

People & Places Board

Agenda

Tuesday, 16 March 2021
1.00 pm

Online via Microsoft Teams

People & Places Board
16 March 2021

There will be a meeting of the People & Places Board at **1.00 pm on Tuesday, 16 March 2021**
Online via Microsoft Teams.

Apologies:

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

Conservative:	Group Office: 020 7664 3223	email: lgaconservatives@local.gov.uk
Labour:	Group Office: 020 7664 3263	email: labour.grouplga@local.gov.uk
Independent:	Group Office: 020 7664 3224	email: independent.grouplga@local.gov.uk
Liberal Democrat:	Group Office: 020 7664 3235	email: libdem@local.gov.uk

LGA Contact:

Emma West
emma.west@local.gov.uk /

Social Media

The LGA is committed to using social media in a co-ordinated and sensible way, as part of a strategic approach to communications, to help enhance the reputation of local government, improvement engagement with different elements of the community and drive efficiency. Please feel free to use social media during this meeting. **However, you are requested not to use social media during any confidential items.**

The twitter hashtag for this meeting is #lgapp

People & Places Board – Membership 2020/2021

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 16 March 2021

1.00 pm

Online via Microsoft Teams

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Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 8 June 2021, 1.00 pm, Venue TBC

Note of last People & Places Board meeting

Title: People & Places Board

Date: Tuesday 12 January 2021

Venue: Online via Zoom

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Welcome, apologies and substitutes, declarations of interest <p>The Chairman welcomed Members, officers, and guests to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Cllr Diane Marsh (sub Cllr Colin Davie) and Cllr Kyle Robinson.</p> <p>The Chairman declared an interest as he was the Chairman of Transport - East.</p> <p>Cllr Keith Glazier declared an interest as he was the Chairman of Transport - South East.</p> <p>Cllr Rob Waltham declared an interest as he was a Member of the Transport North Board and Rail North.</p>	
2	Transport Update <p>The Chairman invited Kamal Panchal, Senior Adviser, to introduce the update.</p> <p>Kamal introduced the report which provided members with an update on the sub-national transport bodies, work on decarbonisation of transport as led by the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport (EEHT) Board and upcoming projects.</p> <p>Members made the following comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is important to re-emphasise the significance of sub-national transport boards (STBs). There is very positive work taking place across the country in bringing together local authorities and local bodies. We need to encourage others to become involved in the sub-national transport board over the next 18-24 months.• We want to continue to encourage people to get out of cars and do more exercise, how could we convert temporary cycle lanes into being permanent cycle lanes and ensure that government create extra investment to increase the number of cycle lanes and paths?	

- There are greater challenges in the North, we need to focus on governance and building partnerships.
- It's important to focus on connecting with outer, more rural areas and continue to lobby government for rural transport funding.
- Whilst electric vehicles are a step in the right direction, they do not solve congestion-related issues, sustainable alternatives need to be in place.
- We need to improve the mindset of people and to do that we need the relevant infrastructure in place.

Kamal responded to the comments made by Members:

- In relation to STBs, a lot of the points being raised by Members of this board have and continue to be raised.
- Underpinning this work is the need for particularly government policy to reflect the 'no one size fits all' principle.
- People should avoid travelling by car if possible. Where people do need to travel by car, they should try to change the vehicle that they are using to an environmentally friendly car.
- As part of the ongoing work, we are focusing on tackling issues which relate to pavement parking.

Decision:

Members noted the report.

Action/s:

Officers to note the comments made by Board Members and to continue to feed those comments into ongoing work.

Officers to submit further updates to a future meeting of the People and Places Board.

3 Broadband Update

The Chairman welcomed Justin Leese, UK Gigabit Programme Director - Building Digital UK, Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Digital Connectivity Champion, and Andrew Carter, Chief Executive of the Centre for Cities. He then invited Justin to introduce the update.

Justin introduced the report and the separate confidential briefing which provided members with an update on the government's downgrading of its gigabit-broadband-for-all target. He referred specifically to the current policy position, market investment the engagement work that continued to take place and existing and upcoming projects/interventions.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne provided a brief update in relation to the timelines for the new rollout, local intelligence to form responses to the spending review and project funding. He referred to a recent meeting with the Department

for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and confirmed that workshops would be held by the DCMS focusing on access to land and relieving tensions between local governments and providers. He reassured Members that there would be a local government voice at the workshops.

