

People & Places Policy Updates

Purpose of Report

For information.

Is this report confidential? No

Summary

This report provides Board members with an update on the progress of activity in the board work programme including: health devolution, housing and town regeneration, strategic transport and green jobs including local food and drink supply chains.

LGA Plan Theme: Stronger local economies, thriving local democracy

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the content of the update paper.

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Health Devolution

1. Officers have continued to work with the NHS Confederation on a joint report into the opportunities for closer working between Integrated Care Systems and local government devolution. Following feedback from members a shorter, more focused report is being written and will be circulated to lead members of the People and Places, City Regions and Community Wellbeing Boards for comment and clearance before publication.

Housing and town centre regeneration

2. The decline in footfall in many town centres combined with the growth of permitted development rights resulting in more homes means there has been a lack of additional investment in wider facilities in town centres. These pressures are particularly acute when set alongside the additional challenges non-metropolitan places experience, such as poor transport connectivity, rurality, an increased number of short-term lets and holiday homes.
3. Creating thriving town centres fits with Government aspirations, as one of the ten Levelling Up missions is increasing 'Pride in Place'. Local authorities may be utilising limited funding pots, such as the High Street Accelerator, Future High Streets Fund, Levelling Up Fund and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, to invest in their town centres and needs the housing stock that meets local housing demand.
4. The LGA will be commissioning a supplier to show how housing regeneration can be a vehicle for delivering town centre growth that develops sustainable communities. It will identify the trends for non-metropolitan areas relating to housing and town centres, as well as some of the key policy challenges. It will also identify opportunities and highlight good practice to share with the sector. This will enable the LGA to develop policy asks to support ongoing Government influencing on housing and town centre repurposing, as well as share learning across the sector to further encourage innovation.
5. The commissioned work will include:

5.1 Statistics: Commission quantitative research which identifies trends in non-metropolitan areas regarding housing supply and proximity to town centres.

5.2 Qualitative research with local authorities: The supplier will undertake in-depth interviews with 12 local authorities that reflect the political and geographical make up of non-metropolitan local authorities. The supplier will provide lead members with a long list of 20 local authorities which reflect geographic, political and governance differences.

- a) **Reimagining Town Centres** through exploring how councils have aligned housing strategies and plans for town centre renewal; different models and sizes of house building, such as joint-ventures, and how they have contributed towards meeting town centre regeneration; creating a vision for town centres through community and stakeholder engagement.
- b) **Repurposing Town Centres** by recognising the changing need for town centres as the trend for more people to shop and work online; using office space to be more flexible; creating solutions for different usage of retail space, such as greater use of empty shop fronts for logistics, temporary use of empty shops for start-ups and local markets.
- c) **Reinvigorating Town Centres** by increasing footfall through a range of measures,

including: health provision such as health hubs and services; promoting cultural venues, heritage and tourist sites; use of open and green space for leisure activities and climate adaptation; any other activity that has increased pride in place.

5.3 Presenting the results of the research: The supplier will be expected to write up their findings and develop key policy asks and challenges that their research has indicated, focusing on the unique challenges in non-metropolitan and rural areas. This will also include good practice case studies to support the sharing of innovation. The supplier will also deliver a webinar in the autumn to share their findings across the sector.

6. If members would like to contribute examples to be considered for the research, please get in touch with Paul.Green@local.gov.uk

Universal Support

7. The LGA is working with DWP to route Universal Support (US), the Government's Back to Work intervention announced during last year's fiscal events, through local government. The £1.4 billion 'place and train' employment programme covering England and Wales, will support economically inactive groups including those with physical and mental health conditions and unemployed people with complex needs. It will be phased in from Autumn 2024 and run to 2028/2029. We continue to bring councils together with DWP to discuss design elements and are linked in with devolved areas who are having parallel discussions.
8. Board Members discussed this at the January Boards and raised several points. These included: US and similar initiatives being led by Integrated Care Boards must align; local government needs the ability to move funding from year to year; some groups will take longer to secure sustained employment; and training is vital to help people transitioning to new industries.
9. Political level engagement between the LGA and DWP is critical to ensuring a shared understanding and commitment to delivering this. We will report back to the Board following a meeting with Mims Davies MP, the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work.

Strategic Transport

10. The City Regions Board has agreed to lead on the commissioning of a piece of work looking at examples of decision-making arrangements for transport investment and planning in different countries, including the UK, and the role of local governments within them. The research will consider how well transport decisions are be integrated with other infrastructure and service decisions and include consideration of the specific needs and experiences of urban and non-metropolitan places. This comparison will allow a robust appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of the current system in England together with options for change to strengthen our evidence base for any changes we wish to propose to a new or returning government. Given the People and Places Board's

shared interest in this work officers will work with Lead Members to ensure that their priorities and ambitions are captured and reflected in this project.

Green Jobs

11. The LGA has been collaborating with other local government sector bodies, including ADEPT, MCA Network and UK100, as part of the Local Capacity and Capability sub-group in putting forward a vision for the skills and net zero system, reflective of the LGA's [Green Jobs Framework](#). This has also been informed by the views of representatives of businesses, skills providers and industry. The local government representative will continue to promote this model through the Ministerial Green Jobs Delivery Group, with an expected Green Jobs Action Plan due later in March 2024

Local food and drink supply chains

12. The LGA are undertaking a piece of research on the role of councils in local food and drink supply chains, through a lens of jobs, growth and prosperity. This will include conducting in depth case studies of four areas, reflecting different geographies and governance arrangements, and will explore some of the opportunities and challenges, including driving local food and drink strategies and partnerships.

13. The project will also focus on approaches to specific areas of the local food supply chain including Agri-Tech and agricultural workers, supporting local markets and infrastructure investments, such as food hubs, and jobs and businesses in connected industries such as local markets, retail and tourism. This piece of work will identify policy asks and best practice and will run throughout 2024.

Implications for Wales

14. Officers will look to share lessons emerging from this work with the Welsh Local Government Association when appropriate.

Financial Implications

15. This can be met from the Board's budget.

Equalities implications

16. When possible, LGA officials will include details related to inequalities, including protected characteristics and other groups that experience.

Next steps

17. Officers will continue driving work forward and will report back to the Board when appropriate.