started in November 2020. DWP reports the scheme is progressing well and **by mid-November a total of 4,783 applications, covering 23,934 vacancies had been approved for funding.**

25. Councils and combined authorities are working hard to encourage local businesses to participate in the scheme, as well as offering opportunities themselves; for instance [Leicester City Council](#) have created 70 Kickstart placement as part of it economic recovery plan; Suffolk County Council have provided 42 placements and Norfolk County Council 72 respectively.

Apprenticeships

26. **Apprenticeship starts (October 2020) showed that starts had halved during lockdown.** The proportion of starts by age group was: 16-18: 23.7 per cent (75,500); 19-24: 29.5 per cent (94,200); 25 and over: 46.8 per cent (149,300). The Government's employer incentives to recruit more apprentices are welcome along with the support for those who have been made redundant. Unfortunately, **more young apprentices will become unemployed in the New Year, especially in the leisure and hospitality sectors, as the furlough scheme unwinds.**

Parliamentary Committee Inquiries

27. The House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee published its inquiry into Employment and COVID-19 [report](#) last month. The LGA submitted written evidence earlier in the year. **The report has been positive about our work, particularly the green jobs research and that more programmes and resources should be devolved to local areas.**

28. A new House of Lords Special Inquiry Committee was [announced](#) (December 2020) to consider youth unemployment, education and skills. Its scope is wide ranging and will include risk associated with high levels of unemployment, under-employment and insecure employment, challenges posed by COVID-19 and Brexit. It is expected that once the Committee's members are appointed a formal inquiry will be launched in the New Year. **Members are invited to give their views on this and provide an early steer on the direction we should take in any LGA submission.**

29. **Members are asked to consider, comment and provide a steer on:**

- **how best to progress our youth ambitions further with relevant Ministers (para 8)**
- **Councils statutory duties discussion paper (Annex A) – further issues/challenges to be included (para 11)**
- **T Levels discussion paper (Annex B) – further issues and guiding principles for implementation to be included (para 17-19)**

- how post-16 employment and skills and SEND policy should be developed (para 20-21)
- the direction we should take in any LGA submission for the potential House of Lords Special Inquiry Committee on youth unemployment, education and skills (para 28).

Next steps

- Following the Board's considerations and comments on the contents of this paper, officers will provide regular updates on the development of this policy/ activities at future boards meetings.

Financial implications

To be covered through the existing Budget.

Implications for Wales

Skills and employment are devolved matters. The LGA liaises with WLGA colleagues.

ANNEX A

Councils statutory duties issues/challenges

Appropriate provision

It is challenging at the moment to keep young people in full time education. There is a growing number of young people with complex needs that require a significant level of support. Councils have to ensure that the breadth of support needed by all learners is effectively commissioned.

The challenge is that current provision is quite rigid and not flexible to meet the specific needs of different learners. The structure of learning, for example, the traditional year-long programmes, are not suitable for many students. The programmes need to be shorter, flexible and include employability skills.

A tailored programme that delivers employability resilience with short stepping-stones for progression is required; a number of local initiatives provide such support. For those who are NEET, care leavers and hard to reach groups with complex needs, a pre-offer is needed that responds to their specific needs, as the mainstream provision is often not suitable for these particular groups.

Councils are able to offer an enhanced service by connecting with other local services to provide the necessary wider support that is vital to secure and sustain education, employment and training opportunities.

Sufficiency of provision

Some areas have lost some good specialist providers over the last couple of years, resulting in gaps in provision in the area. There is an assumption by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) that FE colleges will be able to plug the gaps with the right provision but this has not been the case.

Councils have statutory duties around sufficiency of provision but feel they are being hindered in this area as they have very little control over ESFA budget and therefore, unable to direct provision where it is needed.

There is a significant risk of more young people becoming NEET as more students are dropping out of year 12 and first year of college. Also, in some areas there has been a drop in apprenticeships which correlates with a drop in provision.

Careers, advice and guidance

The careers landscape is complex and fragmented and young people are often not getting the level of service required. A coherent offer of all the options is needed. Year 12 drop-out is an issue and there is an opportunity to address this challenge with the emerging FE White Paper by incorporating a careers element as part of FE reforms.

School leavers in the post-16 transition period are required to seek any careers advice and guidance from the education institution they previously attended. This is a real issue for students that were not fully engaged with the school whilst in education and therefore as a result risk becoming NEET.

Funding

A number of initiatives that provide the wider support to young people are funded through European Social Fund (ESF) and there is concern that much of this provision will be lost when the current European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF) programme ends. This needs to be urgently addressed.

ANNEX B

T Levels: making implementation a success for young people, employers and the economy

Background

The [Sainsbury Report](#) (2016) recommended a new system consisting of a technical education option alongside an academic option for students aged 16 -19. The Government committed to these recommendations and published the [Post 16 Skills Plan](#). In 2017 the Government launched a new set of technical qualifications (T Levels) aimed at establishing parity between academic and technical routes, and to meet the current and future skills needs.

[T Levels](#) are a two year technical programme at level 3 and above for 16-19 year olds. The course provides a mixture of study and industry placement (approximately 45 days) in a chosen industry or occupation; supported by relevant Maths, English and digital skills.

These qualifications are being offered alongside apprenticeships, providing another route to a technical qualification, with the same set of employer- designed standards, approved and managed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

T Levels are part of the Government's broader skills agenda that aim to meet needs of local employers and the economy.

The importance of a good quality technical skills offer

The traditional academic route is not appropriate for many post-16 students. Having alternative choice is vital for young people to ensure the right levels of skills and participation. Apprenticeships give young people the opportunity to combine earning whilst learning. T Levels are the other side of the same coin that offers learning with practical experience through an industry placement.

The current state of play

The introduction of the first three T Levels (Digital, Construction and Education and Childcare route) started last year (September 2020) at selected colleges, schools and other providers across England. A further seven T Levels will be available in September 2021 with the remaining courses starting in either 2022 or 2023. There will be a total of 24 T Levels in 11 routes by 2023.

COVID-19 impacting T Levels implementation

COVID-19 crisis has impacted both the supply and demand side of T Levels implementation. Students with lockdown restrictions and remote learning have missed out on key opportunities to gain information, advice and guidance on available vocational options, including T Levels. This has impacted recruitment of students for the September 2020 start as numbers are below targets: Digital 76 per cent and Education and Childcare 92 per cent; and surprising Construction 121 per cent against target respectively. Many providers have launched their own recruitment campaigns to secure viable numbers for courses. Employer recruitment for Industry Placements has also struggled, particularly with the Education and Childcare and Digital T Levels.

LGA Workforce team update

The LGA recognises that T Levels are pivotal for councils and employers for addressing skills shortages/gaps and to develop a pipeline of a skilled workforce. The LGA workforce team secured DfE funding to deliver a pilot programme to promote T Levels industry placements within councils and also capture and share best practice on what works well and not so well in the sector.

It has launched the pilot programme with a media campaign (December 2020) that is aligned with the DfE T Levels national campaign. To raise awareness and promote a positive message in the sector there was a T Levels [feature](#) in the First magazine. The LGA campaign key messages include:

- promoting councils as career destinations for young people and developing the future workforce through a Technical Level skills pathway.
- LGA is working with and supporting councils to provide at least one T Level placement from September 2021.
- Sharing and learning from T Levels Industry Placements in councils; what works, what needs to be improved.

The workforce team has set up a sector focus group to inform and support its T Levels campaign. The initial feedback from the workforce focus group activities highlighted it was

important to focus on three key areas: local political support; the role of the line manager and to provide one young person with an opportunity with a clear 'pathway'.

