

Note of last People & Places Board meeting

Title: People & Places Board
Date: Thursday 16 October 2014
Venue: Bevin Hall, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Welcome, introductions and declarations of interest Cllr Hodge (Chairman) welcomed members to the meeting. An apology was received from Councillor Stan Collins, substituted by Councillor John Cordwell. Cllr Hodge also welcomed Cllr Keith House and Natalie Elphicke, who were guest speakers on item 3, "Review of local authorities' role in housing supply". <u>Declarations of interest</u> Cllr Hodge declared an interest:	
2	People and Places Work Programme-Update Lead Members had worked with officers to develop the agreed work programme priorities and they were invited to present briefly on progress before opening to Board discussion: a) Employment, skills and economic growth This paper reported on the findings from 'Realising Talent' report and updated on the forthcoming report on individual barriers and opportunities in accessing employment support. Board members raised the following points in the discussion that followed: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The LGA need to put pressure on national politicians to ensure action in this area.• Devolution would help and allow Councils greater opportunity to pursue these issues to a greater degree.	

- Councils should be able to share their experiences.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

- b) Planning and infrastructure for growth, including broadband

The report provided an update on Planning and Infrastructure for growth, including broadband: overview of strategic planning and infrastructure research findings, analysis, and emerging policy proposals and reported of recent engagement with government and councils on broadband issues.

Board members raised the following points in the discussion that followed:

- LEP's were important although they should not become like non-departmental public bodies
- LEP's should be developed further and be made much more co-terminus across authority boundaries.
- Broadband needed to reach all areas and the speed should be as fast as possible. There was a lack of connectivity in rural areas.
- EU regulations in the broadband area needed to be checked.

Decision

The Board discussed the emerging policy proposals for the Planning and Infrastructure for Growth project and commented on the draft LGA response to DCMS and HMT Digital Communications Infrastructure Strategy Consultation.

With specific reference to p17 of the report concerning broadband "*ensuring that councils have the access to timely data from BT about planned broadband coverage and speed*", the Board considered that there needed to be tougher line taken with BT as more areas of the country needed to be reached in ensuring fast broadband. It was clear that this report was "*work in progress*" and more needed to be done to make this more robust, checking relevant EU Regulations and contacting BT.

c) Public service transformation

The report to the Board updated on progressing the Board's work programme for public service transformation and ensuring that this agenda was formally-led. Annex A was the LGA's submission to the Independent Service Transformation Fund. It also updated on selected project places.

(Cllr Clarke as the Lead Member did raise a number of points relating to the report and queried these on a long list- I did record these and can pass these on to you but suggest the following wording for the minutes:

Cllr Clarke introduced the report and asked for amendments to the report.

Board members raised the following points in the discussion that followed:

Decision

The Board noted the progress update on public service transformation.

The Board strongly supported the report and may use the media to support public service transformation and reform. They also supported the Chief Executive and the Leadership Board in putting forward a strong case to Government and other agencies on public service reform/transformation across the local public sector in non-metropolitan and city areas.

3 English devolution

The Board received an update on the LGA work on Scotland issues following the Scottish independence referendum.

Members noted that the debate around English devolution would run up to the General election in 2015 and clear decisions about any settlement would not be taken until after it.

Board members raised the following points in the discussion that

followed:

- Local authorities voices should be heard in this matter and not be lost in any Constitutional Convention. It should be also kept high on the agenda.
- Local Government works and should be trusted by Government.
- What do we mean by devolution and this can mean different things to different people.

Decision/Actions:

Members **noted** the report.

Leadership Board and Lead Members on the People and Places Board should take this matter forward to develop an approach alongside that of the proposed Constitutional Convention. Carolyn Downs advised that the LGA were working on this matter at the present time.

English devolution would be considered in further detail at a future meeting of the board

4 Review of local authorities' role in housing supply

- a) Presentation on the 'review of the role of local authorities in housing supply' commissioned by DCLG and HMT from Cllr Keith House and Natalie Elphicke, co-chairs of the review.

Cllr House advised that there was a clear consensus amongst the main parties that there was a necessity to build affordable homes and that Councils could do more to access private finance. There were four things that he felt were important:

- 1) Where does the local authorities' responsibility in housing cease?
- 2) Do you have the skills base to make this work?
- 3) Building on smaller sites was also as necessary as utilising larger sites for development.
- 4) Do local authorities have access to private finance? Were authorities transparent in this way?

Natalie Elphicke highlighted that local authorities should be trusted with house building and there was an awareness and zest for building more homes. She advised that the joint report would be published in December 2014 and stated that

it would be courageous and challenging. In particular, the report would listen to local authorities and talk to developers.

Board members raised the following points in the discussion that followed:

- Planning is not the problem and there is a need to improve access to finance. The mortgage market also needs to change and become more flexible.
- Government needs to trust local authorities so that they can start building houses again. Councils would also like to see the Housing Borrowing Cap lifted to support them to build more homes.
- Members raised the importance of small sites in non-metropolitan areas and the importance of being able to secure affordable housing on those sites. CLG proposals to exempt small sites from affordable housing requirements is unhelpful in this regard.

Cllr Hodge thanked Cllr House and Ms Elphicke for their presentation.

Decision:

Members **noted** and welcomed the presentation and would view the final report with interest.

b) Housing work programme: update

The paper provided an update on progress against the housing programme area and included a background paper on international experience and best practice.

Decision:

Members **noted** progress against the housing programme area and **agreed** the international case study publication attached at Annex A.

5 Other business report

The report contained a review of the Board's activity and wider LGA activity at the political party conference. It also contained a review of the recent joint LGA/Rural Services Network Conference.

Decision:

Members **noted** the report.

6 Minutes of the last meeting

Decision:

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2014 were agreed.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Cllr David Hodge	Surrey County Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Anne Western	Derbyshire County Council
	Cllr Neil Clarke MBE	Rushcliffe Borough Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Heather Kidd	Shropshire Council
	Cllr John Pollard	Cornwall Council
Members	Cllr Vince Maple	Medway Council
	Cllr Jennifer Mein	Lancashire County Council
	Cllr Alan Rhodes	Nottinghamshire County Council
	Cllr Eion Watts	Bolsover District Council
	Cllr Philip Atkins	Staffordshire County Council
	Cllr Roger Begy OBE	Rutland County Council
	Cllr Andrew Bowles	Swale Borough Council
	Cllr Gillian Brown	Arun District Council
	Cllr Paul Carter CBE	Kent County Council
	Cllr Paul Diviani	East Devon District Council
	Cllr Christopher Knowles-Fitton	Craven District Council
	Cllr Kenneth Meeson	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr John Cordwell	
	Cllr Diane James	Waverley Borough Council
	Cllr Angela Lawrence	Vale of White Horse District Council
	Cllr Simon Galton	Leicestershire County Council
	Natalie Elphicke	
Apologies	Cllr Mark Hawthorne MBE	Gloucestershire County Council
	Cllr Michael Jones	Cheshire East Council
In Attendance		
LGA Officers		

