

Minutes of last People & Places Board meeting

People & Places Board

Tuesday, 6 June 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

The Chair welcomed Members, officers and guests to the meeting.

Apologies were received by Cllr Greenhalgh and Cllr Tett. Cllr Norman attended as a substitute.

No declarations of interest were made.

2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023 were agreed as an accurate record, subject to the following amendments being made:

- Cllr Norman to be marked as present.
- Cllr Dean to be listed as a Committee Member, in place of Dr Roberts.

3 Supporting Economic Inclusion

Bushra Jamil, Adviser, introduced the paper which set out an overview of the six guiding principles to realise economic inclusion in employment and skills, and the key tasks and roles that local government would undertake.

Members made the following comments:

- The importance of working in collaboration and the provision of training and support opportunities, was emphasised.
- The need for more data related to the costs associated with the lack of transport and connectivity across all areas of the country was expressed.
- A Member referenced regional disparities and expressed the need to invest in data to improve educational outcomes for young people in years to come.
- There was a view that economic inequality was often overlooked, and that a lack of social mobility and investment in transport meant a lack of opportunity.

- It was noted that four of the six Economic Inclusion Principles set out within the report stated, 'Local Government may want to...' as opposed to 'Local Government will/shall...'. The need to make the wording stronger and clearer was emphasised.
- A Member felt that the document lacked discussion regarding communities, families, schools, the voluntary community space and social enterprise sector. The importance of investment into adult social care was highlighted.
- In relation to transport cost and connectivity, a Member expressed the need to reference trains in addition to buses.
- A Member emphasised the importance of neurodiversity.
- In reference to Principle 1, a Member expressed the need to amplify the strategic plans being used to identify and target specific industries and sectors, which had the potential to create jobs and economic opportunities for individuals that may be excluded from the local economy.
- In reference to Principle 4, a Member emphasised the importance of councils and combined authorities proactively working in partnership to encourage local procurement, and requested that this be strengthened within the paper.
- A Member felt that there should be more emphasis within the paper on the effects that poor transport links, limited job opportunities and weak connectivity have on mental health.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

Actions:

- Officers to invite Tracy Blackwell, Chair of the Purposeful Finance Commission and CEO of PIC, to the next Board meeting to discuss the Levelling-Up agenda.
- Officers to check legal history to see if the title wording of four of the six Principles could be altered to bind councils to undertake such work.
- Officers to consider bringing a paper to a future meeting of the Board which focuses on collaboration and partnership working.

4 Digital Update

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the paper and provided an update on the Board's digital work over the 2022/23 cycle. He invited **Cllr Mark Hawthorne**, LGA Digital Champion, to discuss the digital agenda.

Cllr Hawthorne set out the following key points:

- Digital inclusion:
 - Discussions had recently taken place with Helen Milner, OBE, Group Chief Executive of Good Things Foundation, regarding lobbying matters and building strong coalition.
 - Government's Digital strategy needed to be updated to keep pace with digital transformation.

- Digital connectivity:
 - The newly appointed Rural Connectivity Champion had announced part of the UK-wide infrastructure strategy, which had been lobbied for tirelessly.
 - Whilst the strategy outlined £40m to be provided for regions and local authorities across the UK to establish themselves as '5G Innovation Regions', there were many questions left unanswered and therefore conversations were ongoing.
 - The LGA continued to lobby in relation to improving the measurement and reporting of mobile coverage.
 - The LGA continued to work in close partnership with the Digital Infrastructure Advisory Group.
- Digital switchovers:
 - There had been a significant amount of positive media in relation to the digital switchovers.
 - The rising concern for the sector in relation to the 2G/3G sunset continued to be explored by the LGA's research team to ensure that potential impacts were clear and addressed.
- Stakeholder engagement:
 - The Digital Connectivity Forum had recently set up a piece of work which focused on the way in which local authorities could improve their role as connectivity enablers.
 - Industry were calling for local government-funded digital champions.
 - The LGA had been invited to join the National Digital Connectivity Alliance through its Wireless Infrastructure Strategy to discuss connectivity matters further.

Members made the following comments:

- Concerns were raised in relation to the digital switchovers, particularly around isolating the elderly and other vulnerable people.
- The importance of retrofitting homes to support new technology and ensuring that masts were appropriately located was emphasised.
- A Member supported the view that there should be a national standard for the collection of data.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

5 Britain's Leading Edge

Cllr Linda Taylor, Leader of Cornwall Council, provided an update to the Board in relation to the recent work of Britain's Leading Edge. She presented a series of slides and invited Members to have a wider discussion about collaboration opportunities.

Members made the following comments and asked a number questions:

- Members raised concerns in relation to rural inequalities and emphasised the importance of ensuring that all areas were treated fairly and equally with appropriate access to services for all.
- A question was asked which related to investment in rural and coastal areas ahead of the upcoming general election.
- The importance of sharing information and partnership working was emphasised.
- A question was asked which related to the partnership working arrangements between Leading Edge, Coastal Special Interest Groups (SIGs) and the SPARSE network.
- A question was asked about lobbying back to central government to reinvigorate fishing industries.
- The importance of representing the needs of remote and regional communities and councils well in all aspects of work was emphasised.

