

## **People and Places Board - End of Year Board Report**

### **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. At the start of the 2017/18 board cycle, Members reflected on the apparent 'pause' in the progress of the Government's devolution agenda and took the decision to pursue a twin-track approach: supporting the case for specific instances of devolution, in areas such as skills, trade and investment and fiscal reform, while also developing a longer term vision, framed by Britain's departure from the EU.

#### **Post-Brexit England Commission**

4. The Board launched the Post-Brexit England Commission in February 2018 in London, to examine non-metropolitan areas' role in shaping and supporting a successful post-Brexit England and to develop a refreshed case for ambitious devolution to non-metropolitan areas.
5. Both the Commission's launch and two subsequent roadshows were attended by a wide range of business leaders, stakeholders and government representatives. They took place in Taunton (South West), and Nottinghamshire (East Midlands). Officers are currently planning more events for the 2018/19 board cycle to gather further evidence regarding the challenges and opportunities facing non-metropolitan and rural England.
6. An interim report is due to be published at the LGA Annual Conference, with a final report to be published in early 2019.

#### **Skills and Employment**

7. The People and Places and City Regions Boards joined forces to take forward LGA employment and skills lobbying. Members of both Boards decided the LGA should design an offer to Government which was strategic in nature covering the whole employment and skills landscape. It was on this basis that Work Local was developed, which aims to make the current national system more integrated and localised and for the sector to benefit from a devolution deal process offering real freedom and flexibility.

8. In March 2018, Chairman of the People and Places Board Cllr Mark Hawthorne and Chair of the City Regions Board Sir Richard Leese attended a meeting with the Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships the Rt. Hon. Anne Milton MP. The meeting was extremely productive, and foundations were laid to form a strategic and systematic relationship between the Department of Education and the LGA. An additional meeting was held in on Thursday 7 June with the Skills Minister, to further discuss the LGA's vision for a more localised skills system.
9. Both the People and Places and City Regions Board also agreed to establish a new 'skills taskforce', whose purpose will be to dedicate specific time to, and have oversight of the LGA's employment and skills work, and re-focus LGA work to provide place-based solutions to Brexit and the Industrial Strategy. Both Boards have agreed it should draw in expertise from within the sector and engage a range of stakeholders. Establishment of the Taskforce is well underway, drawing on expertise from Members of the relevant LGA boards.

### **Trade and Investment**

10. The Board has continued to seek to advance the case for reform of the sub-national trade and investment landscape. With much of the UK's future trading relationship contingent on the form and timing of Britain's departure from the EU this work has had a degree of overlap with the LGA's Brexit Task and Finish Group. It is anticipated that this work will gain increased traction following the EU summit in October 2018.

### **Broadband and Mobile Phone Connectivity**

11. The Board continues to be a credible and respected voice in the field of digital connectivity. As Members are keen to build on this position and advance their priorities in this area, the Board agreed to focus this work via the formation of the Rural Digital Connectivity Working Group (the Members' Working Group) in March 2018. The Members' Working Group is made up of Members from the People and Places Board, and will contribute to the LGA's work on digital connectivity outside of the Board's formal work programme.
12. The Members' Working Group is supported by an Officers' Group, established by The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT). The Officers' group provides extra capacity and will work with LGA officers to share the frontline opportunities and challenges facing local authorities in improving the provision of digital connectivity in rural and coastal areas. Its first action will be to pursue conversations with the British Standards Institute on establishing a digital connectivity Kitemark for new build properties to reassure homebuyers before completion that their new home will have a digital connection fit for the 21st century.
13. The first and second meetings of the Members' Working Group have taken place. These have established clear priorities for its work programme on digital and mobile phone connectivity. At the most recent meeting, Members held discussions with representatives from Ofcom, the UK's communication regulator, on the poor quality of

mobile coverage in rural areas and the role local government can play in helping extend digital connectivity across non-metropolitan areas.

### **Industrial Strategy**

14. The Government published the Industrial Strategy White Paper in November 2017. The White Paper contained a number of announcements relating to the role of LEPs, which included a review of the roles and responsibilities of LEPs and a pledge to bring forward reforms to leadership, governance, accountability, financial reporting and geographical boundaries.
15. Since the launch of the White Paper, Government's focus has been on the LEP Review (see below) and the Board has, in turn, concentrated on making the case for local government leadership and further devolution through this process. Alexandra Jones, Director of Industrial Strategy at BEIS, will be in attendance at the June Board meeting for a discussion regarding the Government's proposals. This is expected to include further details regarding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and future Local Industrial Strategies, both of which are likely to be key priorities for the board in the coming months.

### **Local Enterprise Partnership Review**

16. The LEP Review has been overseen by the LEP Advisory Panel, established by Jake Berry MP and Margot James MP in December 2017. Following a request from the LGA for non-metropolitan local government representation, Cllr Anne Western (Derbyshire County Council) attended the Panel in her capacity as Lead Member of the People and Places Board. Altogether, four meetings of the Panel were held, and it is anticipated that final recommendations from the LEP Review will be published prior to the summer recess.
17. On 15 March, the LGA hosted a joint roundtable event with the LEP Network following a previous joint working commitment between the two organisations. The event provided an opportunity to identify common ground between councils and LEPs and to strengthen their strategic relationship ahead of the publication of the Government's LEP Review.
18. Following the roundtable a letter was sent to the Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which was signed by three LEP Chairs, along with Chairs of the EEHT, City Regions and People and Places Board.
19. The letter requested support from national government in three key areas: unified funding, local leadership and greater local flexibility. A response to the letter was received on 6 May 2018 and the Board is continuing to pursue Government on these issues.

### **Leading Places Project**

20. Over the past year, the Board has continued to support work to strengthen the strategic relationship between local government and higher education at a local and national level.
21. Most notably, the Board has overseen delivery of the second phase of the Leading Places programme which has been funded by the LGA and delivered in partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Universities UK.
22. Phase 2 of the programme has seen 15 project partnerships across the country made up of councils, universities and other anchor institutions, such as the NHS, explore the development of collaborative approaches to tackling local priorities in public service reform and driving inclusive growth.
23. The LGA has also worked with HEFCE, Universities UK and the NHS Confederation to support delivery of the Local Growth Academy which is a leadership development programme focused on collaborative delivery of local growth and targeted at representatives from higher education, local government and the NHS.
24. Both programmes concluded at a national event in March attended by nearly 200 delegates from the across higher education, health and local government sectors.

### **Programme of work and priorities 2018/19**

25. The board will continue to develop the case for devolution to non-metropolitan areas, in particular through the work of the Post Brexit England Commission.
26. The board will continue to take forward the LGA's lobbying work on skills, both making the case for the Work Local model, and implementing a successful and effective strategic relationship with the Department for Education.
27. The board will continue to build on its work to date on broadband and mobile phone connectivity, including through the Rural Digital Connectivity Working Group.
28. The Board will seek to ensure the key elements of the Industrial Strategy – Local Industrial Strategies, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the LEP Review, fit with the priorities and ambitions of non-metropolitan authorities

### **Financial Implications**

29. All work programmes are met from existing budgets and resources.