Members made the following comments:

- With regards to rural broadband, it would be more economical and efficient for incoming broadband providers if Councils be funded to put multi-channel ducting into roadside verges.
- I have some concerns with regards to the reduction in targets. We need to emphasise the increase in broadband use, especially during lockdown and because of the COVID-19 pandemic. How can we put more pressure on companies to ensure that we are delivering better and more comprehensive broadband at a higher level?
- Should the LGA recommend that all new or refurbished car parks should incorporate ducting to carry the cables for car charging so that when it becomes necessary, it can be installed without major building works?
- Broadband supply feels very different in smaller suppliers prepared to commit capital; it seems as though suppliers will tend to the easier jobs first. Government need to use influence on providers to make them accountable, fair, and equitable.
- The voucher scheme could be risky, some providers are taking advantage of the scheme and sending bills to customers.
- Suppliers must provide broadband using the 'outside in' process, because many rural communities are still waiting for sufficient broadband, with people working from home more due to COVID-19 and parents home schooling their children, a good broadband connection is very important.
- Cross-border issues are very significant, and some are very rural. How do you join it up and what duty do you have to make sure we have an equitable cross-border?
- The commercial sector needs to be on same timeline as government.

Justin, Andrew and Cllr Hawthorne responded to the comments made by members:

- We have various projects and pilots running on the strategic road network, we're building duct infrastructure with some fibre but there is capacity for more fibre, we've added to the existing duct network and that's been put into co-operative ownership. We're working with the Department for Transport (DfT) and network rail to deploy a fibre cable from Manchester to York which is being opened for

wholesale access.

- With regards to policy, it is now is entirely megabit focused and the infrastructure in place must be capable of delivering the megabits.
- In relation to our targets, the target is at least 85%. We will be prioritising individuals who do not have Superfast broadband yet.
- There are lots of providers joining the Superfast programme. We are regularly reviewing structures and looking at suppliers' contribution as well as our own.
- In relation to cross-border delivery, the Superfast programme had a very hard definition around local authority areas. For the new programme, we'll look more closely at hard to reach areas and find out about paying for services and combining areas to provide a more attractive offer.

Decision:

Members noted the report and the information contained within the confidential briefing.

Actions:

Cllr Mark Hawthorne to report back to a future meeting of the People and Places Board in relation to the outcome of the DCMS workshops.

Officers to send Justin's details to Cllr Martin Tett as he had to attend another meeting during this item.

Justin to report back to a future meeting of the People and Places Board in the next few months re a progress report.

Officers to note the comments/concerns raised by members.

4 Youth Employment and Skills Update

The Chairman invited Bushra Jamil, Adviser, to introduce the update.

Bushra introduced the report which provided an update on the development of a youth participation and employment and skills policy which related to young people. The paper had been well received at the Children and Young People Board.

Members made the following comments:

- What work is being undertaken in relation to hard to reach children and young people who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET)?
- In relation to NEETs, there are those that are already in the system and those that are entering it. We should have two separate approaches to try and tackle these different groups.

- The situation with children and young people who are NEET is changing all the time and is such a broad spectrum. NEETs are a perfect example of when people fall out of the system because of a change of circumstances, and with the current COVID-19 pandemic, there is a mismatch in the marketplace for work.
- In relation to vulnerable children and young people, particularly care leavers, there is positive work being undertaken by many councils in supporting them back into work.
- With regards to Principle 5, Annex B, which refers to employers being incentivised to support Industry Placements, the final paragraph relating to local government is very positive. One of the things that we should be doing and championing for ourselves is the positive work that we're already doing and emphasising the fact that as Councils, we could be leading in this element of it.
- In relation to point 8 of the report, which refers to the LGA Chairman's correspondence with Ministers regarding support, maybe we should include the Minister of Social Care.
- With regards to post-16 establishments, post-16 education was handed to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) but there needs to be a clear role for local authorities in this. There are issues around transport for post-16 education, could officers liaise with transport colleagues to progress on this matter?

Bushra responded to the comments made by members:

- Following the Ministerial roundtable event last September, we have been in regular dialogue with the Department for Education (DfE) officials. A meeting is scheduled for next week to discuss the issues and challenges relating to young people and NEETs and how to better support them.
- Transport related issues and wider support for young people and those who are NEETs are discussed regularly with the DfE officials.
- With regards to T Levels, we are working closely with our workforce development team to ensure that Councils are aware of the suite of initiatives and providing opportunities for young people. This is particularly important, as part of the statutory responsibilities in terms of looked after children and more vulnerable groups.

Decision:

Members noted the report and agreed to provide comments/steer in relation to plans for progressing the policy.

Actions:

Officers to explore an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) in relation to youth employment and skills.

5 EU Exit Paper

It was agreed by the Chairman that agenda items 5 (EU Exit paper) and 6 (UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) paper) be discussed together. The Chairman invited Paul Green, Adviser, to introduce the papers.

Paul introduced both reports referred to above. The EU Exit Paper updated Board members on UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and the work that the LGA has been undertaking to support councils in preparing for Britain's exit from the EU and the end of the transition period. The UKSPF paper updated Board members on the UKSPF and sought their steer on engagement with the Government in shaping the fund. He highlighted several key issues which were a result of the end of transition period and explained in detail the work being undertaken to address these issues.

