

Leading Places Project Update

Purpose

For information.

Summary

This paper provides members with an overview and update on the Leading Places Project.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the update.

Action

Officers to take forward as directed by members.

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Leading Places Project Update

Background

1. The Leading Places Project is a joint project developed in partnership between the Local Government Association (LGA), Universities UK (UUK) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which aims 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.
2. The project arises following a number of conversations between leaders from the higher education and local government sectors and growing recognition of the role academic institutions can play in actively contributing to the economic and civic potential of areas and the scope for collaborative leadership to underpin the success of place-based devolution.
3. It draws extensively on research undertaken on behalf of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE), which indicates that while there is already good collaboration in some areas, there remains more to be done to close the gap between strategic agreement amongst institutional leaders and practical activity at an operational level. The project's potential is underlined by recent forecasts by HEFCE which indicate that universities are forecast to substantially increase their capital investment programme over the next four years to more than £17 billion.
4. It has been agreed that the initial stage of the project will be to fund the expert facilitation of six Action Learning Partnerships (ALP). Each ALP will include a senior leadership group comprised of the Chief Executive and/or Leader of a council and the university Vice Chancellor. In support of this process HEFCE will provide initial grant funding of £48,000 to the LFHE to provide this facilitation. As the project develops, the LGA will be seeking to make a contribution to the work that matches the contribution of the Higher Education sector.

Activity to date

5. Following the establishment of a project steering group comprised of officers from UUK, the LGA and HEFCE, six areas have been identified as suitable for participation in the first phase of the project and invited to do so:
 - 5.1 **Coventry** - Martin Reeves (Chief Executive, Coventry City Council)
 - 5.2 **Brighton** – Geoff Raw (Chief Executive, Brighton and Hove City Council) and Professor Debra Humphris (Vice Chancellor of Brighton University)
 - 5.3 **Gloucestershire** – Cllr Mark Hawthorne (Leader, Gloucestershire County Council) and Stephen Marston (Vice Chancellor, University of Gloucestershire)
 - 5.4 **Bristol** – Steve West (Vice Chancellor, University of West England)
 - 5.5 **Newcastle** – Jane Robinson (Gateshead Council, Chief Executive) and Chris Brink (Vice Chancellor, Newcastle University)

5.6 Manchester - Simon Noakes (Manchester New Economy)

6. The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education have since made contact following these invitations and have arranged for a number of more detailed conversations to begin in the second week of June.
7. The invitation to participate was accompanied by a press release which attracted good coverage, being picked up by the Times Higher Education¹ and the Municipal Journal², amongst others. Consequently, a number of academic institutions and councils have expressed interest in participating in any future phase of the project.

Next steps

8. Once the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education have confirmed participation from both academic and council partners in each of the areas, they will facilitate a discussion to agree the strategic context and priority challenge theme. LGA officers will work to ensure that these partnerships are fully inclusive and the agreed outcomes are suitably focused.
9. These proposals will be developed over the summer and autumn in anticipation of a peer review session on 21 November. It is proposed that the results of each of the Action Learning Partnerships will be presented at a national event in February 2017.
10. LGA officers will continue to update members of the People and Places Board as the project develops, potentially bringing forward a more detailed paper in early autumn, once more substantial progress in each of the pilot areas has been made.

¹ <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/english-universities-team-councils-boost-regions>

² <http://www.themj.co.uk/LGA-in-universities-link-up/204106>