The LGA has engaged with our member authorities, in particular, areas where 2020 T Levels are being rolled-out to gather intel and inform policy. The workforce and policy teams are developing positions and supporting the sector as both councils as employers and economic development leads. This paper was developed on the back of those discussions and we will continue our work with the sector to enhance our policy position as T Levels are rolled out across England.

This paper sets out below what we would see as the **guiding principles** to ensure success of T Levels implementation for young people, employers and the economy.

Principle 1: School leaders and teachers should have greater awareness of T Levels

It is important for school leaders and teachers to have detailed knowledge of T Levels; as they can play pivotal role in raising careers awareness, both in their interactions with students as teachers and in pastoral roles, and also through their engagement with parents.

Although the [Next Level awareness raising campaign](#) is welcomed, recent evidence from the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) survey suggests that further work is needed to inform schools about T Levels. T Levels information gaps include course content, structure and assessment; target students; level of credibility with employers; entry requirements and identifying suitable pupils; local availability and institutions and progression routes.

Councils have existing relationships with schools and colleges in their areas and can support greater awareness as a trusted partner due to their impartiality but need resources to do this.

Principle 2: Students should have careers education and guidance on T Levels options

Good quality careers education, independent and impartial advice and guidance on T Levels should be available for students throughout their education, in particular, at key transition points of making important decisions, for instance: at 16 when taking key decision about KS5 routes and subjects, or vocational pathways. Students need clear information about course content, structure and assessment, progression routes to higher education, T Levels available.

The Youth Employment UK [Youth Voice Census](#) found that a T Levels option was only explored with 6 per cent of young people in the survey.

Principle 3: T Levels should be part of the coherent post-16 local offer

It is positive that young people have greater choice with a range of options (A levels, T Levels, Traineeships, Apprenticeships) to pursue their chosen career but this also creates a confusing picture. Young people need to have clear information on all options to make informed decisions on the best route for their career.

Councils are best placed to have a lead role in planning for a post-16 local offer given their statutory duties for young people. It is fundamental for young people to have a coherent offer of locally available options, including T Levels.

The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) has created a website for students, Greater Manchester Apprenticeship and Careers Service ([GMACS](#)) which is populated with T Levels information for students and parents. GMCA have also created visual occupational maps for Construction and Digital as part of the Oldham Opportunity Area project to make technical education attractive.

Principle 4: T Levels offer should be differentiated from other initiatives

Employers are currently being bombarded with a plethora of government initiatives (T Levels, Traineeships, Apprenticeships) and there is a risk the T Levels messaging may get 'lost in the noise' as employers focus on the challenges currently facing them.

T Levels as well as providing very useful knowledge and experience for a student about a particular industry can also provide employers with a pipeline of skilled workers for the future. Consequently, there should be clear information on the merits of T Levels for employers as opposed to other initiatives.

Councils work with providers to ensure that local employers have the skills to meet their business needs, focussing on bringing the supply and demand sides of the labour market more closely together to improve the offer.

Principle 5: Employers should be incentivised to support Industry Placements

The challenge of delivering Industry Placements for T Levels on a national scale is immense. Many employers want to support T Levels but struggle, particularly SMEs, with the additional costs associated with providing a placement. Therefore, employers need to be incentivised with flexible funding for supervisory and other associated costs to offer more placements.

Local government has a vast range of different and diverse professions and can therefore provide a broad range of opportunities. It has the infrastructure to embrace the T Levels agenda as part of its wider workforce offer (Apprenticeships, Traineeships, Kickstart Scheme) and wants to support Industry Placements but it needs the resources to develop a comprehensive offer that meets the needs of individual, particularly for SEND and disadvantaged groups.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

This paper updates Board Members on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and seeks their steer on engagement with the Government in shaping the fund.

Recommendation

Members are invited to:

- Review the UK Shared Prosperity Fund pilot projects and Heads of Terms (para. 4 – 7)
- Discuss the key issues for local government outlined in this report (para. 8 – 13)

Action

- Members to discuss the next steps in lobbying and engagement for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund

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UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Background

1. This paper sets out the latest developments in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and outlines the opportunities available for local government to influence the design of the fund.
2. In March 2020, the Board refreshed the LGA's lines on the UKSPF to be which includes:
 - 2.1. Councils and combined authorities should be the vehicles to drive the fund.
 - 2.2. The fund should be driven by locally determined outcomes and need.
 - 2.3. It should be aligned with other growth funding to move towards a single pot of funding.
3. At the November Spending Review, the Government announced the [Heads of Terms](#) (page 37) for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This outlined the £220 million that will be allocated for pilot projects and gave limited detail of the UKSPF.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Spending Review

4. At the November Spending Review, the Government announced the Heads of Terms for the UKSPF. The UKSPF will be the domestic replacement for the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund and the European Territorial Cooperation Fund.
5. £220 million will be allocated to pilot schemes for the new fund in 2021/22 with a prospectus being launched in January setting out the details of the pilots. Questions remain how this will be allocated, what it will be piloting and how it relates to the remaining unspent European Structural and Investment Fund Programme.
6. The UKSPF will be introduced in 2022 and will, on average, ramp up to £1.5 billion a year. There remains uncertainty how long the fund will last for and whether it meets the quantum of the ESIF programme.
7. Places will agree specific outcomes to target within a wider UK framework. The fund will cover three themes, which covers a much wider remit than the ESIF programme:
 - 7.1. **Investment in people:** skills programmes tailored to local needs, such as work based training as well as local support services, such as early years
 - 7.2. **Investment in communities and place:** including culture and sporting facilities, civic, green and rural infrastructure, community owned assets, neighbourhood and housing improvement, town centre and transport improvement and digital connectivity
 - 7.3. **Investment in local businesses:** supporting innovation, green and tech adoption, tailored to local need.

Key issues

8. There remains a number of unanswered questions and issues that are not addressed by the Heads of Terms. We understand that some of these will be addressed at the next Spending Review.
9. The Government announced in the Spending Review that £220 million will be allocated to pilot projects in 2021/22. There is no detail of what or who will be trialling these projects and how the funding will be allocated. It is also unclear how this will work with current ESIF programmes as local ESIF committees work to determine how the remaining ESIF programme will be spent.
10. There is no detail of the governance or decision making, and it remains essential that local government is the vehicle driving the fund. The themes of the UKSPF are wider than the ESIF programme, with a greater emphasis on place based projects and programmes. The Heads of Terms includes new areas that the fund intends to support, including neighbourhood and housing improvement, sport and cultural facilities and early years provision. It is therefore essential that local government lead so there is a joining up of wider strategies, such as housing, public health and early years.
11. The Heads of Terms outlines that places will be agreeing the outcomes of the fund through a UK investment framework, without making clear the linkage with local plans and strategies. There are concerns that this could be a roll back of devolved decision making that was agreed for the ESIF programme in some parts of England, such as Cornwall and Greater Manchester. It may also have implications for devolution in Wales.
12. The UKSPF announcement was made in the context of wider regeneration announcements, including the Levelling Up fund, Towns Fund, Freeports and Green Book reforms. There is still no detail of how the UKSPF will be aligned to these initiatives. There is also no detail of how the fund will work with the £1.1 billion allocated to farmers, land managers and the rural economy.
13. It is unclear whether the fund will be allocated or competitive bidding, nor the mixture between capital and revenue. Clarity on these issues is expected to be announced at the 2021 Spending Review.