Members made the following comments:

- We have established, through our Brexit Transition Board, a contact group with the EU to share experiences and understand what some of the issues will be as part of the Brexit work as the deal works through the transition.
- In terms of the UKSPF, I have expressed concern in the past in relation to the level at which decisions are made. The UKSPF paper is optimistic as it suggests that we will be making decisions as councils. An update in relation to local decision-making would be very helpful.
- In relation to the pilot schemes for the new fund in 2021/22, do you have any further information on that? £220 million doesn't seem like a lot of money for the whole country.
- When it comes to direct funding for local projects, that should be done through the local authorities and not through LEPs.
- Have we received any further information from government in relation to what the role of LEPs will be? Is it moving back more towards local government?

Paul responded to the comments made by members:

- The LGA line is that the fund should be driven by councils and combined authorities and this is one of the key points the LGA will continue to make as part of our wider lobbying work..
- In relation to longer-term monitoring of the impact of the end of the transition period, there is currently a staggered approach by UK government with regards to checking paperwork for import products. April and July is when we will have an increase in checking import products, that will impact on ports, we do have certain pinch-points where know where the pressures will be as we

approach the end of transition.

Decision:

Members noted the EU Exit paper.

6 UK Shared Prosperity Fund Paper

It was agreed by the Chairman that agenda items 5 (EU Exit paper) and 6 (UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) paper) be discussed together, the discussion for both items was noted in minute 14 above.

Decision:

Members noted the UKSPF paper.

Actions:

Officers to continue to lobby for local government to be driving by local government.

7 Health Devolution

The Chairman invited Eleanor Law, Policy Adviser, to introduce the update.

Eleanor introduced the report which provided Board members with 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 (ICS). She thanked Lead Members for their comments and feedback on the LGAs consultation response before Christmas. She confirmed that she would submit a further update report to a future meeting of the People and Places Board, should the NHS or the Department of Health provide further information re the NHS bill.

Members made the following comments:

- There is a risk of losing some of the collaboration work that currently exists. We need to emphasise the significance of partnership working and joint decision making with the NHS.
- The vaccination process in relation to COVID-19 is great for working in partnership with NHS. We do have a lot to offer at a local level that can help and support the NHS.
- My experience locally is that the NHS and local authorities have worked extremely well together in terms of the COVID-19 crisis response and it has opened many doors that were previously closed to us (e.g.: data sharing, ICS). Although there is a lack of transparency and accountability, it's becoming more difficult to engage with local NHS groups. Equal partnerships are very important and it's to the benefit of the NHS and local NHS professionals to engage with communities effectively to re-enforce

transparency and accountability.

- The role of the Health and Wellbeing Boards must be paramount, and we cannot allow, with ICS, that role to be diminished.
- In relation to Scrutiny, councils need to have more powers and reports must arrive in a timely manner to ensure that accountability is passed on and can be acted on.

Decision:

Members noted the report.

Actions:

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.

Officers to ensure that 'Health Devolution' becomes a standing item on the agenda to address ongoing issues (to include information re the NHS bill once it is received from the NHS or the Department of Health).

8 Mid-Year Review

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

Sonika introduced the report which enabled Board members to review the current work programme. It outlined the key issues likely to influence the work areas of the People and Places Board in 2021 and provided members with an opportunity to flag up future areas of interest or any additional focus which they would like within the current work programme.

Members made the following comments:

- Whilst people migrating from cities and suburbs into rural areas to live and work is welcome, as it develops, it is going to put pressure on rural schools, rural services, and the finances of the local authority.
- In relation to Broadband, can we ensure that the debate continues regularly?
- Could you provide more information in relation to COVID-19 recovery where the LGA will have a reflection on the resilience of local government and the capacity to continue providing services in all areas of the country?

The Chairman and Sonika responded to the comments made by members:

- There is an ongoing piece of work which focuses on rural and coastal resilience and recovery, we could take migration into rural areas from cities and suburbs into account as part of that work.

This will be discussed at the next Lead Members meeting.

- As Chairman, I will ask Justin Leese to report back to the People and Places Board in 3 months' time in relation to Broadband and project progress.
- In relation to service delivery in COVID-19 recovery, the Chief Executive of LGA and SMT are already looking at this. We could provide an update to the next Lead Members meeting to ensure that we feed into that.

Decision:

Members noted the report.

Actions:

Officers to increase the focus on rural migration in the ongoing piece of work on rural and coastal resilience and recovery.

Officers to ensure that the ongoing piece of work on rural and coastal resilience and recovery is discussed at the next Lead Members meeting.

Chairman/Officers to ask Justin Leese to report back to the People and Places Board in 3 months' time in relation to Broadband and project progress.

