

Note of last People & Places Board meeting

Title:	People & Places Board
Date:	Tuesday 15 March 2022
Venue:	Hybrid meeting (via Microsoft Teams OR Beecham Room, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ)

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
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1 Chair's Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed Members, officers and guests to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Colin Davie, Peter Butlin and Stan Collins. Cllrs Peter Heydon, Erica Lewis attended the meeting as substitutes.

No declarations of interest had been received.

The Chair referred to recent government announcements and negotiations between the Secretary of State and the LGA's Chairman, James Jamieson, in relation to the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Board Members made a number of comments and the Chair requested that officers feed Board Members' comments back to the LGA's Chairman, on his behalf.

2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 January 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

3 Levelling Up Rural and Coastal Communities

The Chair welcomed Minette Batters, President of the National Farmers Union (NFU), and invited her to introduce the report.

Minette introduced both herself, and the report, and provided an overview of the NFU's "Levelling up rural Britain" report, looking in greater detail at areas of common interest and overlap with the LGA's "Rural recognition, recovery, resilience and revitalisation" report.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- Food security, pressures on land use and the current disruptions to

the farming and agricultural industry.

- The NFU's working relationship with The Syngenta Group, the leading global provider of agricultural science and technology.
- The work that local government could undertake to support the NFU from a skills perspective.
- Moving to a plant-based diet and the role of farming in supporting the transition to net-zero.
- The protection of land from overdevelopment.
- Fuel security and the lack of public transport available in rural areas, in particular with regard to rural bus networks.
- Embedding rural proofing in procurement and supporting local businesses.
- Investing in farmers.
- Preserving rural areas and enabling rural businesses.
- Ensuring that meat and dairy products in particular were affordable and accessible.

Minette responded to Board Members' comments, setting out the following points:

- The NFU continued to liaise with government in relation to their commitment to setting self-sufficiency targets and the ability to continue to grow in successful areas.
- The Nature Recovery green paper would be launched on 16 March and would set out thoughts on driving nature recovery in England via protected sites and species protections.
- It was important that the UK displayed global leadership and collaborate working to ensure that there were no global shortages.
- The NFU had a good working relationship with The Syngenta Group and communicated with them regularly.
- With regards to the current disruption in Ukraine, the NFU had recently spoken to a colleague based in Ukraine in relation to food shortages who had confirmed that they had hoped to plant 50% of crops. Areas such as North Africa and the Middle East were heavily reliant on grain out of Russia and Ukraine.
- The NFU were working closely with primary and secondary schools on a successful education campaign which related to linking agriculture to stem learning.
- More renewable energy projects were needed.
- In relation to building houses, the need for a rural policy which delivered a multi-faceted return to support the ever-growing population.
- The importance of whole foods, cooking from scratch and a balanced diet was emphasised.
- The need for working collaboratively on a world-beating food strategy, ensuring that everyone everywhere had access to high-quality British food, was emphasised.
- A trade-strategy had been devised to ensure that the UK could import and export more high-quality produce than at present.
- Challenges which related to tourism and affordable housing remained to be a concern for farmers.
- The importance of diversification on farms, planning, biodiversity and associated investments was emphasised.
- The Southwest LEP had undertaken work in relation to food

procurement which would be shared with Members of the Board.

- The NFU do not condone any business that does not have very high welfare standards on farms.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

Officers to liaise with group spokespeople and the Chair of the Economy, Environment, Housing and Transport Board in relation to buses.

4 Levelling Up and Devolution

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

Philip introduced the report which, following the recent publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, proposed four issues for the Board to consider as part its work programme over the remaining political cycle: county deals and the devolution framework; the UK Shared Prosperity Fund; neighbourhood governance; and the expected levelling up and devolution bill. It also asked for the Board's views on the emerging work related to the government's commitment to streamline growth funding.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- The devolution framework.
- The best opportunity for further devolution to deliver for residents and businesses.
- The LGA offer of guidance to councillors to help them make decisions for the areas in which they represent.
- Accountability for local councillors and the involvement of their communities.
- Better supporting town and parishes' governance and culture.
- The lack of capacity within government departments to respond to enquiries.
- The importance districts and boroughs having clear responsibilities and powers.