Engagement with Government

14. The LGA has raised the need for a locally driven UKSPF through the EU Exit Taskforce, member representation on the Growth Programme Board and through engagement with officials.
15. Following the November Ministerial EU Exit Local Delivery Board, the Chair of the EU Exit Taskforce, Councillor Kevin Bentley wrote to the Minister of Regional Growth and

Local Government, Luke Hall MP, proposing that the Government work with local government and develop a taskforce, at both the member and officer level.

16. The Minister has since responded indicating that they are keen to set up a taskforce of some kind at an official level. Members are asked to provide a steer on further engagement and lobbying on the UKSPF.

Implications for Wales

17. The Government have said the UKSPF will be used to reduce inequalities across the four home nations, including Wales. Through the EU Exit Ministerial Local Government Board, the LGA has been working closely with the WLGA in lobbying for a localised replacement for EU funding. We continue to work closely with the WLGA on the details of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Financial Implications

18. Work has been carried out from within existing budgets.

Update on health devolution and NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) consultation on integrated care systems (ICSs)

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper provides an update on the joint meeting of the People and Places, City Regions, and Community Health and Wellbeing board Lead Members, and the LGA's response to the NHS England and NHS Improvement consultation on integrated care systems.

Recommendation/s

That Members:

1. Note the update in the report.

Action/s

2. Officers to continue to work with councils and NHS England/NHS Improvement to look in detail at options proposed and continue to update members on the outcome of the consultation.

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Update on health devolution and NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) consultation on integrated care systems (ICSs)

Background

1. On 26 November, Lead Members of the People and Places board, City Regions board, and the Community Health and Wellbeing board met to discuss the LGA's lines and current position on health devolution. Lead Members heard about the experiences of Manchester and Cornwall as areas which have had some responsibility for health devolved to them, with Jessie Hamshar, Strategy and Engagement Service Director, Cornwall Council, and Warren Heppolette, Executive Lead, Strategy & System Development, Greater Manchester Health & Social Care Partnership from Manchester speaking.
2. At this meeting, the LGA's current lines on health devolution were agreed (see appendix 1 below), and there was also a brief discussion of the NHS England and NHS Improvement consultation on integrated care systems that had been launched that day. Alyson Morley, Senior Adviser on Adult Social Care and Health, agreed to circulate the LGA's draft response to Lead Members of all three boards for comment.
3. Lead Members commented on the draft submission before Christmas and comments were fed back to Alyson, who incorporated them into the LGA's final submission.

Issues

Summary of LGA response to NHSEI consultation on integrated care systems

4. Placing ICSs on a legal footing will affect existing partnerships, and it is essential that NHSEI engages councils as equal partners in developing the proposals.
5. The LGA supports the direction of travel of the proposals - joining up health and care support, with collaboration and locally led decision making is in line with our principles around devolution. However, the proposals are missing out on the opportunity to develop real collaborative place-based policy, which could look at the wider determinants of health to address health inequalities and improve population health.
6. The LGA supports the objectives of the NHS Long Term Plan but would like to see greater clarity in how this will work in practice – for example, whether this is really a step change in the NHS away from a very centralised system to one with greater devolution,

or whether national level decisions being delegated to ICSs will result in replacing or bypassing existing accountable place-based partnerships.

7. It is essential that there is local government representation on ICS boards, although it seems that at the moment ICSs as they are currently proposed will be NHS bodies will local government representation rather than a true partnership of equals.
8. There were a range of opinions from councils on the legal basis of ICSs, with some councils expressing concern that creating ICSs as a statutory corporate NHS body will be a retrograde step and damage the collaborative and equal partnerships in many STPs and ICSs.
9. Some councils favoured option 1 (that ICSs will be a statutory joint committee), on the basis that a joint committee has the benefit of being able to act as a strategic partnership body for the whole system. Other councils favoured option 2 because there is value of having a single corporate body across NHS organisations in a health economy, which could plan strategically and deploy resources to best effect across an area. Given these differing views, the LGA has not argued for either option, but stressed that there should be system level partnership where local government can work with the NHS to drive real change and improve health incomes. A number of other local authorities stressed the importance of co-terminosity between local authorities and ICSs, and how difficult it is to plan with health systems whose footprints bear no relation to identifiable place and communities.
10. The LGA emphasised that most commissioning should still take place at a neighbourhood/primary care network level, and that it should only be undertaken by ICSs when there is need or benefit in doing so. ICSs should not result in the withdrawal of commissioning capacity at a local place-based level. It is disappointing the proposals do not discuss the value of joint commissioning between the NHS and local government.
11. The LGA strongly calls for the whole of the public sector to operate within the same legal framework wherever possible, so have concerns about the proposal to remove NHS services from the scope of the Public Contracts Regulation 2015, as this could create a barrier to joint commissioning arrangements.
12. The LGA's full consultation response can be found here:
<https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/lga-response-nhs-england-and-nhs-improvement-consultation#summary-of-the-key-lga-messages-questions-and-concerns>.

Implications for Wales

13. Health is a devolved matter, but LGA officers remain in contact with colleagues from the WLGA and other stakeholders to explore areas of shared interest.



Financial Implications

14. Any further work on this area will be met from the LGA's existing programme budget.

Next steps

15. Officers will continue to work with councils and NHS England/NHS Improvement to look in detail at options proposed, as well as other options, to understand how they could improve health and wellbeing, and the implications for future working between local government and the NHS.

Appendix 1: LGA position on health devolution

- 1. Health devolution is not an end in itself.** It is a means of securing local freedom, responsibility and accountability to achieve improved health and wellbeing outcomes, better health and care services and better use of resources. It has also been seen as a key driver for the integration of health, social care and wellbeing care and support. The LGA has a long-standing commitment to moving the integration of health and social care from marginal activity to the main way of planning and providing services.
- 2. There is no one model or governance that is right for every area,** and where health and local government leaders agree that greater local freedom and flexibility is needed, it is for the area to develop its own proposals. The decision to propose health devolution sits with local authorities to make with
- 3. Decisions should be taken as close as possible to the communities they affect.** Local government and the NHS do not always share a common understanding and narrative on health devolution. The LGA continues to work with national partners to build a common understanding of the importance of devolving real power and resources as close as is appropriate to local communities, and will work with partners to ensure that notions of devolution within the NHS and local government are consistent with each other and have subsidiarity as a founding principle.
- 4. ICSs and STPs must be accountable to local places.** The LGA will continue to work with NHSEI, DHSC and MHCLG to ensure ICSs fully understand the importance of local government involvement in devolved decision-making structures for health and care, and that ICSs and STPs remain accountable through council overview, scrutiny and Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWBs). ICSs also have potential to be genuine strategic partnerships between councils, the NHS and other sectors, and the LGA will continue to work to identify the vital components that all ICSs need to have in order to achieve genuine health devolution.
- 5. The LGA supports a joined-up approach to improving population health, but have concerns that the national priorities of NHSE will dominate ICSs.** Many ICS leaders strongly underline our message that local government leaders need to be at the heart of ICS leadership, in order to achieve their objectives of improving health, improving health and care support, and addressing inequalities, but some ICSs are still strongly focussed on the NHS rather than wider population health, and need to have a wider and more inclusive approach.
- 6. The one size fits all approach expected from the NHS Long Term Plan on CCG mergers is not appropriate for all areas.** All decisions about the merger of CCGs should be taken in partnership with councils and HWBs, and CCGs that merge onto a larger footprint need to ensure that they are able to contribute to the HWB.

7. **The LGA supports the broad objectives of the NHS Reform Bill** to remove barriers to collaborative working, but the reforms need to strengthen and embed a place-based approach. There is a danger that putting ICSs on a statutory footing will bypass and undermine place-based integration, led my HWBs.