Officers to ensure that feedback from the Chief Executive of LGA and SMT in relation to service delivery in COVID-19 recovery is discussed at the next Lead Members meeting.

9 Spending Review

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

Sonika briefly introduced the report which focused 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.

Members made the following comments:

- In relation to paragraph 12 within the report, local authorities are under a significant amount of pressure in responding to the COVID-19 crisis that they have not always got the opportunity to put in their best bids. Could we see if the message can be passed up the line to ensure that there is an awareness that local government is under massive resource pressure at the moment and that the bidding culture is unhelpful as it widens the gap.

Decision:

Members noted the report and considered the announcements made by the Chancellor and any specific impact on the key policy areas of the

Board.

Action:

Chairman/Officers to send a note from the People and Places Board to the Chairman of LGA in relation to local government resource pressure and bidding culture.

10 Equalities Advocate update

The Chairman introduced the report, as the Equalities Advocate for the People and Places Board. He emphasised the importance of equality and how accessibility affects individuals with differing needs. He added that an item relating to equality would be a standing item on the agenda going forward.

Members made the following comments:

- My experience locally, specifically in relation to the Black Lives Matter campaign, is that we updated our equality documents, engaged with our communities regarding the services that we provide. It would be interesting to know how other councils across the country engage with their communities so that we can share good practice and ensure that there is strong representation across all of the protected characteristics to ensure that voices are heard.

Decision:

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

Action:

Officers to carry out a survey for all Board Members in relation to accessibility.

11 Update Report

Decision:

Members noted the report.

12 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 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
	Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council
	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 Eddie Reeves	Oxfordshire County 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 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 Diane Marsh	Gravesham Borough Council
	Cllr Kyle Robinson	Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
In Attendance	Cllr Colin Davie	Lincolnshire County Council

Update on “Devolution Deal to Delivery”

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper provides an update on progress on the “Devolution Deal to Delivery” project, which has been commissioned to look at the lessons that can be learnt from areas that have successfully negotiated devolution deals, and to develop resources to assist areas that might seek to secure a future devolution deal. Following a request from Lead Members, Shared Intelligence, the consultants commissioned to deliver this work, will attend the meeting.

Recommendation/s

That Members:

1. Note the update in the report.

Action/s

1. Officers to continue to work with Shared Intelligence on the outstanding areas of work in the project, including deep dives.
2. Officers to organise a workshop setting out the finding of the project.

Contact officer:	Ellie Law
Position:	Policy Advisor
Phone no:	07584 273764
Email:	Eleanor.law@local.gov.uk

Update on “Devolution Deal to Delivery”

Background

1. Shared Intelligence have been commissioned to carry out research into the devolution process in England, looking at the lessons that can be learnt from areas that have successfully negotiated devolution deals and in some cases established new combined authorities.
2. This project aims to develop a suite of practical advice, learning tools, top tips and short case studies to guide local areas through the process of reaching a devolution deal and realising the potential of that deal. It will also identify potential support needs for emerging and existing devolution deal areas. The project is due to complete in early April and a representative from Shared Intelligence will attend the Board and provide more details on project progress.

Issues

3. To date, Shared Intelligence have carried out 34 interviews between December and February. 21 of these interviews were with combined authorities, their constituent authorities and partners. This has included interviews with officers, councillors and representatives from two Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and one university. 13 of these interviews were with non-combined authorities, again encompassing both council officers and councillors and representatives from an LEP, HM Treasury (HMT), the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and Homes England.
4. These interviews covered a wide range of topics including questions about existing devolution deals, structures, strategies, ways of working, perspectives on the experience in different areas of the establishment and operation of the combined authority and the negotiation and delivery to date of the devolution deal, and possible areas for learning.
5. Shared Intelligence have also carried out desk research into each of the combined authorities. This work looks at:
 - a. The composition of the combined authority, including membership, portfolio holders and voting arrangements
 - b. Other aspects of political governance, including boards, sub-groups and advisory bodies
 - c. Relationships with partners including LEPs, the NHS and business.
 - d. The groups bringing together officers from the combined authority and constituent councils.
 - e. The combined authority officer structure

- f. The area and geography of the combined authority, including the number of councils and population of the area
6. Shared Intelligence are now in the process of setting up deep dives into five combined authority areas. These deep dives will cover: the ambitions, devolved resources, and devolved powers of each devolution agreement; the functions of the devolution deal; and the impact of the devolution deal.
7. The deep dives will be developed initially through collecting core materials from websites, interview notes, the published devolutions deals, and other published reports and committee papers. This work will be supplemented through a group discussion with Combined Authority officers, interviews with a council leader from within the Combined Authority area and representatives from partners and/or local stakeholders such as a university or CCG. If possible, the mayor of each Combined Authority in a deep dive area will also be interviewed.
8. Shared Intelligence have also set up a Sounding Board made up of key stakeholders to steer the final product. This includes, Cllr Simon Henig, Leader of Durham County Council and Vice Chair of the People Board.
9. The project, which is expected to finish in April, will deliver a number of resources to assist local areas seeking to secure a devolution deal. These resources will include a suite of learning tools, case studies and guides on how to achieve a successful devolution deal and how to put it into practice. These will be available to officers and councillors and we will seek to hold a workshop to further share learning from the project.

