

Minutes of last People & Places Board meeting

People & Places Board

Tuesday, 12 September 2023

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A**

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Chair's Welcome, Introductions, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest
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The Chair welcomed Members, officers and guests to the meeting.

The Chair thanked the previous Chair, Cllr Kevin Bentley, and the Board Members for their work over the past year.

Apologies were received by Cllr O'Brien, Cllr Greenhalgh, Cllr Brown and Cllr Reeves. Cllr Culver, Cllr Smith, Cllr Carling and Cllr Wilcox attended as substitutes.

The following declarations of interest were made:

- Cllr Julian Dean declared a standing interest as he owned a property in Shrewsbury which was let on AirBnB.
- Cllr Rachel Bailey declared a standing interest as she, along with her husband and son, form S N Bailey & Partners – a dairy farm/agriculture-food business.

The Chair noted that Council meetings were often held on Tuesdays which created a clash with Board meetings.

Action:

- Officers to review Board dates with Lead Members.

2	Minutes of the last meeting
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The minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

A Member of the Board asked a question which related to Tracey Blackwell, Chief Executive Officer, and a Director of Pension Insurance Corporation plc, being invited to a future meeting of the Board. **Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser**, responded to the question confirming that Tracey Blackwell would join a future meeting of the Board.

Action:

- Officers to invite Tracey Blackwell to a future meeting of the Board.

3 People & Places Board Terms of Reference

Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced the paper and invited comments from Members.

The Chair alluded to the change of focus regarding the newly formed Local Infrastructure Net Zero (LINZ) Board and the Economy & Resources (E&R) Board. He stated that greater clarification was needed regarding the changes to prevent future duplication or gaps. Members agreed that greater clarity would be welcomed.

In addition to the Chair's comment, Members made the following contributions:

- A comment was made which related to levelling-up and devolution work alongside the City Regions Board, the extension of powers which provided greater opportunities related to strategic housing and transport.
- The importance of supporting rural housing and building capacity around the green economy as a non-metropolitan Board was emphasised.
- A question was asked which related to resilience planning.
- It was suggested that deep-dive work be undertaken by officers focused on housing and attracting new people to communities, this should include information related to planning, economic growth, homelessness, access to housing and levelling-up.

Rebecca responded to Members' comments:

- With regards to resilience, the Safer and Stronger Communities Board had responded to the recent consultation on The National Resilience Strategy. Issues related to resilience would be noted in the Board's work programme.

Rebecca suggested that the item be deferred to the next Board meeting to ensure that there was greater clarity in relation to the changes brought by the newly formed LINZ Board and E&R Board. Board Members supported this.

Decision:

- That the Board's terms of reference be deferred to the next Board meeting.

Action:

- Officers to work with the Board's Lead Members and the LINZ and E&R Board officers to seek greater clarity in relation to the

changes brought by the newly formed Boards, to shape the Board's terms of reference and work programme.

4 People & Places Board Draft Work Programme 2023/24

Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced the paper which set out a brief overview of the Board's work.

Members suggested that the following issues be incorporated into the Board's work programme:

- Clear, sub-topics related to agriculture
- Homelessness and a review of the implications of the Homelessness Reduction Act
- Housing numbers
- Short term lets
- Social mobility
- Non-metropolitan disparity regionally

Members made the following contributions:

- It was suggested that the Rural Services Network be invited to a future meeting of the Board as a special interest group.
- In reference to point 17.4 within the report, work being undertaken which related to attainment disparities in rural and non-metropolitan areas was welcomed, as well as a recognition that different areas will prioritise different job types and sectors according to local need. This Board should particularly look at non-metropolitan jobs and routes into employment.
- In relation to the recent decision to withdraw funding to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), it was suggested that a cost-benefit analysis be undertaken to look at the implications in greater detail.
- It was suggested that the new Levelling Up Minister, Jacob Young and Shadow Minister, Angela Rayner, be invited to a future meeting of the Board. The Minister to provide an update regarding the Levelling-Up Fund Round 3, share best practice, and provide more information as to what local government can do to help shape local communities. Member would also like to raise the impact of inflation and role of the private sector.
- The topic of devolution was key in supporting strategic transport and housing.
- It was suggested that the work programme include all the Board's meetings within the cycle and a schedule of upcoming work for each of the meetings.

Rebecca responded to Members' comments and suggested that the work programme be deferred to the next Board meeting to ensure that Members' comments were incorporated. She added that Members could contact her directly should they have additional suggestions related to the work programme.

Decision:

- That the Board's work programme be brought back to the next Board meeting.

Action:

- Officers to incorporate Members' comments and suggestions into the Board's work programme.

5 Digital Update

Cllr Mark Hawthorne, LGA's Digital Champion, provided an update on the Board's digital work over the 2022/23 cycle and areas of priority for the upcoming 2023/24 cycle. Cllr Hawthorne's update included the lobbying work around local authority digital champions, information related to the digital switchover, and work on digital inclusion.