8. **ICSs should be required to ensure meaningful involvement and an equal partnership with local government**, with a 'place by default' approach. ICSs required to involve local government and HWBs in the development of plans. This goes further than sign off of final plans and involves early and ongoing engagement in the development of plans. Furthermore, ICS plans to devolve the development of place or locality plans to HWBs, based on JSNAs and joint health and wellbeing strategies. CCGs to continue to have a strong place-based focus. In larger CCGS, for the CCG to ensure that they play a strong and proactive role in HWBs. HWBs should have a statutory sign off and veto on all ICS plans.



People & Places Board Mid-Year Review

Purpose of report

For direction.

Summary

The report enables members to review the current work programme. It outlines the key issues which are likely to influence the work areas of the People & Places Board in 2021 and provides members with an opportunity to flag up future areas of interest or any additional focus which they would like within the current work programme.

Recommendation/s

Members to consider:

5. Are members happy with the current work programme, are there any gaps which need to be highlighted?

10. Taking into consideration the work of the board in 2020, what issues would members like greater focus upon in 2021?

Action/s

Officers to follow up on any issues raised by members, and to use feedback to shape the future work programme

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People & Places Board Mid-Year Review

Background

1. 2020 has been a difficult and unpredictable year for the sector. At the outset of the pandemic in March councils took a leadership role in ensuring their communities were supported and safe. Councils continued providing frontline services whilst standing up completely new forms of support, being developed in real time with direction from central government. The sector moved seamlessly onto an emergency footing which for many councils has lasted longer than originally anticipated.
2. Back in March 2020 it had been hoped that if the nation locked down for an extended period, we would be able to ease out and start thinking about what recovery would look like. However, the reality has been the introduction of a tiering system which has meant that different parts of the country have found themselves at different points in the cycle of lockdown. A full focus on recovery is still not yet possible as many councils are in a response phase and will be in this position well into the New Year.

Issues

3. As the new board cycle began in August the People & Places Board set its workplan for the year. The focus for the boards work was to be:
 - Within the context of COVID-19 and the forthcoming English devolution white paper the board will pursue a programme of engagement with Government and rural stakeholders to ensure councils in non-metropolitan England have the powers and resources to lead a successful and sustainable recovery and drive improved outcomes for their communities.
 - The Board will continue to take forward the LGA's lobbying work on skills, making the case for the Work Local model and continuing to engage with key stakeholders. The Board may want officers to focus on the role employment and skills will play in the Government's recovery plans.
 - The Board will continue to play a leading role in driving forward the digital connectivity agenda.
 - The Board will seek to ensure the key elements of place-based growth – Rural Land Management, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, trade and investment fit with the priorities and ambitions of non-metropolitan authorities.
 - Reflecting on feedback from lead members the Board will identify cross cutting policy issues which it would like to work on with other boards in order to help shape LGA lobbying lines e.g. planning, transport, housing, health

4. Based on further discussion with members the following pieces of work have been commissioned to support the broader lobbying work of the board. This compliments the regular programme of work officers are undertaking on the key work areas. Members have been provided updates on this through the various reports officers have brought to the board meetings.

Subject area	Project	Completion
Devolution	Devolution and the Role of Town and Parish Councils	March 2021
Local Recovery	Strengthening rural and coastal resilience and recovery	April/May 2021
Jobs and skills	Mapping employment and skills provision	March 2021
Jobs and skills	Unemployment predictions in local areas	February 2021
Local recovery (RSG funded)	Jobs and skills planning – 1) development of 'how to / top tips' to support the sector lead / contribute to local jobs and skills recovery 2) case material on local government's role to support jobs and skills during the Covid-19 crisis and as they plan for recovery	Both March 2021
Local recovery (RSG funded)	Supporting the UK tech sector and digital economy - forecasting advanced digital skills demand at a local authority level	March 2021
Devolution (RSG funded)	Devolution explainers	February 2021
Devolution (RSG funded)	Combined authority governance network support	March 2021
Devolution (RSG funded)	Lessons learned from devolution deals	March 2021
Post 16 (RSG funded)	Supporting youth participation	March 2021
Jobs and Skills (RSG funded)	Councillor Handbook on adult and community education services	Completed 2020
Jobs and Skills (RSG funded)	Evolving employment and skills commissioner role of Combined Authority	Completed 2020

5. This is an opportunity for members to review the direction of travel for the board and to indicate whether there are any gaps which they would like to flag up. **Are members happy with the current work programme, are there any gaps which need to be highlighted?**

Moving forward – 2021

6. Early 2021 will continue to be dominated by COVID19 and the progression in and out of the tiering system. The rollout of the vaccine programme brings hope that in 2021 there will be some sort of resolution to the pandemic. However, there is no real timescale to predict when this will be, and the focus of councils will continue to remain on the management of the pandemic.
7. 2021 will immediately reveal the impact of EU exit. There will be a differential impact from this across the country with port authorities potentially facing additional burdens. We await the outcome of the trade talks and are emphasising that new LG responsibilities must be seen in the context of all the winter pressures on councils. The early part of the new year brings potential capacity issues for local government as EU transition plans will be in addition to the work to support communities against the virus. The confluence of issues needs attention, especially the capacity of public services in port towns.
8. March will see the Chancellor presenting the budget. The furlough scheme will be coming to an end and it will provide a clear opportunity to understand what the long-term unemployment situation looks like. The skills landscape will need to change significantly and we will need investment in long term job creation. It is anticipated that the Chancellor will at this point provide some further indication around the government's approach to the long-term economic recovery of the nation. A Higher Education White Paper has also been suggested which will provide further opportunity to address skills issues.
9. By this point we should have further detail about how both the Levelling Up Fund and the UKSPF pilots will be operating. There could also potentially be further detail around the industrial strategy and post May we anticipate the Economic Recovery and Devolution White Paper being published. This will all be taking place whilst the government plans for the UN Climate Change Conference – COP26, in Glasgow on 1st November 2021.
10. The board is asked to take this opportunity to consider the issues it will be facing in 2021 and to flag up any gaps there may be. Moving forward members may want to indicate to officers any key areas of work they would like additional focus on. This could potentially be around:
 - EU exit and what its specific impact may be for non-metropolitan areas particularly in addressing issues around rural economies.
 - Economic recovery and the impact of the industrial strategy
 - UN Sustainable Development Goals and COP26

Taking into consideration the work of the board in 2020, what issues would members like greater focus upon in 2021?

Implications for Wales



11. Officers from the LGA are in regular contact with the WLGA on shared policy areas. We will continue to consult WLGA colleagues on issues which haven't been devolved to the Welsh Assembly.

Financial Implications

12. There are currently no direct financial implications of this report.

Next steps

13. Officers will factor in any comments from members into the future development of the board's work programme.



Spending Review: Key Issues

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The 2020 Spending Review took place on 25th November, outlining the Government's spending plans for 2021/22. The LGA published a full response to the Spending Review. This report focuses on the elements of the Review which are of particular interest to the People & Places Board – UKSPF, digital connectivity, freeports, levelling up and jobs and skills.

Recommendation/s

Members consider the announcements made by the Chancellor and any specific impact on the key policy areas of the Board.