Implications for Wales

10. This project is specifically looking at devolution deals in England, but LGA officers remain in contact with colleagues from the WLGA and other stakeholders to explore areas of shared interest.

Financial Implications

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

Next steps

12. Work will continue on the deep dives in the coming weeks, and the Sounding Board will meet twice to reflect on the work to date and steer it going forward.
13. Members may wish to consider whether there are any additional areas of combined authority governance that Shared Intelligence should consider during the next stages of



the project, and if there are any topics not so far looked at which should be included in the deep dive interviews.

Devolution and Local Governance Reform Update

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

While there continues to be a degree of uncertainty regarding the timing of the Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper the LGA has continued to keep the issue in the national spotlight and maintain a watching brief on the related, but distinct, issue of local government reorganisation. This paper provides a brief update following the launch of the Devolution APPG Inquiry into the role of national government in making a success of devolution in England.

Recommendations

Members of the People and Places Board are asked to

- i. **Note** the publication of the Devolution APPG report – **attached at Appendix 1**.
- ii. **Note** the developments in relation to local government reorganisation.

Action

Officers to take forward work subject to the comments of members.

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

Devolution and Local Governance Reform Update

Background

1. While there continues to be a degree of uncertainty regarding the timing of the Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper the LGA has continued to keep the issue in the national spotlight, maintain a watching brief on the related, but distinct, issue of local government reorganisation and support areas looking to advance local plans for devolution – as described in a separate agenda item.

Issues

Devolution All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Inquiry

2. On 9 March the LGA supported the launch of the Devolution APPG's [inquiry into the role of national government in making a success of devolution in England](#). This inquiry drew on five oral evidence sessions with academics, politicians and experts and written submissions from 24 organisations. It was chaired by Andrew Lewer MP and steered by a panel including Cllr Morris Bright, Vice Chair of the People and Places Board.
3. The report makes several recommendations in the following areas:
 - 3.1 **Covid-19:** The strength and importance of local government has been amply demonstrated in the response to COVID-19. To successfully deliver economic recovery, levelling-up, improved health outcomes and increased resilience, much greater devolution of powers and funding is needed.
 - 3.2 **The White Paper:** The government's deal-based approach linked to the creation of metro mayors played a clear role in kick-starting the process of English devolution, but it has now run its useful course. Given the scale of the economic and social challenges ahead, the need to make swift progress and to recognise that metro mayors are unlikely to be appropriate for every community, the Government needs to widen its approach and consider new models. The forthcoming White Paper should bring forward a new approach.
 - 3.3 **Barriers in Central Government:** There are cultural barriers towards further devolution in Whitehall that must be addressed. Local Government needs to be given the parity of esteem that its huge achievements in responding to COVID-19 deserve.
4. For reference, a copy of the final report is attached at **Appendix 1**. At the time of writing this report the publication has received good media coverage and has been well received by senior figures in national and local government. In the coming weeks the Devolution APPG will meet to discuss how best to take forward the proposals contained in this report, Board members are welcome to attend and share their priorities.

Local Government Reorganisation

5. We continue to keep an eye on the issue of local government reorganisation. [The open consultation on proposals for locally led reorganisation of local government in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset launched on 22 February and is set to close on 19 April.](#) There are four proposals for Cumbria, two proposals for North Yorkshire and two proposals for Somerset. LGA regional teams are working with local areas to provide support and advice where appropriate and LGA policy colleagues are continuing to work with MHCLG and others to identify any relevant policy issues e.g. the timing of elections.
6. With a view to anticipating any future demand in this area, we are also currently in the process of commissioning a “Plain English Guide to Local Government Reorganisation”. This will set out how reorganisation works in practice, advise on how to get the best local outcomes from this process and explore what the implications are for both existing local authorities and residents. It will aim to support areas that have determined to explore the process of reorganisation locally and will not seek to make the case for any particular form of local governance.

Next steps

7. Members of the People and Places Board are asked to:
 - 7.1 **Note** the publication of the Devolution APPG report.
 - 7.2 **Note** the developments in relation to local government reorganisation.

Implications for Wales

8. The LGA has worked closely with the Welsh Local Government Association and the associations of the other devolved administrations throughout the coronavirus pandemic and will continue to do so through the process of recovery. Councils in Wales are on a different devolution journey to those in England.

