

People and Places Board: Review of the Year

Background

1. The People and Places Board membership is drawn from the County Councils Network, District Councils Network and any non-county unitaries not represented by those two bodies. It oversees a core programme of policy activity and has also commissioned the Independent Commission for Economic Growth and the Future of Public Services in Non-Metropolitan England, chaired by Sir John Peace.

Work programme

2. At its June meeting, the Board agreed a programme of activity in each of its key areas. This report sets out the outcomes, outputs, delivery dates and member oversight for each area. Where governance structures are set to change, the transfer of responsibility will be discussed at relevant meetings.
3. The Board agreed a programme proposed by Cllr Heather Kidd to explore a more locally led approach to housing in non-metropolitan areas. The project will model the impact of providing local areas with greater flexibility over land disposal and new ways of working with developers as well as highlighting good practice and examining whether the current approach to assessing the viability of housing development is fit for purpose. It will also continue the LGA's campaign for the necessary financial flexibilities for councils to build housing. The project will produce research findings and policy recommendations in the autumn which will feed into the LGA's work to influence the government's review of councils' role in the delivery of housing. It will be reported jointly to the People and Places and Environment and Housing Board, with input from the City Regions Board.
4. The Board also agreed a programme proposed by Cllr Eion Watts to enable councils and their partners to ensure economic growth and planned housing growth are supported by the necessary infrastructure. The project will develop an evidence base and share good practice of how councils are working effectively across local boundaries to plan strategically for infrastructure and working in partnership with the private sector to bring forward development and secure investment in infrastructure; make the case for what more could be achieved with more devolved funding for infrastructure at a local level; and develop policy proposals for increasing councils' ability to assemble adequate funding for infrastructure and thereby reduce delays and barriers to growth. This will take the form of a publication, lobbying strategy, and event by late autumn. It will be reported to both the People and Places and Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Boards, and the City Regions and Environment and Housing Boards will be kept informed.
5. The planning and infrastructure project will include a specific focus on broadband, through which the LGA will continue to try to secure value for money for councils by providing practical support through Local Partnerships on contract management; open up a dialogue with Ofcom on the regulatory framework for the telecommunications market; press Ministers to ensure proper competition for contracts to reach the final five per cent

of the population; and promote councils as the best place to join up the broadband roll out. This will report to the People and Places and Culture, Tourism and Sport Boards.

6. The Board also agreed a programme led by Mayor Tony Egginton to develop a compelling proposal for the devolution of responsibility for employment, skills and welfare. The LGA is working with the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusions (CESI) to deliver two evidence-based reports: the first, into growth and skills needs, being presented in July, and the second, on how the current system affects local people and how their needs might be better met by a local system, in the autumn. The programme will also collect good practice and will test a local model in a number of non-metropolitan and metropolitan areas in time to influence the re-let of the Work Programme in 2015. This work will be reported to both the People and Places and City Regions Boards, and regular updates will be provided to the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board and Resources Board.
7. Finally, the Board agreed a programme proposed by Cllr David Hodge which will set out a way forward for the transformation of public services in non-metropolitan areas, ensuring it is locally and democratically led. This will involve working with a number of non-metropolitan areas to refresh the evidence for place-based working and maintain the momentum of a community budgeting approach. The project will be completed by March 2015.

Non-Metropolitan Commission

8. The Board has also commissioned the Independent Commission for Economic Growth and the Future of Public Services in Non-Metropolitan England Association to seek ways to stimulate economic growth regionally, create new jobs and help people live their lives better. Chaired by Sir John Peace, the Non-Metropolitan Commission has received evidence from over 40 organisations, including councils, LEPs, businesses and the voluntary and community sector to inform its review. It has also commissioned independent research into the economic, social and demographic trends facing non-metropolitan areas. The Commission will present its final report by the autumn.

Financial Implications

9. There are no unbudgeted implications for the LGA.

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