Action/s

Officers to take forward any actions arising as a result of member feedback

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Spending Review: Key Issues

Background

1. The Government's Spending Review (SR) took place on 25th November 2020. The 2020 SR outlines the Government's spending plans for 2021/22 by setting budgets for each central government department. The full set of documents is available on the [Treasury website](#).
2. The LGA [published a media statement](#) responding to the announcements. This highlighted that the announcements at the Spending Review went some way towards meeting core spending pressures and estimated COVID-19 costs next year, but only if councils made full use of council tax raising powers. However, the one-year Spending Review has not addressed the underlying pressures and urgent need for investment in early intervention, adult social care and public health.
3. The LGA's full SR on the day briefing is available at <https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/spending-review-2020-day-briefing>. This report focuses on the aspects of the SR which address key issues of concern for members of the People and Places Board:
 - UK Shared Prosperity Fund
 - Digital connectivity
 - Freeports
 - Levelling Up Fund
 - Jobs and Skills

Issues

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

4. The Chancellor set out how the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) will help to level up and create opportunity for people and places across the UK by providing £220 million additional funding to help local areas prepare over 2021/22 for the introduction of the UKSPF. The fund will target places in most need such as former industrial areas, deprived towns and coastal communities.
5. The LGA response was:
 - 5.1. Having lobbied since the referendum for a domestic replacement for EU funds, we welcomed the clarity this announcement had brought to local government.
 - 5.2. The SR contains the "Heads of Terms" for the UKSPF (the Government's replacement of the European Structural and Investment Funds) and confirms that the fund will be at least £1.5 billion a year.
 - 5.3. Local government has made an offer to co-design the programme with Government and the investment framework for local areas that sits behind this. Councils have a

democratic mandate to represent their communities, as well as respect current local decision making and devolution agreements.

- 5.4. The additional £220 million to help local areas transition to the UKSPF in 2021/22 by running pilots and new approaches is welcomed. The Government must now work with all local areas to ensure there is a smooth transition to the new funding regime.
- 5.5. We will be working with the Welsh LGA to ensure that the new funds meet the needs of councils in Wales.

Digital Connectivity

6. The Chancellor announced over £260 million for transformative digital infrastructure programmes, including the Shared Rural Network for 4G coverage, Local Full Fibre Networks, and the 5G Diversification and Testbeds and Trials Programmes. £1.2 billion was announced to subsidise the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband, as part of the Government's £5 billion commitment to support rollout to the hardest to reach areas of the UK.
7. The LGA response was:
 - 7.1. Access to fast and reliable digital connectivity remains a necessity for communities and businesses across the country and will be essential to keeping pace with developments across the globe as we emerge from the pandemic.
 - 7.2. We welcomed the previously announced Shared Rural Network as good news for our communities. It is now vital that mobile network operators and the Government work with local authorities to deliver this ambitious programme.
 - 7.3. It is positive that the Government has confirmed the first four years of funding for the £5 billion Gigabit Broadband programme. We continue to be concerned by the Government's intention to manage this programme centrally from Whitehall. We believe that the success of the Superfast Broadband Programme demonstrates how councils' local knowledge and expertise can make all the difference to a well-managed roll out. We remain committed to working with Government to help design an approach to roll out that will benefit from the local expertise of councils.
 - 7.4. Finally, we note the Government has revised down its target of rolling out 100 per cent gigabit-capable broadband by 2025. It will now aim for a minimum of 85 per cent gigabit capable coverage but will seek to accelerate roll-out further to get as close to 100 per cent as possible. We had previously outlined our reservations as to whether the Government's original 100 per cent ambition was achievable by 2025.

Freeports

8. The Chancellor announced a minimum of 10 Freeports across the UK – at least one in each of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – to bring jobs, investment and prosperity to some of the most deprived communities. The programme aims to establish Freeports as national hubs for global trade and investment across the UK, promote regeneration and job creation and create hotbeds for innovation.

9. The LGA response was:

9.1. Following our calls to Government, we welcomed its commitment in the Freeports Bidding Prospectus to consider more than 10 freeports if bids are particularly strong. It is also positive that seed capital will be provided to winning areas to address local infrastructure constraints. It will be vital that freeports create new jobs and opportunities for local people. We have therefore asked that Government remains alive to the risk of domestic economic displacement of UK domestic businesses in its assessment of bids and as it progresses with winning areas.

Levelling Up Fund

10. The Chancellor announced that a new Levelling Up Fund worth £4 billion will be launched for England. Moving away from a fragmented landscape with multiple funding streams, this new cross-departmental fund for England will invest in a broad range of high value local projects up to £20 million, or more by exception, including bypasses and other local road schemes, bus lanes, railway station upgrades, regenerating eyesores, upgrading town centres and community infrastructure, and local arts and culture.

11. It will be open to all local areas in England and prioritise bids to drive growth and regeneration in places in need, those facing particular challenges, and areas that have received less Government investment in recent years. Spending Review 2020 makes available up to £600 million in 2021/22. The Government will publish a prospectus for the fund and launch the first round of competitions in the New Year.

12. The LGA response was:

12.1. It is good news that this fund moves to tackle our complex and fragmented funding system, which we have long warned about. However, we are concerned by the prospect of a competitive bidding process at a time when councils want to be fully focused on protecting communities and businesses from the impact of the pandemic.

12.2. The best way to make decisions about local investment is by working with councils, who know the needs of their areas best. We want to work with the Government to ensure this fund produces the best possible outcomes for local communities.

Supporting Jobs

13. The Chancellor announced that:

13.1. £2.9 billion Restart programme will provide intensive and tailored support to over 1 million unemployed people and help them find work, with approximately £0.4 billion of funding in 2021/22

13.2. Funding the £2 billion Kickstart scheme which will create hundreds of thousands of new, fully subsidised jobs for young people at risk of long-term

unemployment across Great Britain. The SR20 settlement includes £1.6 billion in 2021/22 which will ensure funding for over 250,000 Kickstart jobs.

13.3. Investment of £375 million from the National Skills Fund in 2021/22, which will provide £138 million for the Government's commitment to fund in-demand technical courses for adults, equivalent to A level, and to expand the employer-led boot camp training model.

13.4. On Apprenticeships, the Government is:

- making available £2.5 billion of funding for apprenticeships and further improvements;
- allowing levy paying employers to transfer unspent levy funds in bulk to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) with a new pledge function from August 2021.
- confirming unspent Levy funds will continue to expire after 24 months;
- introducing a new online service to match levy payers with SMEs that share their business priorities for the purposes of Levy transfer from August 2021;
- allowing employers in construction and health and social care to front-load training for certain apprenticeship standards from April 2021 and explore whether this offer can be extended to other sectors;
- testing approaches to supporting apprenticeships in industries with more flexible working patterns in 2020/21, including considering how to best support apprenticeship training agencies;
- extending incentive payments for hiring a new apprentice introduced in the Plan for Jobs to 31 March 2021.

14. The LGA response was:

14.1. National and local government should combine resources and expertise to deliver for people and businesses hard hit by the crisis and co-design the solutions.

14.2. In 2030 across England there could be as many as 694,000 direct jobs employed in the low-carbon and renewable energy economy, rising to over 1.18 million by 2050.

15. On Restart:

15.1. Support to the long-term unemployment needs to be as close as possible to local communities and the local services they rely on including housing, health, training and debt management. Local government offers to work with the Government to plan, commission and deliver Restart so it can align with local services and training opportunities and deliver optimal impact for people and places.

16. On Kickstart:

16.1. We believe this next phase of Kickstart should be extended to 16-17 year olds at risk on unemployment, and that local government should be able to refer this group into the Scheme.

16.2. Kickstart will work best for young people, businesses and communities if it is planned and delivered in partnership locally. DWP must build local government into the further iterations of the Scheme as we have already set out.

17. On In-demand technical courses for adults:

17.1. Using the National Skills Fund to fund free Level 3 courses for adults not yet qualified to these levels is welcome. We encourage the Chancellor to go further by devolving and localising this support so that it is customised to local need and can offer a clear pathway to further learning and work in places where people live.