Financial Implications

9. Project costs related to the commissioning of any external support will be met from the board's policy budget.

Strengthening Rural and Coastal Recovery and Resilience

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

This paper provides a covering note for a presentation to be provided by Pragmatix Advisory on the work they have undertaken on the Strengthening Rural and Coastal Recovery and Resilience Project.

Recommendations

Members are asked to:

- **Note** the summary findings of the project to date (paragraph 4) which will be expanded on by Pragmatix Advisory at the Board.
- **Comment** on the findings of the report, their applicability to members' rural and coastal settings and how they might inform the Board's future programme of work.

Action

Officers to take on board comments and steer Pragmatix Advisory as appropriate.

Contact officer:	Daniel Shamplin-Hall
Position:	Adviser
Phone no:	0207 664 3314
Email:	Daniel.Shamplin-Hall@local.gov.uk

Strengthening Rural and Coastal Recovery and Resilience

Background

1. There is evidence that the significance of deprivation and economic challenges in rural and coastal areas has been underestimated by national datasets and, as a result, subsequent Whitehall policy interventions have failed to provide adequate support.¹
2. Following discussions with the Board on how best to address these issues within the context of the Government's levelling-up agenda, Lead Members approved the commissioning of research to explore how to strengthen recovery and resilience in rural and coastal areas.

Progress to date

3. Pragmatix Advisory (PA) were commissioned to undertake the project and will present their interim findings at the upcoming Board. These will draw on a wide-ranging qualitative and quantitative research exercise including more than fifty rural and coastal stakeholders' interviews, detailed analysis of national datasets, and deep dives into eight case study areas drawing on locally derived insight and data to augment the project's overall findings
4. At the time of writing PA are bringing together their research and drawing up a series of recommendations for central and local government. With more work to be undertaken before the project's completion at the end of March, the Board will be asked to sense-check the emerging findings of the report and help steer its final recommendations. To date the work has uncovered the following themes:
 - 4.1. **Ongoing challenge of Covid-19** - uptake of the Job Retention Scheme suggests rural and coastal businesses are suffering as badly as their urban and suburban peers. The high proportion of 'micro' enterprises and smaller family owned businesses that make up rural and coastal areas are now vulnerable to failure.
 - 4.2. **Challenge of scale** - the challenge of limited scale is reflected in higher fixed and unit costs in the provision of services (public and private) and delivery of infrastructure and assets - transport, communications and energy networks are key constraints on rural and coastal growth.
 - 4.3. **Challenges of geography** - there are fundamental challenges of geography that rural and coastal communities face to varying extents, such as low average population density, sparsity, peripherality. Each of these geographical characteristics bring with them a unique set of economic challenges such as small market catchments and the development of smaller enterprises with thinner margins across fewer sectors.

¹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327675106_The_development_of_an_index_of_rural_deprivation_A_case_study_of_Norfolk_England

- 4.4. **Challenge of the industry** Three broad sectors often represent a higher share of output and employment; farming, fishing and agri-food, tourism and manufacturing. These key sectors bring their own specific challenges –such as the need for seasonal labour, dependency on export markets (often in the European Union) and reliance on natural resources.
- 4.5. **Challenging social outcomes** - These issues combine to provide challenging social outcomes which need to be addressed. These are easily seen in the performance of many coastal communities in the Index of Multiple Deprivation. But even in places with a 'good IMD score' there are hidden disadvantages holding back rural locations.
5. To further augment their findings, PA will host a workshop on Wednesday 10 March with a selection of People and Places Board members and officers from rural and coastal areas to test their findings. This will include a series of proposed solutions and opportunities which will be drawn together at the presentation to the Board.
6. PA will also host three focus groups on w/c 8 March, one each for participants from rural areas, coastal areas and the sparsest areas from both. The focus groups will explore key rural and coastal stakeholders' views on the various structural and socio-economic issues identified, and the potential policy interventions to tackle them. Participants from the focus groups will reflect a balanced and diverse sample of the local community, focusing on senior local businesspeople, community representatives, opinion formers and NGO leaders.
7. The project is set to be completed by 31st March 2021.

Next steps

8. Members are asked to:
- 8.1 **Note** the summary findings of the project to date (paragraph 4) which will be expanded on by Pragmatix Advisory at the Board.
- 8.2 **Comment** on the findings of the report, their applicability to members' rural and coastal settings and how they might inform the Board's future programme of work.



New UK subsidy control regime

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

The Government has launched a consultation on a new subsidy control regime for the UK, ahead of issuing primary legislation.

No longer being subject to EU law, the UK can decide which subsidies are allowable, where, and for what purposes. The new regime will impact on a wide range of issues of concern to local government and will govern the award of grants that councils themselves issue to businesses.

