

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

Trade and Investment

1. Within the context of greater devolution, the Government's Industrial Strategy and the uncertainty surrounding Britain's departure from the European Union, the People and Places and City Regions Boards jointly commissioned research from the consultants *Value Adage* in late January 2017 to undertake a review of the national trade and investment policy landscape with a view to understanding the potential for a strengthened sub-national approach.
2. Following a combination of desk-based literature review, telephone interviews with local and national stakeholders and a policy workshop, the independent report 'Strengthening Sub-National Trade and Investment' was presented to members at the June 2017 board meetings. In line with the recommendations of the report and feedback from members of both boards officers are now looking to explore three elements of further work: engagement with the business community; aligning our thinking with the emerging industrial strategy; and, informed by both, better understanding what works on the ground.

Skills and Employment

3. Last year, with the City Regions Board, the Board commissioned the Learning and Work Institute (LWI) to develop a local government vision for an integrated and devolved employment and skills service which will bring agencies and provision together so they work for everyone that needs support to progress. The final report – Work Local – which details the proposed model, and recommendations to achieve it - was launched at the LGA Annual Conference in July during the 'Industrial Strategy- the local response' Plenary Session, alongside a public consultation on the proposals.
4. The final report features on a dedicated [Work Local webpage](#). Officers have met to discuss Work Local with a range of stakeholders, and we expect analysis from a consultation will follow shortly. More recently we held fringe sessions at each of the party conferences this autumn focusing on our Work Local proposals.. In the coming months the Boards will engage with decision makers including Ministers and opinion formers.

Devolution

5. It is now two years since the then Government invited devolution submissions from areas across the UK. The Board has been at the forefront of the debate on devolution since that time, and as a number of areas continue to negotiate with Government with the intention of securing a devolution deal and setting up a combined authority, the LGA continues to provide improvement support to all non-metropolitan areas interested in devolution.

Leading Places project

6. Following on from the success of Leading Places Phase 1 and in recognition of the growing currency of work to strengthen collaboration between universities and councils, a second phase of the Leading Places project continues to progress in 15 areas with LGA funding and support. The Leading Places project is delivered in partnership with Universities UK and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

19 October 2017

7. The LGA is also working with HEFCE to support delivery of the Local Growth Academy, a leadership programme which aims to bring together councils, universities and the NHS to strengthen their individual and collective contributions to local and inclusive growth. Initial sessions of the Academy have been positively received by attendees from councils.

Superfast Broadband and Mobile Connectivity

8. The Board will continue its strong focus on improving the digital connectivity of residents. Over the next year, the Board will maintain its interest in broadband but prioritise new thinking and stakeholder engagement activities to build capacity in relation to the provision of mobile infrastructure, where the role of local government is currently less influential and the opportunities to have a significant impact are more pronounced. The Board will also continue to strengthen key relationships with national government and the communications regulator Ofcom.
9. I was pleased to meet the Rt. Hon Matt Hancock MP, Minister of State for Digital, on 11 September to discuss the broadband Universal Service Offer, the rollout of full-fibre infrastructure and mobile connectivity. The discussion was very positive with several areas of agreement identified and the Minister expressed an interest in meeting with the People and Places Board in future.

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