17.2. We continue to recommend the Government at least doubles funding for the Adult Education Budget to increase support for the nine million people across England that lack basic literacy and numeracy skills.

18. On Apprenticeships

18.1. The Government has listened to employers and is introducing some long overdue reforms to the apprenticeship levy.

18.2. Local government should be offered more local freedom and flexibility to maximise the use of these funds, for example to widen participation to disadvantaged groups. We look forward to receiving more information on the Government's plan to allow employers to make levy transfers to SMEs enabling local government to work with employers to take a more strategic approach to apprenticeships locally

18.3. We urge the Treasury to reconsider and pause the 24-month expiry policy for unspent levy funds, to prevent employers from losing funds through no fault of their own. The Government should also introduce a levy payment holiday of up to six months for businesses struggling with cashflow problems.

Implications for Wales

19. Local government funding is a devolved matter and the Welsh LGA is undertaking its own work programme. We are in regular contact with the Welsh LGA and the other local government bodies in the devolved nations to exchange intelligence, ideas and consider joint work.

Financial Implications

20. The provisional 2021/22 local government finance settlement was announced on 17th December 2020. Officers are working through the detail.

Next steps

21. The Chancellor announced that the next Budget will be taking place on 3 March 2021, with a deadline for representations of 14 January. This timescale is without recent precedent. Officers in the finance team have been working with group leaders on the LGAs submission over the Christmas period.



People and Places Board Equalities Advocate

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

The LGA is developing its approach to equalities issues through the work of its boards. Equalities advocates are being identified for each board in order to drive the equalities work. Cllr Kevin Bentley is the equalities advocate for the People and Places Board. Members are invited to provide a steer around how they would like to see equalities issues addressed throughout the work of the People and Places Board.

Recommendation/s

Members to provide a steer around how they would like to see equalities issues addressed throughout the work of the People and Places Board.

Action/s

Officers to follow up on any member recommendations

Contact officer: Sonika Sidhu
Position: Principal Policy Advisor
Phone no: 07775802327
Email: Sonika.sidhu@local.gov.uk

People and Places Board Equalities Advocate

Background

1. The Executive Advisory Board have asked each Board to identify a member to be an Equalities Advocate within each Board to raise the profile of any equalities issues within the Board's workstream, to contribute to the cross-cutting work around equalities, and to report into the Executive Advisory Board on equality issues relating to their Board.
2. The nature of this may vary between different policy areas, but the Advocates aim across all Boards will be to help the Board embed equalities into the work of the Board.

Issues

3. Within the Board the Advocate will be expected to:
 - Encourage the Board to consider equality issues in all their work
 - Challenge the Board to embed equalities into the work of the Board
 - Hold the Board to account around equalities issues.Outside of the Board the Advocate will be expected to:
 - Collaborate with other Equality Advocates from other LGA Boards on cross-cutting equalities issues
 - Provide input into and feedback to the LGA equalities work programme.
4. Support: The role will be supported through the normal officer structures which support each Board as we aim for equalities to be embedded in our policy work.
5. Time commitment: Members may be asked to attend additional meetings to contribute to the cross-cutting equalities work and the development of the equalities policy work programme. Otherwise this is a role that should be performed within the role as member of the Board.
6. Cllr Kevinn Bentley is the equalities advocate for the People and Places Board.

Next steps

7. Members to provide a steer about how they would like equalities addressed throughout the work of the board.

People and Places Board Update

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper provides members with a brief update on issues and policy areas not covered by other items on the agenda.

Recommendation

Members are to note the contents of the report.

Action

Officers to take forward any comments from members.

Contact officer: Sonika Sidhu
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone no: 07775802327
Email: Sonika.Sidhu@local.gov.uk

People and Places Board Update Paper

Employment and skills update

Adult skills and lifelong learning

1. On 18 December, the Education Select Committee released its [recommendations](#) from its adult skills and lifelong learning inquiry. The LGA submitted written evidence and provided follow up material at the request of the Committee. The report recommends that there should be a community learning centre in every town and singles out providers of adult and community learning as “the jewel in the crown of the nation’s adult education landscape”. ACL providers include many councils, who either directly deliver or commission this provision, so this is a positive endorsement of councils’ work. Building on this momentum, we will now take forward discussions with the Government and the Education Committee and use the content of the LGA councillor handbook on making the best of its adult learning service (launched in October 2020) to support these discussions. [Learning for Life: the role of adult community education in developing thriving local communities - A handbook for councillors | Local Government Association.](#)

Restart employment support for long term unemployed people

2. Our member authorities are concerned about the impact unemployment will have on their residents, communities and wider local economy as the Covid-19 crisis continues to unfold. This is why the LGA and our member authorities proactively engaged DWP since last summer to put forward practical suggestions on how employment support for the long term unemployed (12 months plus) could be delivered to best effect. We suggested this could be done by contracting at a local level, working with the grain of local service provision and devolved / local programmes, using a multi-agency referral system recognising not everyone out of work will use JCP, and that other organisations should be able to deliver it alongside ‘prime providers’.
3. In November, the Chancellor announced a three-year, £2.9 billion, national [Restart programme](#) to support long-term unemployed (LTU) people back to work, and DWP launched a national procurement exercise for it through its prime provider framework on 11 December. Restart is likely to commence in the summer.
4. While it remains a national programme, there are signs that DWP has listened to some of our calls and recognises the added value of local government input. For instance, the procurement document states that providers should engage local government, not duplicate existing activity, and work with local employers to create local jobs. In addition, on 21 December, DWP issued a letter to the LGA and other local government representatives seeking input on the national procurement exercise. For each Restart contract package area (CPA), it has invited one tender question for each area (end

January 2021), plus two nominated external assessors per CPA (end February) to review bidders' responses to the question to inform DWP's evaluation and selection.

5. The LGA will help the sector engage with Restart and continue to make the case to DWP to engage with the sector early on as it develops further support programmes. This point was made at the LGA convened roundtable session bringing together P&P and CR Lead Members with the Minister for Employment, Mims Davies MP, on 21 December. An oral update will be provided.

Support the sector to lead / contribute to the Covid Response

6. Dealing with the economic and social implications of the Covid-19 pandemic and minimising the knock-on effects on communities is a priority for local government, as well as putting plans in place for recovery. How areas will deal with it depends largely on their unique economic and social conditions, the extent to which the Government engages the sector in developing flexible policy responses, and the action local government itself can take, working alongside its partners at a national and local level.
7. The sector has, and continues to do, incredible work to lead or contribute to local jobs and skills recovery efforts, but capacity and resource constraints offer little opportunity for the sector to share learning and ideas with each other. To save the sector time and resource and facilitate knowledge transfer, the LGA initiated two projects to be delivered by the end of March. These include:
 - 7.1. an online 'how to / top tips' resource. This will focus on five themes critical to jobs and skills recovery, drawing on the knowledge and expertise of a representative group of twelve member authorities. The Learning and Work Institute (L&W) has been commissioned to deliver this for us.
 - 7.2. Enhancing our existing online case study resource with new material that demonstrates local government's role to support jobs and skills within their local area during the Covid-19 crisis and as they plan for recovery. Rocket Science will deliver this project.

West Yorkshire Devolution deal

8. The [Devolution Deal for West Yorkshire](#) has reached a significant milestone, with the Order establishing a Mayoral Combined Authority for the region being laid in Parliament. If approved, the deal will unlock a new single pot of funding for economic growth in the region, worth £38 million a year for the next 30 years. This is alongside new powers over transport, education and housing and on top of further investment including, £317 from the Transforming Cities Fund and £3.2 million to support the development of housing sites across West Yorkshire.