LGA Officers have been engaging with Whitehall at an early stage to ensure local government concerns are reflected in the new regime. LGA now wishes to respond formally to the consultation and seeks members' views.

Recommendations

Board members are asked to consider the issues raised within the report and provide a view on the suggested focus of an LGA response.

Action

Officers to feed members' views back in the consultation response.

Contact officers:

Dominic Rowles

Position:

Deputy Head of Brussels
Office

Phone no:

+32493445427

Email:

dominic.rowles@local.gov.uk

New UK subsidy control regime

1. Overview

- 1.1 On 3 February 2021, the Government (BEIS) published its [consultation](#) 'Subsidy Control: designing a new approach for the UK'. The document provides detail on the proposed new regime and seeks responses to a range of questions. The consultation closes 31 March 2021, after which the Government will issue primary legislation governing the whole of the UK.
- 1.2 In line with the UK's international commitments, the government has indicated that public support will only be allowed to step in where there are clear social, economic or environmental advantages and a value-for-money case can be made.
- 1.3 Most new grant programmes or one-off grants, whether national, regional, or local will have to comply with a range of principles to ensure the grants minimise the distortive effects on competition. The system will be governed by an independent body, possibly the Competition and Markets Authority.

2. Impact on councils

- 2.1 The regime will set the legal framework for subsidies/grants of all types in the UK. This will include areas where local government has a direct role:
- payments issued in relation to tackling COVID. Councils issue several business support grants and the adult social care infection control fund for example
 - local growth or enterprise funds such as the proposed UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Levelling Up Fund and the Towns Fund, or any loans given by councils
 - one-off grants from councils to small-scale initiatives which benefit local communities, such as arts, culture, heritage, museums, sports events, social enterprises, volunteer and community groups.
- 2.2 The regime will also impact areas where local government typically has a less direct role but nevertheless remain fundamentally important:
- support for environmental measures, including energy saving and climate measures contributing to the 'net zero carbon' goal
 - subsidising employment and skills programmes
 - subsidies for public service provision in areas of market failure, such as rural bus or rural broadband services, some types of waste collection etc.
 - support for research, development, and innovation
 - business bailouts, such as failing steel works, car manufacturing plants, banks. Councils may have a role in workforce support packages following redundancies
 - aid to ferry links, airlines and airports. Councils may have part ownership.
- 2.3 The consultation is seeking views on whether bespoke rules are needed for any or all of the above activities, and the Government will support each area with guidance. It will also explore those instances where the size of grant is so low that it can be automatically considered to be compatible with the regime (no more than £340,000 to single recipient over a three-year fiscal period is proposed).

2.4 There are also proposals in relation to transparency. Public bodies, including councils, will have to publish all awards of aid above a threshold on a new publicly accessible subsidies database. The proposed reporting threshold is £500,000, for most types of aid.

3. Proposed LGA response

3.1 As part of our long-standing dialogue with Whitehall on these questions, we would propose that our response to the consultation is based around following key messages:

- The new regime must be based on local government's experience of what works on the ground.
- Local flexibilities are needed in several areas to ensure local ambitions can be delivered including:
 - supporting the COVID recovery
 - ensuring economic growth and 'levelling up'
 - delivering social benefits / promoting community cohesion
 - delivering employment and skills reforms
 - delivering environmental and transport improvements.
- We recognise the need for transparency, but new reporting burdens should be limited. Reporting burdens at the level of each grant programme must be taken into account: councils should only have to publish their awards to businesses one time and in one place.
- Legal difficulties should be ironed out. The businesses receiving the aid, rather than councils, must be responsible for keeping track of the public support they receive from different sources for example. As currently, businesses should continue to self-certify that aid received does not exceed the permitted thresholds.
- The new regime needs to be supported by training and capacity building activities for local government officers. Many councils will not have in-house state aid expertise. Undue concerns over compliance should not stifle valuable projects which should otherwise go ahead. Councils must be given a 'green light' to deliver local benefits.
- The regime needs to be predictable and clearly separated from the new public procurement regime (which LGA is also helping to co-design with government). When goods or services are procured via public procurement, the subsidy control regime is not applicable.

We seek members' views on these messages.

4. Implications for Wales

4.1 The proposals will provide a single legal framework for the whole of the UK. There may be concerns in Welsh local government that a single national framework for subsidies may limit devolved powers in fields such as economic development. Government underlines that spending decisions within the parameters of the new regime will remain with the devolved administrations, however.

5. Next steps

5.1 Having discussed the issues raised in this report, lead members will be asked to agree the LGA's final detailed response to the consultation (43 questions).

People and Places Board Update paper

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

Project Updates

1. In anticipation of the Local Economic Recovery and Devolution White Paper, and to ensure members are well positioned to represent the interests of non-metropolitan councils in the coming months, the Board is overseeing a range of projects related to growth, devolution and recovery. A summary of these projects is provided below.