Philip and the Chair responded to Board Members' comments, setting out the following points:

- Residents and their needs continued to be the key point of focus.
- The importance of an open and honest conversation with government officials and the need to think about what the LGA could better offer as an organisation, was emphasised.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to submit a report to a future meeting of the Board in relation to the government's plan to streamline growth funding.

5 Demography and Levelling Up

The Chair invited Ellie Law and Esther Barrott, Policy Advisers, to introduce the report and set out a series of presentation slides.

Ellie and Esther presented a series of slides which provided an update on the findings of LGA officer research into demographic changes resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and set out the implications of the findings for the levelling up agenda.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- The benefits of the census being carried out online and its timeliness.
- The ownership of second homes in rural areas and the associated rise in house prices.
- Homelessness and its presence within the levelling up enquiry.
- The financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic being higher for women.
- Building houses for local residents and the need for more social housing.
- The impact of changing economic factors.

Ellie and Esther confirmed that the points raised by Board Members would be built into the Levelling Up Locally Inquiry, and report back to the Board again once census data is released.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to ensure that regular update reports be submitted to future meetings of the Board.

6 Digital Levelling Up

The Chair invited Esther Barrott, Policy Adviser, to introduce the report.

Esther introduced the report which provided an overview of recent policy and public affairs activity relating to digital connectivity and proposed a new work programme focused on addressing digital exclusion for the Board to consider, including a session on 'digital levelling up' at the LGA's annual conference. Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE, Digital Champion for the LGA, had seen the report and was engaged in regular conversations with policy officers.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- The need to continue to focus on data poverty.
- The importance of upskilling and the use of technology to ensure that all people had equal access to good data connection.
- The role of local government re digital inclusion.
- Cyber security and the checks that could be put into place to protect people digitally.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

7 Retrofit Skills and Employment

The Chair invited Jacob Coburn, Adviser, to introduce the report.

Jacob introduced the report which set out the current barriers to the retrofit sector, the implications that retrofit would have on the work undertaken by councils, and changes that could be implemented to support retrofit skills and employment to develop effectively and at speed. In parallel, officers of the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board continued to look at approaches to 'whole-place' street /neighbourhood decarbonisation, including buildings and transport. The Board's work would make recommendations to policy makers, national and local partners, and local authorities across the UK. Both pieces of work would give the LGA a clear policy position and strategy for retrofit.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- The net-zero agenda.
- A proposed timeline re green skills and green jobs in agriculture.
- The need to insulate and ventilate homes to avoid high prices and contribute to net-zero.
- The need to undertake more work across the country re training and qualifications for people of all ages.
- Making the case to government for a strategic approach across all sectors and to better support councils with the next steps.
- The need for innovation and sustainability to encourage councils to procure appropriately.

Jacob and the Chair responded to Board Members' comments, setting out the following points:

- Councils' Adult Community Learning (ACL) teams had undertaken a significant amount of work during and post Covid-19 pandemic to support people of all ages in retraining and upskilling.
- Re the example provided in point 15 of the report, additional information could be submitted to a future meeting of the Board in terms of the work that Devon County Council had undertaken.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to re-circulate the LGA's green economy work to Board Members.
- Officers to submit an update report to the next meeting of the Board.

8 Any other business

None.

Appendix A - Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Kevin Bentley	Essex County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Morris Bright MBE	Hertsmere Borough Council
	Cllr Emily Smith	Vale of White Horse District Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
	Cllr Emily O'Brien	Lewes District Council
Members	Cllr Rachel Bailey	Cheshire East Council
	Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcester City Council
	Cllr Hilary Carrick	Cumbria County Council
	Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen	Breckland Council
	Cllr Jordan Meade	Gravesham Borough Council
	Cllr Eddie Reeves	Oxfordshire County Council
	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire Council
	Cllr Phillippa Williamson	Lancashire County Council
	Cllr Barry Wood	Cherwell District Council
	Cllr Doina Cornell	Stroud District Council
	Cllr Damien Greenhalgh	High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Caroline Leaver	Devon County Council
	Cllr Kevin Etheridge	Caerphilly County Borough Council
Cllr Sue Roberts	South Oxfordshire District Council	
Apologies	Cllr Peter Butlin	Warwickshire County Council
	Cllr Stan Collins	Cumbria County Council
In Attendance	Cllr Peter Heydon	Bracknell Forest Borough Council
	Cllr Erica Lewis	Lancaster City Council
	Cllr Michael Mullaney	Leicestershire County Council