Cllr Taylor responded to Members comments and questions, setting out the following points:

- There was a significant amount of potential to solve recurring issues within many areas, specifically around food, critical minerals, and alternative sources of energy, through Britain's Leading Edge.
- Inequality continued to be evident, specifically within rural areas, Britain's Leading Edge would help to ensure that the levelling-up profile was raised and present across the whole of the country and to provide fairer funding and investment into such areas.
- Work with Coastal communities and the sharing of good practice continued.
- Regarding the Fishing industry, food security had recently become a serious issue as a result of the war in Ukraine, and funding was needed to tackle food-related issues.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

6 People & Places Board Annual Report

Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced the report which summarised the Board's activity over the past year. It set out key achievements in relation to the priorities for the Board in 2022/23 and looked forward to next year's priorities.

Members made the following comments:

- Regarding the Board's future priorities, A Member requested that the subject of rural inequality, specifically relating to connectivity and transport issues, be included.
- The need to ensure that emphasis on non-metropolitan towns was not lost was expressed.
- A Member requested that the subject of coastlines be included.

Decision:

Board Members **noted** the report.

Actions:

Officers to take Members comments and requests into account for inclusion within the Board's future priorities.

7 Update on the health and devolution working group with NHS Confederation

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the paper and provided an update on the newly formed health and devolution working group established by NHS Confederation and co-sponsored by the LGA following its first meeting in April 2023.

Members made the following comments:

- The importance of low-level architecture was emphasised, and the need for ICSs to appoint a place-making officer who local planning authorities could contact for their input and comments and planning applications, was expressed.
- A Member sought clarification in relation to the devolution deals in combined authorities, as mentioned within the report.
- In relation to issues with accountability, A Member asked whether there had been any developments within ICBs which led to direct accountability without the need to liaise with local authorities.
- The importance of community wealth building in lifting areas economically and recruiting staff living within the area was emphasised.
- The green plans set out within ICBs needed to be integrated with local authorities' green plans.
- The need for more democratic accountability within the NHS and local accountability in decision making was emphasised.

In response to a question, Philip explained the purpose of the report in greater detail and said that it focused on devolution deal areas, focusing specifically on local authorities' new powers and how they fit with ICSs. He added that the Community Wellbeing Board, People & Places Board and City Regions Board were all discussing the topic.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

Action:

Officers to provide an update to Board Members once the report had been presented to the City Regions Board on 7 June.

8 Supporting Economic Growth and Prosperity Update

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the paper and provided an update for Members on the work of the Board in supporting local

economies.

A Member expressed the importance of government having clarity about whether all LEPs would be disbanded regardless of their individual funding positions, or whether their funding would stop, and being clear about where the saved monies would be allocated to.

Philip said that government's levers to disband LEPs were limited and agreed that further clarity was needed to ensure that it did not cost the public purse.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

9 Growth Funding Update

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the paper and provided an update on recent work to improve the provision of growth funding from national to local government highlighting correspondence with the Secretary of State relating to the Levelling Up Fund.

A Member emphasised the importance of submitting bids to government, even if not successful every time.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

10 Growth & Prosperity Update

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the paper and invited **Steve Hughes**, Associate Economist at WPI Economics, to present a series of slides on the interim findings of WPI Economics' research into councils' role in driving growth and prosperity. The slides also set out information related to the Local Growth and Prosperity Framework background, interviews, roles and activities, recommendations and next steps.

Members commented on the report and presentation slides. Their comments included information related to The Green Book reform, the correlation of information collected by size, the importance of risk-taking and place-shaping and the role that procurement undertakes in driving growth.

Steve responded to Members' comments.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report and supporting presentation slides.

11 Green Jobs and Skills

Paul Green, Adviser, introduced the paper which provided a summary of progress from the Local Capacity and Capability sub-group and proposed

a policy narrative for a green jobs framework.

Members commented on the report. Their comments included information related to the working relationship between national and local government, Net-Zero requirements for funding, the importance of investing in skills, building and workforce, green jobs, energy sources and associated costs.

Paul responded to Members' comments.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

Action:

Officers to send two links to Members outside of the meeting (Climate Change Hub and ONS Green Jobs Definition).

12 **Community Land Trusts**

Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, introduced **Joe Fyans**, Head of Research at Localis, and invited him to present a series of slides on Localis' work on community land trusts and interim findings.

Members commented on the report and presentation slides. Their comments included information related to the wider housing need across the country, consultations, and the management of short-term lets.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

Action:

Officers to provide further information to Members outside of the meeting in relation to a Localis Advisory Panel meeting scheduled to take place on 14 June.

Any other business

Members of the Board thanked the Chair for his hard work and dedication to chairing the Board and supporting the work of the Board.

The Chair thanked Members for their kind words and equally expressed his thanks to all Members who stood down/ had not been re-elected.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Kevin Bentley	Essex County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Morris Bright MBE	Hertsmere Borough Council
	Cllr Emily Smith	Vale of White Horse District Council
	Cllr Emily O'Brien	Lewes District Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Amanda Serjeant	Chesterfield Borough Council
Members	Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcestershire County Council
	Cllr Peter Butlin	Warwickshire County Council
	Cllr Hilary Carrick	Cumbria County Council
	Cllr Sam Chapman-Allen	Breckland Council
	Cllr Jordan Meade	Gravesham Borough Council
	Cllr Eddie Reeves	Oxfordshire County Council
	Cllr Barry Wood	Cherwell District Council
	Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
	Cllr Erica Lewis	Lancashire County Council
	Cllr Caroline Leaver	Devon County Council
	Cllr Michael Mullaney	Leicestershire County Council
	Cllr Kevin Etheridge	Caerphilly County Borough Council
	Cllr Julian Dean	Shropshire Council
Apologies	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire Council
	Cllr Damien Greenhalgh	High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council
In Attendance	Cllr Steve Norman	Lichfield District Council