

Minutes of last People & Places Board meeting

People & Places Board

Tuesday, 14 November 2023

Smith Square 1 & 2, Ground Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

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 Smith and Cllr Oliver. Cllr King attended the meeting as a substitute.

No declarations of interest were received.

The Chair noted that Council meetings were often held on Tuesdays which created a clash with Board meetings and asked that Member Services attempt to change at least one of the Board meetings which fell on a Tuesday for the 2023/24 cycle and avoid Tuesdays in the future.

2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2023 were agreed as an accurate record.

3 Terms of Reference

The Chair stated that item 3 and item 4 would be taken together.

The Chair alluded to the change of focus regarding the newly formed Local Infrastructure Net Zero (LINZ) Board and the Economy & Resources (E&R) Board, specifically, the housing and transport element.

In addition to the Chair's comment, Members made the following contributions:

- The need for a productive and structured relationship with both the LINZ and E&R Boards where value could be added, specifically in relation to bringing in a rural, non-metropolitan perspective, was expressed.
- The importance of addressing challenges for non-metropolitan areas and low wage economies was emphasised, particularly in relation to transport-related issues, planning and linking up

sustainably.

- It was suggested that the Board share real examples of best practice with both the LINZ and E&R Boards.
- A comment was made which related to Transport Boards across the country, their effectiveness, similarities between them and their successes.
- A concern was raised regarding the lack of clarity in relation to planning and which elements of planning sat under each of the Board's remits, if any.
- It was suggested that the Board focus on issues related to homelessness, ensuring that both short-term and long-term measures were in place and the work that the voluntary sector were undertaking in relation to homelessness.
- A comment was made which related to the changes in tenures regarding private residential lets to holiday lets and its impact on the residential population, business communities and councils.
- A concern was raised which related to Homes England and the way in which it delivered affordable housing solutions and other services.
- It was suggested that the Board work with the LINZ Board on issues related to Home to School transport, and the lack of public transport available in the evenings, particularly in rural areas.
- It was suggested that the Board focus on issues related to housing and town centre regeneration.
- It was suggested that New Town development corporations, their legacy and impact in terms of housing development, be looked at in further detail by the Board.
- A concern was raised which related to the Rural mobility fund which would end in Autumn 2024.
- The Chair suggested that work be undertaken to look more closely at Artificial Intelligence (AI) and how it's used as an application, how it improves efficiency and customer experience and reduces costs.

Decision:

- Board Members noted both the revised Terms of Reference and the Work Plan.

Actions:

- Board Members to submit their views to officers outside of the meeting.
- Officers to work alongside the LINZ and E&R Boards regarding the People & Places Board's work plan.

4 Work Plan

Item 3 and Item 4 were taken together, please refer to minute 3 for further details.

5 Rural Services Network

The Chair welcomed **Kerry Booth, Chief Executive – Rural Services Network (RSN)**, and invited her to present a series of slides to the Board related to the work being undertaken by the RSN and some additional background information.

Members made the following contributions:

- A question was asked which related to the RSN working with the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Rural Services to raise awareness of the current funding situation for rural councils.
- It was suggested that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Board which related to fair funding, focused on health and wellbeing, population, and transport in rural areas.
- It was suggested that anti-social behaviour, broadband and connectivity, social care, transport and access to employment be focused on as key issues within rural areas.
- A comment was made which related to devolution in non-metropolitan areas.
- The importance of ensuring that the true meaning of devolution was not lost was emphasised.
- The importance of district councils, their local knowledge and the impact on the prosperity of their local areas was emphasised.
- A concern was raised regarding the lack of financial inclusion and pockets of hidden deprivation in rural areas.
- The weekly RSN bulletin was welcomed.
- A question was asked which related to the impact that loneliness and social isolation had on people's wellbeing, and the way in which local government could support communities and rural businesses struggling to recruit.
- A concern was raised which related to the reduction in bus services and routes in rural areas.
- It was suggested by the Chair that Members note the commonality between topics already explored by the Board in the past and include more recent suggestions in the Board's work plan for the 2023/24 cycle.
- It was suggested by the Chair that the Board's work plan be shared with the RSN and Coastal Special Interest Groups (SIGS) to ensure that best practices were shared and to form joint working arrangements.

Kerry responded to Members' comments and questions setting out the following points:

- Whilst the RSN just covered England, there was a lot to be learnt from Wales and Scotland regarding rural policy working arrangements.
- The RSN had worked with the APPG on several issues in 2023 regarding transport, off-grid energy homes and the requirement to move away from fossil fuel boilers by 2025. The deadline had since moved to 2035, and the RSN continued to work with APPG to ensure that people were ready to make their homes energy efficient.
- The RSN were keen to share work and best practices with the LGA and Coastal SIGS.

- The importance of ensuring that rural voices continued to be heard was emphasised.
- The RSN had campaigned that RSG's should be given to all rural areas, as opposed to the top quartile only.
- The importance of ensuring that the entire population could access statutory services was emphasised.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to liaise with Kerry to ensure that the presentation slides were shared with Board Members outside of the meeting.

6 Health Devolution

The Chair welcomed **Michael Wood, Head of Health Economic Partnerships – NHS Confederation**, to the meeting and invited him to present a series of slides to the Board and discuss emerging recommendations from the health and devolution working group.

Members made the following contributions:

- Concerns were raised which related to the lack of engagement and equality between local government and the NHS.
- A concern was raised which related to the diminishing role of councillors throughout the process.

Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, confirmed that a draft paper would be submitted to Lead Members of the People & Places Board, City Regions Board and Community Wellbeing Board, and then to the Boards.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

7 Councils' Future Role in Driving Growth and Prosperity

Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, introduced the report which summarised updates to a research report undertaken by WPI Economics, exploring growth and prosperity and how this could be unlocked through enhancing the roles and responsibilities of local government.

Members made the following contributions:

- The importance of strengthening relationships and communities' involvement and understanding what more local government could do to drive the agenda forward for growth, was emphasised.
- The need to strengthen information related to the future

relationship of businesses within the report was expressed.

- The importance of social value was emphasised.

Officers reported they were in the process of commissioning research which focused on Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Future Growth Funding and confirmed that the 'Councils' Future Role in Driving Growth and Prosperity' paper would form part of a suite of documents in this space.

Decision:

- Board Members agreed to the publication of the report.

Appendix A - Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr Martin Tett	Buckinghamshire Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Louise McKinlay	Essex County Council
	Cllr Caroline Leaver	Devon County Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Amanda Serjeant	Chesterfield Borough Council
	Cllr Emily O'Brien	Lewes District Council
Members	Cllr Lisa Brown	Cumberland Council
	Cllr Simon Henig CBE	Durham County Council
	Cllr Damien Greenhalgh	High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Eddie Reeves	Oxfordshire County Council
	Cllr Marc Bayliss	Worcestershire County Council
	Cllr Kris Wilson	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
	Cllr Hilary Carrick	Westmorland and Furness Council
	Cllr Colin Noble	Suffolk County Council
	Cllr Rachel Bailey	Cheshire East Council
	Cllr Jordan Meade	Gravesham Borough Council
	Cllr Victoria Wilson	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Michael Mullaney	Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council
	Cllr Alex Wagner	Shropshire Council
	Cllr Kevin Etheridge	Caerphilly County Borough Council
	Cllr Julian Dean	Shropshire Council
Apologies	Cllr Tim Oliver	Surrey County Council
	Cllr Emily Smith	Vale of White Horse District Council
In Attendance	Cllr Phillip King	Harborough District Council