

Meeting: -

Date: -

People and Places Board Work Programme

Purpose of report

For direction

Summary

This report sets out a work programme for the People and Places Board for members' formal agreement.

Is this report confidential?

Yes

Recommendation/s

Members are asked to comment on and agree the proposed work programme for the 2022/23 political cycle.

Contact details

Contact officer: Rebecca Cox

Position: Principal Policy Adviser

Phone no: 0207 187 7384

Email: rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk

People and Places Board Work Programme

Background

1. The People and Places Board has a wide remit, as set out in its terms of reference. This paper sets out a proposed framework for the Board's work in the forthcoming year. Within the broader framework will be opportunities for the Board to respond to new issues as they arise, and the Board is free to amend the framework during the year should the local or national policy context change.
2. This paper was written after the conclusion of the Conservative leadership election and the appointment of Liz Truss as Prime Minister. In discussing this paper, Members will want to reflect on any early indications of national policy direction. At the time of writing the Government has just announced its intention to hold a fiscal event on 23 September, where possible officers will report back on any announcements likely to be of interest to the Board.
3. The framework also contains several projects that were agreed in the previous Board cycle and will complete in the coming months. This gives the Board more flexibility when considering how it might like to use its resources in the second half of the cycle.
4. Following the LGA's annual conference and the publication of [Signals of the Future](#), which was commissioned from Ipsos MORI, the LGA will be taking a fresh look at the long term issues facing the country and what local government's role is in addressing them. This will also support our work to influence manifestos in the lead up to the next general election. The People and Places Board is already well positioned in this space, thanks to its foresight in commissioning the Levelling Up Locally Inquiry, the Work Local refresh and other projects. In their consideration of the work programme, members might wish to consider how the Board's findings and recommendations might feed into the LGA's wider work.
5. Members will want to ensure that the Board's work programme speaks to the cost-of-living crisis which is set to severely impact communities, businesses, and public services. Aspects of this are woven throughout our work programme, albeit with a stronger emphasis on long-term preventative work. The People and Places Board will also feed into the LGA's wider cost of living work through participating in the steering group. Any further views from members about how the Board should engage on this issue are welcome.

Proposal

6. Five themes for the Board's work programme are set out below. Where these are supported by briefing papers, these are mentioned in the text.
7. **Rural Proofing**

Having heard from the National Farmers Union in 2021/22, the Board will continue to explore the need for rural proofing and recognition of rural needs in policy.

DEFRA has published their [second report](#) on the progress of rural proofing and delivering across Rural England. The report sets out some of the challenges of levelling up in rural communities including rural productivity, connectivity, accessibility and rural hardship, as well as future publications and research they will undertake relating to rural priorities. In addition to this, the report sets out how government is intending to level up rural economies and communities, with particular focus on strengthening rural economy, connectivity by developing rural infrastructure, access to rural services and management of the natural environment, as well as how each of the 12 levelling up missions are contributing to rural levelling up. DEFRA Officials will be invited to a future Board meeting to discuss

Officers recently met with Britain's Leading Edge, a collaboration of twelve rural upper-tier local authorities without major cities who aim to shape national debate highlighting the contribution rural regions can make to a sustainable national economy. Britain's Leading Edge will attend the November Board meeting to discuss opportunities for future collaboration.

In the last year the People and Places Board has also worked to influence and inform the work of other LGA Boards with a view to addressing issues of rural importance. A paper to the first board considers the issue of nutrient neutrality, which is being led by the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board. Members may wish to consider whether there are other issues which would benefit from similar scrutiny.

8. **Levelling Up**

Despite the uncertainty surrounding the future of the levelling up agenda in its current form, we are hopeful that the incoming government will continue to see reducing regional inequalities as a priority. In the last Board cycle, members commissioned a number of areas of work jointly with the City Regions Board to position councils at the heart of levelling up, which are set out in more detail in the accompanying paper:

- The Levelling Up Locally Inquiry, looking at funding and alignment, leadership, productivity and prosperity, and place and identity. Its initial roundtables have been completed and the inquiry will bring contributors together in October for two sense-making sessions. The final set of findings and recommendations will be brought to the November Board meeting.
- We will continue to lobby on the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, particularly with regard to the Missions.

- Our Work Local proposals for a more localised employment and skills system were launched in the summer. Officers are focusing on engaging stakeholders, especially businesses and employers, and laying the groundwork for engaging Parliamentarians from all parties and new Ministers in the autumn. In addition, we are continuing work agreed in the previous Board cycle to understand the role of councils and combined authorities in addressing inequalities in skills and employment (see accompanying paper).

9. **Digital Connectivity and Inclusion**

The Board has a good track record lobbying on digital connectivity and at the March board members agreed to expand the work programme to cover digital inclusion which will be crucial to addressing social and economic inequalities and levelling up every community. As such the Board will focus on four areas as part of the 2022/23 digital work programme led by Cllr Mark Hawthorne, the LGA's digital champion. These include continued policy work around digital connectivity and calls for digital champions, the implications of upgrading infrastructure with a focus on lobbying around the integration of the public switched telephone network, digital and the cost-of-living crisis, and a newly commissioned piece of work looking at the intersection between digital infrastructure and inclusion.

10. **Skills for the green economy**

At the last Board meeting, members identified the need for there to be a step change in retrofitting homes to support councils to deliver net zero commitments, tackle the cost-of-living crisis and fuel poverty and keep homes warm. Members directed officers to focus on ensuring there is the qualified workforce available to deliver the scale of retrofit needed, and that this needs to be developed at the local level. Local government has real ambition to deliver on its net zero commitments, and therefore needs a localised, place-based approach to deliver retrofit, which should include an integrated employment and skills offer that is tailored to local need. This would form the first part of a wider piece of work on the green economy.

The accompanying paper sets out activity to strengthen our relationships with stakeholders, including SMEs where there is less understanding of the role of local government, and to influence Government through the Green Jobs Delivery Group and other channels.

11. **Growth funding**

At the final board meeting of the last political cycle, members of the People and Places Board agreed to the preparation of a report for the LGA Executive proposing to consider the future of growth funding. There is already an immediate

focus on ensuring vital local services can keep pace with rising inflation and increased demand from residents, and in the longer term, a need to ensure councils have greater ability to boost productivity and strengthen sustainable and inclusive growth across the country. The accompanying paper sets out a proposal to commission some technical analysis to allow us to better make the case for the relative efficiency of local investment.

The Board also shares with the City Regions Board the responsibility for the LGA's work on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and any issues arising from this over the course of the year will be brought to the Board under this heading.

Implications for Wales

12. Many policy areas are devolved, however where the topic allows we will work with the WLGA and other bodies to ensure issues relating to Welsh councils are properly represented.

Financial Implications

13. Work commitments can be met from the Board's policy budget.

Equalities Implications

14. We strive to reflect equality, diversity and inclusion issues throughout the work programme, whether through the focus of the project, the scope, design and research, or our engagement with stakeholders. More detail is included in the background papers.

Next steps

15. Members are asked to comment on:
 - The overall balance of the work programme
 - Any gaps or other issues that should be considered, particularly with regard to the rising cost of living
 - Any considerations arising from the new Prime Minister's policy priorities.
16. Officers will incorporate members' comments and, subject to the agreement of the Board, proceed with the work programme.