

## People and Places Board – Report from Cllr Martin Tett (Chair)

### Digital

1. On Wednesday 5 July the Board held a digital session at the LGA Annual Conference on 'Growing an inclusive digital economy'. The LGA's digital champion, Cllr Mark Hawthorne chaired the session and speakers included Lord Clement-Jones (Liberal Democrat Lords spokesperson) and Helen Milner (Chief Executive Good Things Foundation). The session explored how widening access to digital platforms has the potential to drive growth and prosperity by increasing the number of people able to participate in the digital economy and influencing the shape of the economy these platforms support. It looked at the role of councils and national partners in improving local connectivity, digital skills, using assets and systems to support better access to digital services and targeted inclusion programmes.
2. The Board has continued to support councils with the digital switchover. Following publication of the [digital switch readiness survey](#) to understand councils' position on awareness, planning and implementation, the [digital switchover hub](#) has been updated in collaboration with key partners and a [communications toolkit](#) launched in April for councils to raise awareness of the switchover locally. The social media assets and leaflet have been revised incorporating feedback from councils. To date the campaign has received over 30,000 impressions on social media, over 250 likes and shares and over 550 individual link clicks.
3. The transition from analogue to digital technologies has created new opportunities for criminals to target vulnerable residents. The Board has been working alongside the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Team and the National Trading Standards Scams Team to create recommended actions for councils to reduce the risk of scams. The [guidance](#) was published in September.
4. The Board commissioned a survey to better understand how the 2G/3G switch off might impact the sector, what services will be most affected and levels of awareness. This information will better help the Board understand how councils can be supported throughout the process to inform its work lobbying Government and supporting the sector with digital connectivity and inclusion. The survey closed in September and the results will soon be published.
5. Continuing to highlight the importance of improved digital connectivity has remained at the forefront of the Board's work programme. Following a steer from People and Places Board members in June, the LGA's digital champion, Cllr Mark Hawthorne, is engaging with Government and industry to discuss how the Board can influence the practical

outcomes of the Wireless Infrastructure Strategy. To date, Cllr Hawthorne has met with DSIT officials to discuss how the LGA can feed in to work to establish an agreed way of measuring local mobile coverage data.

6. Cllr Mark Hawthorne met with Simon Fell MP the UK's first Rural Connectivity Champion on 7<sup>th</sup> August. Cllr Hawthorne welcomed Simon Fell to the role and discussed how the People and Places Board can work with Government to improve connectivity in rural communities ensuring no one is left behind.

## Levelling Up

7. Following the launch of the LGA's [Levelling Up Locally Inquiry report](#) the Board continues to work to share and disseminate its recommendations. A devolution APPG session took place 3.30pm to 4.30pm on 13 September covering the topic of the 'Levelling Up Locally Inquiry'. It provided an opportunity for speakers Cllr Kevin Bentley (Former Chair, People and Places Board, LGA Conservative Group Chair and Leader Essex County Council), Professor Michael Kenny (Director of the Bennett Institute for Public Policy) and Osaro Otobo (British Youth Council Trustee) to reflect upon their involvement in the inquiry and speak to the recommendations for Government.

## Growth and productivity

8. The Board, alongside City Regions Board, held a session at the LGA's annual conference exploring whether growth should be a statutory responsibility. The session asked whether growth should be a statutory responsibility for councils and explores what kind of economy local leaders would seek to create if they had more powers to do so. The session was chaired by Cllr Kevin Bentley (Chair of the People and Places Board) and speakers included Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe (Bradford City Council), Steve Hughes (WPI Economics), Antony Lockley (Blackpool Council) and Lee Rowley MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, DLUHC).
9. The Board, alongside the City Regions Board commissioned Shared Intelligence to provide support for councils and combined authorities undertaking Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) integration and to share good practice and learning. This resource, which includes a self-assessment tool, is now [available on the LGA website](#).
10. Earlier this year, we commissioned Shared Intelligence to undertake action learning sets to support lead authorities with the development of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment plans and early stages of delivery. Using the results of the learning, we have refreshed the LGA's [UK Shared Prosperity Fund Hub](#) which provides the learning from the action learning sets and additional resources to support lead authorities. This has been shared widely through the UKSPF Officer Network.

## Health devolution

11. The NHS Confederation, through its Health Economic Partnerships work programme and ICS network, has established a time-limited health and devolution working group. The aim of the group is to understand the priorities, opportunities, and challenges for ICS leaders, how this intersects with English devolution to date and the emerging devolution deals. The Board is co-sponsoring the group alongside the City Regions and Community Wellbeing Boards. To date, four meetings have taken place in April, June, July and September and officers from the LGA and NHS Confederation are working on a final report.

## Employment and skills

12. The Board, together with the City Regions Board commissioned Shared Intelligence to work closely with the sector to produce a report on the [role and future skills needs of councils' economic development teams](#). The report makes recommendations for economic development teams, portfolio holders and national organisations. For the latter, these include LGA working with partners such as the Institute of Economic Development, the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport, the Chief Economic Development Officers Society and the What Works Centre to coordinate their individual support offers and explore how best to promote the profession and provide clearer pathways, including through apprenticeships. The report, good practice and next steps were discussed with the sector at a webinar (July 2023).
13. The Government's Green Jobs Delivery Group Local Capacity and Capability sub-group runs between March and September. The LGA has been engaging with the partners to support the sub-committee as well as develop our own policy work, outlining the need for a [Green Jobs framework](#), based on the principles of the LGA's [Work Local model](#). The group met in June to commence shaping the recommendations.
14. As we move towards a General Election in 2024, our aim is that a returning Government or new administration will adopt LGA's Work Local proposals for employment and skills devolution, which was jointly developed by the People and Places and City Regions Boards. The LGA is working with councils, devolved authorities and local government partner bodies to develop the finer detail.
15. DWP prioritised through the 2023 Spring Budget support to help economically inactive people back into work. We have supported discussions between councils and the Government on the design phase of Universal Support set to be rolled out in 2024. Discussions have been positive, representing a step change in DWP's relationship with local government on employment support, but key decisions are outstanding including the extent to which it will be delivered through local government.

16. At the LGA annual conference in July, we held a policy session on skills at which Cllr Kevin Bentley, Mayor Marvin Rees (previous chairs of the People and Places and City Regions Boards) and Cllr Lucy Nethsingha (Children and Young People Board) debated the role of local government can have working with employers to bring together the education and skills system. Panellists also included Jane Gratton, Head of People Policy at the British Chambers of Commerce and we heard first-hand from adult learner, Vicky Seagers, who won an award for overcoming barriers to learning and accessed her local council's adult learning services, which enabled her to pursue her vocation in nursing.
17. This Board and the City Regions have developed some principles suggesting how local government could promote economic inclusion through better access to training and employment opportunities. The work concluded in June and can be viewed on our website [LGA Economic Inclusion Principles paper](#) A webinar on 3 October reflected on learning from this work.

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