9. The Mayor of West Yorkshire will also become the region's Police and Crime Commissioner. The region's first Mayoral elections are scheduled to take place next year. While the deal is similar to previous devolution agreements, £101 million government funding for flood management and the piloting of green infrastructure benchmarks appear new.

Note of last People & Places Board meeting

Title: People & Places Board
Date: Tuesday 10 November 2020
Venue: Via Zoom

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Welcome, introductions and declarations of interest The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Eddie Reeves (sub Cllr Barry Wood) and Cllr Colin Davie. There were no declarations of interest.	
2	Covid-19 update The Chairman invited Sonika Sidhu, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the update. Sonika informed members of the key lobbying points for the LGA as the country entered its second lockdown. These were broken down as follows: Immediate priorities for councils: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Spending Review and filling funding gaps• Seeking clarity around support for businesses• Additional support for vulnerable residents• Seeking greater local autonomy over decision making and service provision• Addressing lack of capacity in the enforcement sector• Seeking more local control over test and trace Medium term priorities for councils: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective transition out of lockdown• Clarifying potential role for councils in mass testing• Working with universities to facilitate students returning home and providing support for them where needed Longer term issues for councils:	

- Potential role in the vaccination programme
- Addressing impacts of EU exit
- Clarity around local government reorganisation
- Safely running elections in May 2021
- Providing support for vulnerable families

Following the update, members raised the following points:

- Concern was expressed about the future of school exams, with the devolved administrations having different policies to the UK Government. The 4 Governments should seek a consistent approach. Particular issue for councils on borders.
- The LGA's communication and information sharing with councils was praised.

The Chairman thanked members for their comments and requested that a Covid update be brought to all future Board meetings for the foreseeable future.

Decision

Members of the People & Places Board noted the update.

Action

Officers to bring a Covid update paper to the next Board meeting.

3 Business plan 2019-22 - 2020 review and update

The Chairman introduced the revised Business Plan and highlighted the new priority that the LGA's Executive Advisory Board had resolved to add - "*Narrowing inequalities and protecting communities*" – since the original Plan was drafted in October 2019. The Plan was being taken to all the LGA boards for information.

Members then raised the following points:

- The Plan should focus more on outcomes and improving residents' lives.
- In relation to infrastructure funding, greater emphasis was sought on meeting the increased demand for energy that will result from the shift to electric vehicles.
- In relation to health and wellbeing, frustration was expressed that the Government had still not published its social care green paper. Could the LGA work with councils who had developed their own plans and present a possible solution to Government?
- Councils had played a crucial leadership role during the pandemic in relation to adult social care, particularly in mobilising and coordinating the community and voluntary sector.

Decision

Members of the People and Places Board noted the 2020/21 update of the 3-year business plan as the basis for work programmes over the coming months and requested that officers feedback their comments to the Executive Advisory Board.

Action

Officers to feed back the Board's comments to the Executive Advisory Board.

4 Devolution Update

The Chairman invited Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, to introduce the update.

Philip said that the Local Economic Recovery and Devolution White Paper had been delayed and he wasn't expecting any further major developments on devolution and local government reorganisation until the new year. In the meantime, the LGA was exploring measures that could be introduced without legislation to boost recovery and renewal in the short to medium term and, also, the potential to align health devolution with devolution to local government. A joint Lead Member meeting with the People & Places, City Regions and Community Wellbeing Boards had been arranged for 26 November to discuss health devolution.

Philip sought feedback from members on the following issues:

- The list of detailed devolution proposals set out in Appendix 1
- The extent to which economic recovery and devolution should be linked.
- Potential powers that could be devolved to councils without setting up Combined Authorities.

Following the introduction, members raised the following points:

- The complexity of setting up Combined Authorities was raised and it was suggested that the timescales would be too long to be able to support economic recovery. Combined Authorities were also not considered to be so well suited to rural areas. Support was therefore expressed for a flexible approach, exploring powers that could be effectively devolved to individual councils.
- Members considered that there was a tension between the Government seeking greater clarity and simplicity in local government and the desire for more localised service delivery. Any changes to local government should be informed by outcomes and what works for residents rather than 'one size fits all' system change.
- Could more detail be provided on the items in the list at Appendix 1 so the sector can be clear about its asks. Police and Crime Commissioners taking over fire governance was cited as an example of taking away power from a local level. Philip said that there was a more detailed list behind the summary in Appendix 1 which would be circulated to members.
- The debate around local government reorganisation has become very polarised and a role was suggested for the LGA in taking a broader overview. It was considered vital to keep local communities engaged whatever new system was introduced.
- Concern was expressed about a loss of Spending Power resulting from the creation of unitary authorities such as Dorset. This would not help with economic recovery measures if further unitarisation were to take place.

- It was considered important that councils weren't seen by the public to be 'navel gazing' over devolution and reorganisation, when arguably more important issues needed to be addressed.
- Financing of local government was flagged up as a major concern. It was argued that councils needed to be able to raise more of their own money locally. Business rate retention would be a big unknown for councils into the future as businesses reorganise on the back of Covid-19.
- It was considered vital that adult social care services were retained under local authority control rather than being taken on nationally.

Decisions:

Members of the People and Places Board noted:

1. Ongoing work to review the range of existing devolution asks summarised **at Appendix 1** and agreed that the comments raised during the debate be incorporated as part of this research.
2. that a joint meeting between Lead Members of the City Regions, People and Places and Community Well-Being Boards has been arranged for 26 November.

5 People and Places Board Update

The Chairman invited Sonika Sidhu, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the update.

Sonika briefly ran through the topics in the update paper – EU exit and transition, digital connectivity, Freeports, housing and planning reform, Heads of Place and City Regions Board update.

Members raised the following points:

- Concern was expressed at the lack of training being given to council's regulatory service teams in readiness for the end of the transition period when responsibility for ports would be transferred.
- More information was requested on the Heads of Place pilot. Sonika agreed to provide this.
- An update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund was requested. The Chairman said that they were hoping for some detail as part of the Government Spending Review. He had pressed Government for more clarity on the various EU funded programmes and was making the case strongly for UKSPF money to be channelled through councils rather than LEPs.
- Concern was expressed that if the UK moved to WTO rules on 1 January, councils could be faced with significant extra costs in purchasing goods and services. The Chairman said that he was giving evidence to the Committee on the Future Relationship with the EU on this issue tomorrow. Paul Green, LGA Adviser, highlighted some resources on the LGA website that provided advice for councils on tariffs and other EU exit issues - <https://www.local.gov.uk/issues-local-government-resulting-end-transition-period> and <https://www.local.gov.uk/preparing-end-eu-transition-period>

Decision:

- Members of the People & Places Board noted the update.

Action:

- Officers to provide the Board with more detail on the Heads of Place pilot.

6 Strengthening Rural and Coastal Resilience

The Chairman invited Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, to introduce the report.

Philip outlined research showing how rural and coastal communities have suffered from poverty and deprivation over a number of years and explained that Government interventions to address it had been patchy. The current pandemic had served to highlight some of these issues but there was now an opportunity to consider how best to strengthen rural and coastal resilience within the context of national recovery and the UK's EU exit.

Philip therefore asked the Board to consider commissioning external research to help develop an evidence-based case for strengthening rural and coastal resilience.

