

Note of last People & Places Board meeting

Title: People & Places Board
Date: Thursday 29 September 2016
Venue: Smith Square 1&2, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest The chair welcomed members and listed apologies. There were no declarations of interest.	
2	Minutes of the Last Meeting It was noted that Cllr Leigh Redman needed to be marked as having attended as a substitute at the last board meeting. It was agreed that the MSO would amend this. Action: 1. MSO to mark Cllr Leigh Redman as in attendance in the minutes for the last board meeting. Decision: 1. Members agreed the minutes as an accurate summary of the meeting.	
3	Membership and Terms of Reference The chair introduced the item. The point was made that although the board largely represented non-metropolitan area (as stated in the report), it also covered metropolitan areas. Decision: 1. Members noted the membership of the board and agreed the Term of Reference.	
4	People and Places Work Programme 2016/2017	

Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced the item. She asked members to note the proposed 2016/2017 work programme and suggest any additions.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- Housing and the NHS (health) could be included as topics. A discussion followed on which LGA boards were looking at these issues and if there was a mechanism for feeding back on these.
- There were differences between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas and the board should consider looking at different approaches for these areas.
- Health, education and accountability in Clinical Commissioning Groups was briefly discussed.

It was agreed that officers would consider how best to keep members informed on the work programmes of other LGA boards and wider issues that affected rural areas.

Decision:

1. Members **agreed** the work programme.

Action:

1. Officers to discuss with the Chairman of the Board to determine the best approach to keeping members apprised of the work being undertaken by other LGA boards.

5 Devolution Update

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the item. The paper gave an overview of current devolution work which had taken place since the last board meeting. Since then, the LGA had commissioned research from New Economy Manchester, and were now looking at engaging the community in the devolution process.

Going forward, the LGA's submission on the autumn statement would focus on priorities for devolution, industrial strategy and adult social care all of which directly impact on rural areas. In the coming year, work would potentially focus on fiscal devolution, trade and inward investment, the governance digital technology and the role of LEPs.

Members were informed that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had been invited to attend a board meeting to discuss devolution and the progress of deals in rural areas.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- There was concern around the lack of progress of devolution in two-tier areas. Members urged the LGA to continue to press the

government for clarity on this issue and on the debate around elected mayors.

- Referring to point 10 of the paper, members asked who the research produced by the New Economic Foundation would be shared with and who would attend the event on the 17th October. Officers responded that the work would be shared on the LGA's 'Devohub' website and that an invitation to the event would be circulated to Board members.
- Members discussed the position of the Prime Minister and the new Chancellor of the Exchequer on devolution and suggested that the board invite the Communities Secretary to clarify this. Proposals for him to visit all devolution deal areas were also discussed.
- The LGA could do more lobbying work to help non-metropolitan areas take devolution deals forward. Members felt not enough was being done collectively. The devolution green paper produced for the LGA 2016 conference (which was not taken forward) was discussed.
- Governance arrangements were discussed. Members felt the government was unlikely to agree to different governance models unless there was a strong alternative model to the mayor. It was suggested there should be a discussion on the different arrangements government had agreed to.
- The mayoral problem was cited as a reason for the lack of momentum with devolution deals. There was huge potential to drive change but the debate on governance models had halted the process. Members felt the missed opportunities relating to the slow progress in devolving responsibilities to non-metropolitan areas could be highlighted.
- There would also need to be a reflection on the problems the EU exit may cause for devolution.
- Members discussed forthcoming changes in industrial strategy for local government and asked where LEPs would sit in devolution deals. This was currently unclear.
- Members expressed concern about confusion caused by having several different governing bodies making policies in one area as a result of the devolution process.
- Members asked about current support for devolution from MPs.
- The LGA could make a point to government about the lack of citizen participation in devolution and that the process needed to be more open.
- Members requested that officers share proposed lobbying points on devolution with the board's lead members.

Decision:

1. Members **noted** the update.

Action:

1. Officer to take forward work in line with members' steer, including:
 - 1.1 Sharing proposed lobbying points on taking the devolution process forward with the board's lead members.