1.1. The Future of Parish and Town Council Devolution

Following discussions at the Board, and an emerging narrative from Ministers supporting greater devolution to parish and town councils, the Board approved the commissioning of research to explore the implications of operationalising “double devolution.” The project will provide a practical guide for councils and help ensure Board members are well placed to lead the policy debate on devolution and the future of town and parish councils at the most appropriate future point. The project will provide:

- **A framework for devolving services and funding** outlining the range of assets and services that are candidates for devolution
- **Recommendations on the support needed** to make a reality of double devolution opportunities
- **An assessment of value for money** from the costs involved in delegating services from principal to local councils
- **A series of case studies** to showcase how the vision described in the framework.

A mixture of People and Places Board members, as well as officers and clerks from both sectors attended a sense-making workshop earlier this month to feed into the findings of the work. The project will complete by the end of March and its authors, Shared Intelligence, have been invited to attend the June Board to present its findings. The final output will be published on the LGA’s Devolution Hub before the Summer.

1.2. Supporting the advanced digital skills pipeline

We have commissioned research to outline the interventions councils might take to support the future success of the tech sector, supported by a quantification of the opportunities for growth in this area and with a particular emphasis on addressing the perceived shortage in advanced digital skills. The project will:

- forecast the type of tech jobs, and skills need that will be emerging in the coming decade and how these might disperse across the country by local authority.
- provide a series of detailed local case studies which evidence the role councils have played to attract and retain tech firms with examples of how they have worked to understand and meet specialised digital skills demand in tandem with local partners.

The quantitative data will launch on the LGA's LG Inform platform and will be augmented by a qualitative report outlining key learning from local areas. Both outputs will be published online before the Summer.

1.3. Councils' guide to supporting exports

Trade in UK goods and services will continue to play an important part in the Government's ambitions to increase national growth and prosperity as part of its 'levelling up' agenda. Building on previously published guides for councils looking to attract foreign capital investment and drawing on lessons learned from established and emerging sub-national bodies, we have commissioned Value Adage to produce a guide to outline best practice, advice and assistance to councils looking to support local businesses to increase their exports.

The guide will include:

- An overview of the strategic and economic case for increasing levels of exports, particularly amongst small and medium sized enterprises
- A high-level summary of the support available from national government, business representatives and other key stakeholders
- Insight and guidance from businesses and business representatives as to the type of support they require from councils
- A selection of case studies drawing on best practice from across the UK and, where appropriate, international examples.

1.4. Analysis of Match Funding Sources for the European Structural and Investment Fund

To support our policy work relating to the UKSPF and wider growth funding streams, we have commissioned work to explore private and public funding which have matched EU funding from the ESIF programme. This will provide us with a great understand how much additional funding the ESIF programme has brought to local areas. This will help us understand the total quantum of the ESIF programme, as well as provide us with commentary on the outcomes, commissioning and decision-making process which will further support our policy development.

1.5. Employment and skills activity

Local government's role in jobs and skills recovery: The sector has, and continues to do, an incredible amount of 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, we initiated two projects. The material for both of these projects will be delivered by suppliers by the end of March, and hosted on the LGA website in April. They include:

- 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. We worked with a group of local authorities to test which themes to focus on and the agreed themes are: dealing with economic shocks and opportunities, improving basic skills and capabilities, retraining the local population, addressing long-term unemployment and youth unemployment.

- Enhancing our existing online case study resource with new material for fifteen local authorities 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.

Mapping national employment and skills provision: Most employment and skills provision is commissioned and procured nationally by Government departments or their agencies on different geographic boundaries. This can make it challenging for local government employment and skills teams (or similar) to know across their local authority area, what support is available and when. We would like to address that by mapping out national government procurement for existing provision to help improve conversations between local and national government on how to collaborate on existing provision by geography and any future opportunity, thereby making the best use of public funding. This will be an online resource. Research Matters will produce the data by the end of March, and we will look to host this on the LGA website during April.

Long term unemployment: We part funded the Learning and Work Institute to carry out analysis on projections for long term unemployment (LTU) in local areas. The report highlights how different local areas will be impacted by unemployment, the need for a tailored response and a renewed push for a co-design approach for recovery. The report was launched before the Spring Budget and can be viewed through the LGA website.

Youth participation in education, employment and training: York Consulting is undertaking a project for us to provide action learning for eleven areas (councils/combined authorities) to develop a better understanding of the barriers/challenges in fulfilling their statutory duties for young people, for instance, in relation to those not in education, employment or training (NEET) and to explore potential solutions. The first workshop took place in January and the second in February which focused on areas' action plans and examples of useful practice. The project will conclude by the end of March. A final report will outline what works in overcoming barriers to youth participation and showcase innovative approaches by the areas involved.