

Minutes of last People & Places Board meeting

People & Places Board

Tuesday, 10 January 2023

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A**

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest
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The Chair welcomed Members, officers and guests to the meeting.

Apologies were received by Cllr Eddie Reeves and Cllr Kevin Etheridge.
Cllr Georgina Hill and Cllr Colin Kemp served as substitutes.

No declarations of interest had been made.

2	A minute's silence to remember Cllr Judi Billing MBE and former Deputy Board Chair John Pollard
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There was a minute's silence followed by shared recollections for the late Cllr Judi Billing MBE and John Pollard, a former Board Deputy Chairman.

3	Digital Connectivity Update
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Cllr Mark Hawthorne, LGA Digital Champion, introduced the report and invited David Mack-Smith of DMS Research & Consulting to provide an overview of recent policy and public affairs work relating to digital connectivity and inclusion as well as the role of local authorities in tackling digital exclusion.

Key points included:

- Barriers to digital inclusion include access, abilities to connect to the Internet and use online services in addition to other factors such as confidence and lack of trust.
- Rural areas have done relatively well in getting full fibre coverage so far, but lag in terms of gigabit coverage
- It was noted that local authorities have various responsibilities, relationships and assets which position them to play a key role in tackling digital exclusion, given their democratic mandate.
- It was recommended that there should be clarification of the ministerial and executive leadership on digital inclusion.

Members made the following comments:

- The Chair asked if there was knowledge of areas with little to no broadband rollout. Officers replied that the Ofcom Connected Nations Report contained the latest figures and the House of Commons Library provided an accessible map of the key statistics.
- Cllr Hawthorne said that there are effective examples of existing work in district councils and county councils and going forward there would be continued efforts to ensure central government recognises the need for funding for local government to support the broadband agenda.
- Members gave examples of broadband provision in their council areas, highlighting productivity and budgetary challenges.
- A Member queried paragraph 6 within the covering report, which concerns telecare, which he believed might be out of date and would like more information. Cllr Hawthorne replied that he believed adult social care as an industry is fully aware of this issue, but that there was already ongoing work to combat the challenges going forward.
- Attitudes to technology and the internet, especially among older residents, were discussed.
- A Member said he would like to see campaigning to ensure that that resilience is built into broadband strategies. He also asked if the social services were aware of the challenges regarding monitoring, the adult monitoring and PSTN.
- A Member reflected on the importance of inclusivity as well as economic growth, adding that councils need to recognise the gigabyte spine and where it reaches across authority borders.
- There should be greater promotion of the fact there are cheaper tariffs for people with lower incomes.
- There should be further work on digital inclusion and efforts to make sure there is an up-to-date policy in central government.

Decision:

- That Members **noted** the report;
- that there should be **further work** on digital inclusion and efforts to make sure there is an up-to-date policy in central government, reporting back to a future board meeting.

Action/s:

Noting comments from Members from the discussion with DMS Research & Consulting and Cllr Mark Hawthorne, officers will publish the commissioned work exploring the role of local authorities in tackling digital exclusion and create a more detailed plan to take the recommendations forward and land them with central government.

4 People and Places Forward Plan

Members discussed the paper which set out future Board dates with

proposals for discussion topics.

Key points included the following:

- A Member asked if alternative farming voices (such as the Nature Friendly Farming Network) could be invited to future meetings.
- Regarding planning reform for rural areas, a Member queried if the board could comment or be involved in the LGA response. The Chair said there could be a discussion in Lead Member meetings about those who can be invited to board meetings.
- A Member queried if second homes and holiday homes could be discussed at a future board meeting. Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, replied that in the rural recognition, recovery, resilience and revitalisation paper that the board commissioned, there was a homes and built environment section that could be used as a template to review how some of those issues have developed over time. The Chair said the matter would be reviewed, including checking with the EEHT Board, and would go to a future meeting.

Decision:

- That Members **agreed** the forward plan.

5 Levelling Up update and inquiry recommendations

Eleanor Law, Adviser, introduced the final draft report of the Levelling Up Locally Inquiry, giving an overview of the arrangements for the report's launch in March.

Members made the following comments:

- It was noted that UKRI is currently funding research around a project called Local Policy Innovation Partnerships (LPIP), and that the work of universities is relevant to issues raised in the report.
- There was discussion about the structure and focus of the report. A Member said that there should be more work to reduce the number of priorities for levelling up while others believed that more work on the report was required, particularly on clarifying what the top recommendations are from the report and how these will be effectively communicated with Government.
- Members discussed how the report was bringing together a large number of themes and that there needed to be a single thread weaving these together.
- The Chair agreed that Lead Members could discuss the top priorities for inclusion in the final version of the report levelling up.