6 Broadband, Mobile and the Digital Divide

Daniel Shamplin-Hall, Adviser, introduced the item and set out recent work and activity in the area. He advised members that LGA officers were continuing to lobby government to reaffirm their commitment to the Universal Service Obligation (which would give all residents the right to a speed of 10mbps). The government would choose a provider to deliver this. The Up-to-Speed Campaign would continue to be developed and would push the LGA's lines on the upcoming Digital Economy Bill. As a next step, the Chief Executive of Ofcom, Sharon White, would be invited to the next board meeting to discuss Ofcom's plans for lobbying on the Digital Economy Bill.

Mobile provision and the problems with coverage levels in rural areas were discussed. He talked about EE's proposals to roll out the emergency network, and it was suggested that an event on mobile connectivity could be organised.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- There was concern that speeds/download speeds in some areas were actually becoming worse.
- Members asked what the current position was on rolling out 4G to 98% of people by 2017. Officers advised that they would contact Ofcom to find out what progress had been made on this.
- Support was expressed for sending an invitation to Sharon White, CEO of Ofcom, to attend the next board meeting.
- It was highlighted that many coastal areas were experiencing the same problems with connectivity as rural areas.
- EE and the emergency network were discussed and the recent takeover of EE by BT. Members emphasised that there needed to be enough competition for a good service to be provided.
- Members expressed concern that speeds were still below 10mbps in some areas and that there was limited capacity in cabinets to improve this.
- Members asked how data on coverage figures was being

collected. Although Superfast Broadband had been rolled out earlier in the year, not all houses were connected and in some cases it was taking 3 to 6 months to connect them.

- It was suggested that areas with continuing problems look at setting a meeting between Ofgem, BT and the local MP.
- Future proofing was important to consider as the internet would develop and residents/businesses would need more speed and capacity. There was already a risk of building a system incapable of responding to modern demands.
- Members requested that digital inclusion to be part of the lobbying line on the Digital Economy Bill.

Decisions:

1. Members **noted** the report.
2. It was **agreed** that the CEO of Ofcom would be invited to attend the next board meeting.

Actions:

1. Officers to take forward work in line with members' steers.
2. Officers to contact Ofcom to find out the progress on rolling out 4G coverage to 98% of people by 2017.
3. Officers to invite Sharon White, CEO of Ofcom, to attend the next board meeting.

7 Leading Places Project Update

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the item. He advised members that the project had been devised by HEFCE, Universities UK and the LGA to encourage collaborative working between councils, universities and other local anchor institutions. The project was in its first phase (funded by HEFCE). There were six pilot areas, and themes for the project had now been confirmed in Gloucestershire, Manchester and Newcastle. On the 21st November, there would be a Peer Review Event, where pilot areas would update each other on their progress. The possibility of a phase 2 of the project was currently being discussed.

Members raised the following points:

- In a 2nd phase, problems facing universities in light of the EU exit should be discussed, particularly considering the involvement of HEFCE.
- It was suggested that a Leading Places event be arranged at the LGA Conference in 2017 so that best practise in this area could be shared and positive work showcased.

Decision:

1. Members **noted** the update.

Action:

1. Officers to take forward work in line with members' steers.

8 Business Rates Reform (verbal update)

Aivaras Statkevicius, Senior Adviser, introduced the item. The Secretary of State had issued two consultations on business rates in early July: one on system design and the transfer of responsibilities and one on the Fair Funding Review (both documents were included in the agenda pack). The government had received 450 responses to the consultation on business rates and the LGA Task and Finish Group had helped to respond to this. Officers were continuing to highlight issues caused by business rate appeals.