Following the introduction, members raised the following points:

- Members felt that there was already a lot of information on rural and coastal deprivation in the public domain (for example in LEPs and the former Regional Development Agencies) and urged officers not to 'reinvent the wheel'. This existing information should be collated and updated before any new primary research was commissioned.
- Concern was expressed about the closure of welfare assistance schemes in rural areas and, also, that LEPs often failed to address rural economic interests. There was a request for the LGA to engage with SPARSE and others to see what was already being done to address these sorts of issues.
- Members felt that there was a need to differentiate between rural and coastal communities as they often faced different and distinct challenges.
- Any solutions should be outcome-focussed but the problems of rural and coastal areas were often more deep-seated than simply a lack of funding or employment opportunities.

Decision

- Members of the People & Places Board agreed that officers should bring a summary of existing research and information on rural and coastal issues to the next Lead Member meeting to inform a decision on commissioning further work.

7 Devolution and the Future Role of Town and Parish Councils

The Chairman invited Daniel Shamplin-Hall, Adviser, to introduce the report.

Daniel set out some of the issues currently facing parish and town councils and spoke about the partnership working that the LGA had been undertaking with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), particularly around improvement. NALC were keen to build on the work of town and parish councils during the pandemic and, through their response to the Spending Review, were seeking a greater role in the recovery phase.

Daniel said he was keen to hear the Board's experiences of working with parish and town councils and views on their future role. He requested members agreement to commission external research to explore the subject further, within the context of the Local Economy Recovery and Devolution White Paper.

Daniel also sought members' views on the proposal for 'pop up parishes' contained in Danny Kruger MP's report - Levelling Up Our Communities. The LGA had concerns that they could lead to issues around governance, oversight, accountability and value for money at a local level.

There followed a discussion during which members raised the following points:

- Members felt that devolution across the board to parish and town councils would be difficult as they varied so much in number and size geographically and, also, in terms of expertise, resources and professionalism. Any proposal to devolve more powers would therefore need to be supported by effective training (of officers and members), regulation and democratic accountability. In particular, concern was expressed that many parish and town councillors were not elected. The fact that some areas of the country were not currently parished was also considered to be a barrier to further devolution.
- Members cited examples of where the public had previously rejected the establishment of new parish and town councils. This was thought to be due largely to the perceived imposition of another layer of 'bureaucracy' and an additional precept on the council tax.
- Members agreed that devolution of powers by district and borough councils to parishes and towns was often more about cost-shunting than genuinely empowering local communities. Could the LGA raise these issues with DCN?
- It was felt that town and parish councils could become marginalised with the formation of more unitary authorities as they lost their often close relationships with districts and boroughs. Relationships with principal authorities were often poor.
- There was agreement with NALC's position on Covid and members felt it was important not to lose the close working relationships that had built up over the last few months.
- Any devolution to town and parish councils would only be effective if accompanied by a relaxation of the current strict rules around spending.
- One of the strengths of town and parish councils was their apolitical nature and this could be put at risk if they were given greater powers and funding.
- Members suggested engaging with the Society of Local Council Clerks in addition to NALC, to get a broader view of the issues.

- The LGA's position on 'pop up parishes' was supported, particularly on the grounds of lack of democratic accountability and oversight. It was suggested that 'pop up parishes' should not be allowed in areas that had existing parish or town councils.
- Members agreed that officers should seek greater clarity on exactly what NALC was asking for in terms of greater devolution. This, and what the LGA's role ought to be, should be ascertained before commissioning further external research. Daniel agreed that this was a sensible way forward and said he would send a revised commission document to the Board as soon as possible.

Decision

Members of the People & Places Board:

- 1) Approved the LGA response to the pop-up parishes recommendation highlighted in the recent Levelling up our Communities report published by Danny Kruger MP outlined in paragraph 14.
- 2) Requested further information on NALC's position and the LGA's potential role before committing to engaging external expertise.

Action

Officers to produce a revised commission for the next Lead Member meeting and circulate to Board members.

8 Employment and skills recovery

The Chairman invited Jasbir Jhas, Senior Adviser, to introduce the report.

Jasbir reminded members that in the summer, the Board had approved the LGA's jobs and skills recovery position. However, in the light of recent Government policy and funding developments, it had become necessary to update the LGA position. The revised position paper was presented at Annex A and members comments were sought.

Jasbir said that tackling long-term unemployment was going to be a huge issue and she reported that during confidential discussions with the DWP, it had become clear that they were going to introduce a national Work Programme type scheme, with a small number of contractors operating over large areas. This was likely to start in the middle of 2021 and there would be no devolution to local authorities.

Jasbir said that DWP had asked the LGA for its view on how this could be made to work at a local level and this submission, approved by Lead Members and submitted to DWP on 3 November, was attached at Annex B. Members views were sought on how best to convince the Government that a local approach would be a much more effective option.

Jasbir said that retraining was going to be key to tackling long-term unemployment and the Government's forthcoming Further Education White Paper was expected to address this, including by giving FE Colleges a more central role. Members' views were sought on local government's relationship with FE Colleges and possible LGA lobbying lines on the White Paper.

Finally, Jasbir reported that there was a significant risk of the Government's Community Learning Budget being cut and the LGA would be lobbying strongly against this. Last month, the LGA published a handbook containing top tips on how councillors could enhance their council-run adult and community learning services locally. Officers were currently exploring how this document could be taken forward most effectively.

Following the introduction, members raised the following points:

- Members agreed that the national centralised approach to tackling long-term unemployment would not be as effective as a localised approach. Local government had a vital role to play in bringing together local community organisations who were often best placed on the ground to deliver solutions.
- Concern was expressed about the accountability of FE Colleges locally.
- It was suggested that 'green economic recovery' needed to be higher up the list of priorities in Annex A.

In view of the late hour, the Chairman asked members to e-mail any further comments to Jasbir and requested that this item be brought back to Lead Members and the full Board at the next available opportunity. This was agreed.

Decision

Members of the People & Places Board:

- 1) Noted the report
- 2) Endorsed the LGA's position on (i) jobs and skills recovery; (ii) long-term unemployment; and (iii) skills.
- 3) Agreed that the issue should be revisited at the next available Lead Member and full Board meetings.

Action

Officers to bring the report back to the next available Lead Member and Board meetings.

9 Minutes of the last meeting

Cllr Martin Tett expressed his concern that he had not been consulted about Building Digital UK's broadband project despite his authority being one of the areas covered by the programme. The presentation at the meeting was the first time he had heard about it. The Chairman agreed to write to Building Digital UK's Chair and ask for further information on their consultation process.

Action

Officers to draft a letter to the Chair of Building Digital UK on consultation with local government.

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Kevin Bentley	Essex County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Morris Bright MBE	Hertsmere Borough Council
Vice-Chair	Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council
Deputy-Chair	Cllr Bob Jennings	Epping Forest District Council
Members	Cllr Rachel Bailey	Cheshire East Council
	Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcester City Council
	Cllr Hilary Carrick	Cumbria County Council
	Cllr Neil Clarke MBE	Rushcliffe Borough Council
	Cllr Keith Glazier	East Sussex County Council
	Cllr Diane Marsh	Gravesham Borough Council
	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Bradley Thomas	Wychavon District Council
	Cllr Rob Waltham MBE	North Lincolnshire Council
	Cllr Sue Woodward	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Leigh Redman	Somerset County Council
	Cllr Kyle Robinson	Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
	Cllr Doina Cornell	Stroud District Council
	Cllr Sarah Osborne	East Sussex County Council
	Cllr Stan Collins	Cumbria County Council
	Cllr Helen Grant	Richmondshire District Council
Apologies	Cllr Eddie Reeves	Oxfordshire County Council
	Cllr Colin Davie	Lincolnshire County Council
In Attendance	Cllr Barry Wood	Cherwell District Council
	Cllr Peter Moss	Preston City Council