Decision:

- That Members **agreed** for a revised copy of the report to be discussed and signed off at a Lead Members meeting if Lead Members were content with it.

Action/s

Officers will incorporate any comments from members into the final draft of the report and the plan for its publication. A copy of the final report and the launch plans will also be brought to the City Regions Board for their consideration and agreement. Once agreed, officers will press ahead with publication and a launch event in March.

6 Work Local - next steps activity

Jasbir Jhas, Senior Adviser, introduced the report.

Members made the following points:

- A Member questioned section 5 in the report regarding value for money and costs and the effectiveness of the spending decision making. Jasbir Jhas replied that this work was based on existing funds as well as examples of outcomes-based work from local authorities and combined authorities.
- Regarding redundancies and business closures, there should be a change in attitudes (for example, looking at people who are made redundant as an opportunity instead of a problem).
- Central government should provide funding to insulate homes rewild and make farming regenerative.
- In the Levelling Up paper, a Member noted that there is a reference to community wealth building and queried whether something like that needs to be included in the Work Local programme.
- A Member recommended that an infographic be included in the report for further clarity.

Cllr Emily O'Brien updated on the Green Jobs Delivery Group meeting with three ministers. There was agreement to the LGA's request to offer a wider stakeholder group. Some councillors have submitted good practice and local challenges in developing the green jobs and skills needed to achieve net zero. Members wishing to do the same were told to submit them to Paul Green, Adviser. The Chair thanked Cllr O'Brien for her work.

Decision:

- Members **noted** the report.

Action

To take forward the steer provided by the Board.

7 Supporting Economic Growth and Prosperity

Jasbir Jhas introduced the report, inviting Ben Lee and Lisa McCance from Shared Intelligence to discuss the findings.

Members made the following comments:

- The Chair noted that he didn't see education mentioned and reiterated his belief that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to devolution. He believed the role of local government is a convening role and education and businesses need to be considered together to work out what skills are then required.
- A Member referred to section 18.2, believing it would be helpful for creative industries, food, farming and nature sectors to be added to future gap analysis.
- A Member suggested that there needs to be a change in the basis of funding for economic growth, with competition and more longer-term vision.
- A Member believed there was a democratic deficit in general regeneration activity.
- The Chair said there needed to be clarification from central government regarding the plans for LEPs.
- Regarding engagement with councils, the Chair questioned if unitary authorities had been consulted and queried when the research project would be completed. Jasbir confirmed that there would be engagement with unitary councils and that the research would conclude in March. The Chair recommended that Jasbir consult with Councillor Martin Tett of Buckinghamshire County Council and Cllr Lynne Doherty of West Berkshire Council.

Decision:

That the Members **noted** the two pieces of commissioned work: the future skills needs of councils' economic development teams (paragraphs 2-11); and the integration of LEPs (paragraphs 12-17).

Action/s

LGA officers and Shared Intelligence will incorporate Members' perspectives into the two projects.

8 Councils' Future Role in Driving Growth and Prosperity

Due to time constraints, the Chair briefly addressed this work and asked if Members had any concerns with the report. There were no objections.

Decision:

That the Members **noted** the decision to commission a piece of research into councils' future role in driving growth and prosperity. Following a successful process of procurement, the chosen supplier is expected to attend the Board meeting and take a steer from members.

9 Minutes of last People & Places Board meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

Appendix A - Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Kevin Bentley	Essex County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Morris Bright MBE	Hertsmere Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Emily Smith	Vale of White Horse District Council
	Cllr Emily O'Brien	Lewes District Council
	Cllr Amanda Serjeant	Chesterfield Borough Council
Members	Cllr Lynne Doherty	West Berkshire Council
	Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcester City Council
	Cllr Hilary Carrick	Cumbria County Council
	Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen	Breckland Council
	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire Council
	Cllr Barry Wood	Cherwell District Council
	Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
	Cllr Damien Greenhalgh	High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Caroline Leaver	Devon County Council
Cllr Sue Roberts	South Oxfordshire District Council	
Apologies	Cllr Eddie Reeves	Oxfordshire County Council
	Cllr Kevin Etheridge	Caerphilly County Borough Council
In Attendance	Cllr Colin Kemp	Woking Borough Council
	Cllr Georgina Hill	Northumberland County Council
LGA Officers		