

## **People and Places Board – report from Cllr David Hodge (Chairman)**

### **LGA Annual Conference**

1. I chaired a plenary debate on “the case for deeper devolution” with Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Hilary Benn MP, Sir John Peace, Chair of the Non-Metropolitan Commission and Sir Richard Leese, Chair of the City Regions Board. I spoke of the need for organising services based around people and places, not silos, and for local government to be trusted to deliver what local people need. I highlighted how we can improve services and save money by working together and how an incoming government could remove barriers to making this a reality. The session presented a powerful set of arguments for greater devolution to local areas from a local, national, and business perspective.
2. At our annual conference in Bournemouth the LGA hosted a meeting of the government-led Future High Streets Forum which brings together business, government and other stakeholders. Led by the then Chair Brandon Lewis, MP the meeting was held on the day our 100 Days publication was launched. It was a timely opportunity for the Forum to engage on key strategic issues councils will be facing in the lead up to next year's election. On behalf of the LGA I presented an overview of 100 Days, as well as the day to day work that councils and the LGA are doing to promote local economic growth in towns and cities across the country.

### **Non-Metropolitan Commission**

3. I attended the third meeting of the independent Non-Metropolitan Commission, chaired by Sir John Peace, which has been tasked by the Local Government Association to undertake a review of the future of economic growth and public services in non-metropolitan areas. The Commission is now considering the evidence it received and research it commissioned in order to inform its final report.
4. Penelope, Viscountess Cobham, Chair of VisitEngland and one of commissioners on the Non-Metropolitan Commission spoke at a well-attended parallel plenary session at the LGA's annual conference on the implications of devolution for local identity. Lady Cobham spoke passionately of the need to celebrate the diversity of local places and the role councils play in growing local tourism.
5. Jane Ramsay, a Commissioner and Chair of Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust will be speaking at the East of England LGA's 'Fiscal Freedom and Devolved Powers for Local Growth' event on 18 September in Cambridge. Jane will provide delegates with an overview of the Commission's work and some emerging findings around the drivers and barriers to growth. I would encourage members in the East of England with portfolios for economic development to take this opportunity to attend and explore the innovative ways of capitalising on the existing opportunities available and to make the case for empowering local government through further fiscal devolution.

### **Public service transformation**

6. The discussion at the June People and Places Board on public service transformation fed into the LGA's written submission to the Independent Service Transformation Challenge Panel, set up by the Treasury. The Panel is co-chaired by Pat Ritchie, chief executive of Newcastle City Council, and Sir Derek Myers, former joint chief executive of the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham and the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea, and will report back to government in the autumn on a way forward for service transformation. The LGA's submission set out the compelling evidence-based case in favour of faster and deeper devolution to councils and showcased how many non-metropolitan areas have already adopted a community budget-type approach to service transformation that is improving outcomes for residents and saving money for the taxpayer.

### **Rural conference**

7. Dan Rogerson MP is set to provide the keynote address at the Annual LGA / Rural services Network Rural Conference on Tuesday 9 September 2014 in Chester. The conference, which will be co-chaired by the Vice chair of the People and Places Board, Cllr Neil Clarke, will showcase the rural perspective on some of the most significant issues being debated across local government, including the work councils are doing to lead local economic recovery and key challenges for rural authorities on planning, supporting local business, health and wellbeing and housing. I would strongly encourage members serving rural communities to take this opportunity to share their issues with colleagues in an interactive setting.

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