

End of Year Board Report – People and Places Board

Background and Context

1. The People and Places Board was created to provide a clear voice and resource for non-metropolitan authorities within the LGA.
2. Members are asked to consider the achievements of the board over the last year against the use of allocated resources and to reflect on whether the board is continuing to meet its original purpose in response to the emerging priorities of non-metropolitan areas.

Priorities and Achievements

Devolution

3. Board members have continued to shape and influence the devolution agenda - steering the LGA's support offer and lobbying for devolution to non-metropolitan areas.
4. Bespoke support packages have been provided to a range of areas. This has included the development and implementation of deals, policy support, leadership, governance, communications and civic engagement. A combined authority chief executives' network was also created to share best practice between established and emerging combined authorities.
5. In October, the board wrote to the Communities Secretary to raise concerns that devolution to non-metropolitan areas was proceeding at a slower pace than desired.
6. The board has contributed to the LGA's response to Britain's departure from the European Union, leading on work to secure the future position of English local government and overseeing proposals for the devolution of powers repatriated from the EU.
7. Finally, with a steer from the People and Places Board, the LGA commissioned research into the development of a strengthened sub-national trade and investment policy. The research makes the case for an integrated approach to trade and investment and will be used to influence the new government and support local good practice.

Devolving Skills and Employment

8. Securing further devolution of skills and employment support has again been a key focus of the board this year. In partnership with the City Regions and Community and Wellbeing Boards, the board commissioned the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion to develop a devolved employment model for the most disadvantaged jobseekers to influence the design and commissioning of the Work and Health Programme (WHP).
9. In September, the Chairs met Penny Mordaunt MP, the previous Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, to discuss the concerns regarding the WHP design, and

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propose a way to allow the launch of the WHP with the backing of local government. Given the range of concerns, the LGA was unable to endorse the national offer.

10. In December, the People and Places and City Regions Boards commissioned the Learning and Work Institute to develop a vision for an integrated and locally accountable employment and skills service. The final report will launch at LGA Annual Conference.
11. In February, together with the Community Wellbeing and People and Places Boards, the Board responded to the previous Government's ['Improving Lives: the work, health and disability Green Paper'](#) and recommended the need to address the complexity and inadequacies of the current national system through public service reform and devolution.

Digital connectivity

12. The board continues to advocate for fast and reliable digital connectivity in rural areas. In January, the board hosted Sharon White, Chief Executive of Ofcom. Ms White committed to engage with non-metropolitan areas on connectivity and consumer issues.
13. Throughout the passage of the Digital Economy Bill, the board provided steer on lobbying positions which informed a range of briefings for parliamentary stakeholders and the drafting of amendments.
14. Finally, in May the board successfully lobbied the Advertising Standards Agency to reform regulations that underpin inaccurate 'up to' download speed advertisements.

Leading Places Project

15. In partnership with Universities UK and the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the LGA has overseen a project to develop collaborative leadership across the higher education and local government sectors.
16. [Launched in May 2016](#), six pilot areas have developed local partnership and project arrangements to meet a variety of local challenges.
17. Following a competitive process 15 new and continuing partnerships will take part in Phase 2 and begin work to take forward action against each of their locally identified themes.

Programme of work and priorities 2017/18

18. The board will continue to develop the case for devolution to non-metropolitan areas and provide support to progress devolution in England in the context of a new government.
19. Officers will undertake a programme of work to take forward the integrated devolved employment skills service model put forward at the LGA Annual Conference.
20. The Board will continue to build on its work to date, including the Up to Speed campaign. It will also explore the role the councils can play to improve rural mobile connectivity.

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21. The board will monitor the work of the Leading Places Project and explore how emerging good practice in collaborative leadership might be shared more widely.