



People & Places Board – report from Cllr Mark Hawthorne (Chair)

Devolution – the LGA Support Offer

1. Take up of the LGA's devolution support offer, drawn up with direction from the People and Places and City Regions Board, remains excellent, and officers continue to receive positive feedback from councils on the range of services that have been used. The Board have steered officers to continue to position the LGA as the key provider of devolution support to councils. Recent activity includes:
 - 1.1 Working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny to support areas to develop their governance arrangements and [produce a guide](#) on the related learning.
 - 1.2 Officers continue to update The DevoNext Hub which has received more than 12,000 unique visitors in the last two months.
2. The following tools and resources are due for completion imminently, and will be available in print and digital copy in time for Annual Conference:
 - 2.1 A 'plain English' guide to combined authorities, developed in partnership with Shared intelligence. This guide combines details on the legislative provisions for combined authorities, detailing practical suggestions and advice on setting up a CA.
 - 2.2 Professor Robin Hambleton's report on executive models of governance- an examination of international governance arrangements, highlighting lessons and key learning points for those establishing devolved governance structures in England.
 - 2.3 'Don't Be left in the Dark'- a set of FAQs that provide a high level overview of the main questions and answers that have arisen in relation to the devolution agenda. A specific set of FAQs for MPs is also being developed.
3. In addition to the above, the following events to assist councils with their devolution arrangements have either been delivered or are due to be delivered during the period March-June:
 - 3.1 On 13th April, [an event for communications officers in the South West](#)
 - 3.2 On 26th May, [an event for communications officers in Newcastle upon Tyne](#)
 - 3.3 On the 1st June, [Devolving and Delivering: a new relationship for principal and local councils](#), a joint event with the National Association of Local Councils will explore Devolution and the role of Local Councils.
 - 3.4 On the 21st June, [Devolution – a new type of leadership](#), will consider new and emerging forms of local leadership within the context of devolution.

Further development of the offer

4. The People and Places Board continues to work with officers to develop the LGA's devolution support offer further.
5. The New Economics Foundation has been commissioned to assist with the development of policy and resources around the role of communities and the VCS in devolution. This work will ensure good practice is shared and councils are better equipped to engage citizens and their community representatives on devolution. Resources will be made available via the DevoHub by September 2016.

Employment and Skills

6. A priority for this and the City Regions Board is to ensure DWP's new Work and Health Programme (WHP) – designed to get more long term unemployed and those with physical or mental health conditions in to work - has as much local government involvement as possible. Ten devolution deal areas are already working bilaterally with DWP on the design and commissioning of the WHP in their local area.
7. All other areas outside of a devolution deal area will be subject to a DWP WHP national offer. We need to make sure we get that right, so we learn from its predecessor Work Programme. To support the sector's engagement in the development of it, the LGA and DWP are working together. We successfully lobbied DWP to consult all councils through a series of national events across England during May in London, Exeter and Leeds. A joint letter of invitation signed by the Employment Minister and LGA Chairman was issued to all council chief executives. Cllr Mark Hawthorne and Cllr Gillian Brown chaired the Exeter and London events, respectively.
8. Alongside the above, the LGA established a working group of officers drawn from local areas across England without a devolution deal to help influence the design of the offer and put forward recommendations for the WHP. The group met three times during May to ensure it put forward recommendations which will inform DWP's decision making process in June. Work continues with devolved areas to understand how their negotiations are progressing.
9. People and Places Lead Members attended a joint meeting with City Regions Board Lead Members on Skills and Employment on the 10th May to discuss priorities in taking the work forward.

Leading Places Project

10. With input and steer from both the City Regions and People and Places Boards, the LGA is working to deliver a programme of leadership development for both the higher education and local government sectors in support of devolution, public service reform and economic growth in partnership with Universities UK and the Higher Education Funding Council for England. Universities, local authorities and other institutions in six pilot areas are currently working together to decide a priority challenge theme which addresses an issue where the existing knowledge base in local universities is strong, as well as a strategic context. Projects will provide pilot areas with real opportunities for national and international peer review and transfer of learning and best practice. I attended a meeting with HEFCE, UUK and LGA officers, and leaders from the proposed pilot areas at Local Government House on 24th March. The programme was [launched](#) at the beginning of May.

11. In addition to this, on the 27th April, I spoke at the UUK Universities, Communities and Business Conference on how councils and partners can work together to promote growth.

Superfast Broadband and Mobile Connectivity

12. Since the last People and Places Board, the LGA has continued to support councils in their efforts to extend superfast broadband to the final five percent.
13. I chaired a national conference with Broadband Delivery UK to explore the capabilities of alternative technologies and digital infrastructure suppliers to extend broadband connectivity to the hardest to reach areas. The event was attended by over 50 delegates from the sector and received excellent feedback.
14. The Board responded to the [Government's consultation](#) on the primary legislation that will enact the Universal Service.
15. I launched the LGA's [Up to Speed campaign](#) to councillors in April's edition of [First Magazine](#) and, extended it nationally after the local government elections on 5 May, partnering with the Daily Telegraph's Better Broadband campaign. The campaign received front page coverage (9 May).
16. I will moderate a panel session on affordable connectivity at the [Connected Britain Conference](#) on 16th June, exploring how connectivity can impact on healthcare services and how high speed connectivity can be one of the most powerful means to extend access to educational resources.

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