The Fair Funding Review considered ways to make the system more transparent. The government would consult again in late 2016, before the Local Growth and Jobs Bill, and the LGA would be discussing further approaches to the review.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- The chair acknowledged the work of the Task and Finish Group. He requested that members think about issues that needed considering, including the technical details that needed agreeing.
- The Fair Funding Review would need to be fair. Members felt the RSG system was broken and that London was heavily funded. Members suggested setting up an Independent Commission to ensure this.
- If business rates revenue decreased and service pressures continued to grow, it could lead to an unfair position for councils.
- It should be clarified what councils would be expected to fund from business rates. There needed to be agreement that local government would not pick up the cost on additional responsibilities from this fund.
- Members raised problems of underfunding resulting from historic data. Any review would need to take into account historic spends and future proofing would need to be considered.
- Problems for councils that were heavily dependent on one business (making up a high percentage of their business rate income) were raised. Members asked what would happen to these local authorities in the event that the business appealed or shut down. The problem of a small local authority facing a full back dated cost in light of a successful business appeal was also discussed.

- Problem councils were already facing in raising enough council tax and covering the living wage were discussed. Members argued there would need to be a fairer funding base when business rate retention came in.
- Members agreed to urge the LGA Leadership Board to come to an agreement on considering fairer funding, and to potentially look at setting up an Independent Commission.

Decision:

1. Members **noted** the update.

Action:

1. Suggestions to be put to the Leadership Board to set up an Independent Commission if no agreement could be reached on fairer funding.
2. Officers to take forward actions as directed by members.

9 Skills and Employment Update - Next Steps

Jasbir Jhas, Senior Adviser, introduced the item. She advised members that a draft submission on employment and skills was included with the papers. The LGA had been working to make the current national system more localised, with a devolved skills system, funding for 16-18 year olds to help them into employment and a coherent local careers service. The LGA had been working with DWP and DfE to try to achieve this. She asked members for view on Annex A (the commission).

She advised that the board's Chair and the Chair of the City Regions Board (Cllr Sir Richard Leese) had attended a meeting with Penny Mordaunt MP, Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work, to discuss changes to the Work and Health Programme. Following on from decisions taken by the Department of Work and Pensions, the LGA would not be endorsing the government's plans.

The LGA would now make the case for reforms to Job Centre Plus and apprenticeships and would write to Robert Halfon MP, Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills, on these issues.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- Disappointment was expressed on the Work Health Programme and the lack of collaboration between central and local government.
- There was concern that the careers guidance currently available was failing young people.
- Concern was expressed on apprenticeships and it was felt that the profile on this issue should be raised. It was felt that large package

areas would be difficult to manage.

Decision

1. Members **noted** the update and proposed next steps.

Action

1. Officers to proceed with work in line with members' steer.

10 LGA Brexit Update and People and Places Priorities

Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced the item. The paper updated members on work that had happened over the summer. She advised that the Leadership Board had looked at priorities for the LGA when Britain left the EU, and would like feedback from the board on the constitutional position and powers returning from Europe which could be devolved to local government. Officers asked for a steer on 3 issues:

1. Skills and employment
2. Digital connectivity
3. Rural issues and issues on place

The Leadership Board had set up a Task and Finish Group to co-ordinate feedback from all board.

In the discussion which followed, members made the following points:

- It would be useful to commission a list of key issues which could be influenced.
- The European Regional Development Fund was discussed, what would happen to this after the exit and the need to safeguard recipients of this.

Decision:

1. Members **noted** the update.

Actions:

1. Officers to progress with work in line with the steer from members.
2. Officers to commission a list of key issues which could be influenced.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Gillian Brown	Arun District Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Michael Payne	Gedling Borough Council
	Cllr John Pollard	Cornwall Council
Members	Cllr Philip Atkins OBE	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Derek Bastiman	Scarborough Borough Council
	Cllr Paul Carter CBE	Kent County Council
	Cllr Daniel Humphreys	Worthing Borough Council
	Cllr Kenneth Meeson	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Blake Pain	Harborough District Council
	Cllr Ken Turner	Pendle Borough Council
	Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
	Cllr Jennifer Mein	Lancashire County Council
	Cllr Stan Collins	South Lakeland District Council
Cllr Sarah Osborne	Lewes District Council	
Apologies	Cllr Roger Blaney	Newark & Sherwood District Council
	Cllr Chris Hayward	Hertfordshire County Council
	Cllr John Osman	Somerset County Council
	Cllr Caitlin Bisknell	Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Amanda Martin	Council of the Isles of Scilly
	Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council