Members made the following comments:

- It was suggested that work be undertaken to look more closely at Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it's used as an application, how it improves efficiency and customer experience and reduces costs.
- The importance of digital inclusion was emphasised.
- With regards to mobile masts, it was suggested that providers work more closely with local authorities to ensure that more robust plans were in place, ensuring better connectivity for residents.
- A concern was raised which related to point 14 within the report, and the lack of clarity regarding government's 5G Innovation Regions fund.

Cllr Hawthorne responded to Members' comments:

- The digital divide work included looking more closely at digital inclusion. The Good Things Foundation was a key partner and conversations regularly took place to create a lobby group focused on digital inclusion with other partners and organisations.
- A discussion had taken place recently with the Digital Connectivity Forum centred around masts and ways to improve engagement as a sector with infrastructure providers, conversations were ongoing.
- Regarding the lack of clarity in relation to government's 5G Innovation Regions, officers continued to work with government to seek greater clarity.

Cllr Jordan Meade was nominated to be the Board's Digital Lead, working closely with Cllr Hawthorne on the 2023/24 digital work programme. Members of the Board supported this.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report and supported the work plan for the 2023/24 People and Places Board cycle.

6 Employment and Skills

Jasbir Jhas, Senior Adviser, introduced the report which was jointly led by the People & Places Board and the City Regions Board. It set out that the aim of our work is to make the current national employment and skills system more integrated and localised, and for the sector to benefit from greater freedoms and flexibilities through devolution. The report summarised key priority work areas over the past year and suggested next steps for the coming months. A similar discussion would take place with the City Regions Board on 2nd October.

Members emphasised the importance of:

- Growth, land usage and encouraging food production
- rural transport links
- rural proofing
- manufacturing
- understanding future employment growth
- economic inactivity
- redeployment and life-long learning
- long-term planning in relation to upskilling

Members made the following contributions:

- It was suggested that national politicians be invited to a future meeting of the Board.
- Maintaining visibility of the Work Local piece is important.
- A question was asked which related to youth hubs, and what more local authorities could do to overcome transport-related and geographical challenges/barriers, particularly in rural areas.
- The role of local government in stimulating opportunities was highlighted, particularly in growing areas or labour market challenges, for example net zero, climate change resilience, foods and fisheries.
- It was suggested that more should be done to help create pathways for learners by linking courses to employment opportunities to avoid the 'carousel of courses'
- The importance of a having a non-met areas voice in the Youth Commission was emphasised.
- A question was asked which related to mental health issues and barriers to employment.
- A question was asked which related to the potential opportunity for the Board to undertake work with the National Infrastructure Commission.

Jas responded to Members' comments:

- Regarding the webinar scheduled to take place on 3rd October, related to the role of local government in supporting economic inclusion, the invitations would be sent shortly.
- All comments from Members were noted and would be reflected in future work.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

7 Councils' Future Role in Driving Growth and Prosperity

Efa Gough, Adviser, and Steve Hughes, Associate Economist at WPI Economics, introduced the report which summarised commissioned research conducted by WPI Economics exploring growth and prosperity and how this could be unlocked through enhancing the roles and responsibilities of local government.

Members made the following contributions:

- Concerns were raised regarding the report's recommendations, and a question was asked which related to local government assisting central government in addressing needs and working in partnership.
- Further detail was requested regarding KPIs, further funding growth and inclusive growth.
- Concerns were raised regarding decentralisation and the lack of powers to local government for local issues.
- It was suggested that the relevant Ministers and Shadow Ministers be invited to attend a future meeting of the Board.

Efa and Steve noted all comments from Members.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Louise McKinlay	Essex County Council
	Cllr Caroline Leaver	Devon County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Amanda Serjeant	Chesterfield Borough Council
Members	Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
	Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcestershire County Council
	Cllr Kris Wilson	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
	Cllr Hilary Carrick	Westmorland and Furness Council
	Cllr Colin Noble	Suffolk County Council
	Cllr Rachel Bailey	Cheshire East Council
	Cllr Jordan Meade	Gravesham Borough Council
	Cllr Tim Oliver	Surrey County Council
	Cllr Victoria Wilson	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Emily Smith	Vale of White Horse District Council
	Cllr Michael Mullaney	Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
	Cllr Alex Wagner	Shropshire Council
	Cllr Kevin Etheridge	Caerphilly County Borough Council
	Cllr Julian Dean	Shropshire Council
Apologies	Cllr Lisa Brown	Cumberland Council
	Cllr Damien Greenhalgh	High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Eddie Reeves	Oxfordshire County Council
	Cllr Emily O'Brien	Lewes District Council
In Attendance	Cllr Sam Carling	Cambridge City Council
	Cllr Linda Smith	Oxford City Council
	Cllr Sonia Wilcox	Lichfield District Council
	Cllr Carolyne Culver	West Berkshire Council