

People and Places Board – Report from Cllr Kevin Bentley (Chairman)

Levelling Up

1. The [Levelling Up Locally Inquiry](#) has completed five roundtables. The inquiry has looked to explore how the government's levelling up agenda might better strengthen local areas and the emerging themes of the roundtables have been used in conjunction with research into how the pandemic may have affected demographic trends and what the implications are for levelling up of any demographic shifts. The final report will be launched at a hybrid event on Tuesday 14th March. Confirmed speakers include Sarah Longlands, Professor Francesca Gains and Professor Michael Kenny.
2. People and Places Board Lead Members have approved the creation and co-sponsorship of a health devolution working group with the NHS Confederation. This working group will provide an opportunity to ensure that learning can be shared between local government, the NHS and Integrated Care Systems (ICSs). The three boards with an interest in health devolution (the City Regions Board, the People and Places Board, and the Community Wellbeing Board) will all have a nominated representative on the working group. Sarah Pickup, Deputy Chief Executive of the LGA will also be a member of the working group.
3. Following the announcement of the second round of the Levelling Up Fund, Cllr Kevin Bentley represented the LGA in national press coverage, including the BBC's The World at One to make the case that levelling up funding should be determined on the basis of evidence on where crucial investments needs to go, rather than costly competitive bids between areas.

Digital infrastructure and inclusion

4. The board commissioned DMS Consulting to produce a report exploring the links between various types of disadvantage and the availability and usage of digital infrastructure, and to consider the role of councils in tackling digital exclusion. A final report was taken to the January board and is in the process of being published. It will be used to inform the LGA's lobbying positions around digital exclusion.
5. The Board continues to raise concerns about the integration of all analogue lines (PSTN) to digital internet-based infrastructure. Officers continue to run monthly switchover working group meetings to discuss challenges and share good practice between regions. The results from an LGA commissioned

readiness survey reconfirmed the four areas where councils require better support: safe data sharing, funding, communications support, and with the central testing platform. The communications team have developed a series of social media posts and assets which will be shared with local authorities to raise awareness of the switchover. These are currently being tested by the sector before they are distributed more widely.

Growth and productivity

6. The People and Places Board, together with the City Regions Board has commissioned WPI Economics to carry out a piece of research into what works in driving economic growth and prosperity at the local level. It will also look at the steps English councils working in partnership might take to achieve this. This work is due to conclude in April.
7. The Board is also feeding into two pieces of commissioned work undertaken by Shared Intelligence supporting local economies as part of the LGA's Government-funded support offer. The first relates to the changing skills needs of economic development teams. The project aims to better understand economic development services and how they are delivered across England, the breadth of the work undertaken and how they add value locally, and skills and capacity challenges they face including skills needs and capacity issues delivering local and national priorities.
8. The second project supports councils and combined authorities with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) integration process. To date, two workshops have been held with tranche 2 areas, with a further two workshops scheduled to take place including one for tranche 1 areas who have already integrated. DLUHC officials are confirmed to attend the sessions to provide an update from Government. A final report will be published to share good practice and highlight the opportunities and challenges of LEP integration.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund

9. The LGA has commissioned Shared Intelligence to run action learning sets to support local authorities delivering the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This will include developing resources to support the wider sector with the introduction of the fund.

Employment and skills

10. The Board together with the City Regions Board agreed to a piece of work to examine the role of councils in supporting economic inclusion. To build on our initial research we hosted a series of roundtables to hear directly from councils around the country. The aim of the roundtables was to explore how councils are working to improve equality and diversity in employment and skills outcomes to encourage economic inclusion for their communities. Officers are drawing together the evidence from the discussions to develop policy recommendations to advance this agenda.

Green Jobs and Skills

11. The Government's Green Jobs Delivery Group have agreed for the formation of a time limited Local Capacity and Capability sub-group that will run between March and May. The group will make recommendations to the Government on how best to address the local capacity and capability challenges local government face in delivering the jobs and skills needed to achieve net zero.
12. Local Government will be represented by Solace, ADEPT, Mayoral Combined Authorities as well as the LGA, which Cllr Emily O'Brien will be representing the People & Places Board. There will also be representation from business, energy companies, and education and training providers. The LGA are engaging with the partners to support the sub-committee as well as inform our wider policy development work.

Contact details

Contact officer: Rebecca Cox

Position: Principal Policy Adviser

Phone no: 0207 187 7384

Email: rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk