

People & Places Board – report from Cllr David Hodge (Chairman)

Non-Metropolitan Commission

1. In November, the Independent Commission on Economic Growth and the Future of Public Services in Non-Metropolitan England published its interim report, 'How the Other Half Grows: the future of prosperity and public services in non-metropolitan England.' It sets out three clear messages for local and central government:
 - 1.1 Shire areas are today the spearhead of England's global competitiveness and that advantage needs to be enhanced with devolved decision-making;
 - 1.2 Shire areas have ground to make up in the way they take decisions and organise their public services;
 - 1.3 But a handful of shires are ready now for devolved decision-making about public services and tax; more will be in the future; and the country will benefit hugely from devolutionary deals for both cities and shires.
2. The Commission's Chair, Sir John Peace, attended the County Councils Network conference in November and took part in a panel discussion on 'Counties' Role in Ensuring the Recovery Delivers Sustained Prosperity For All'.
3. Also in November, Sir John met with the District Councils' Network to discuss the Commission's work. The discussion focused particularly on examples of cooperation between district and county councils.

District Councils' Network Assembly

4. I attended the District Councils' Network Assembly to run two sessions on the work of the People and Places Board and Non-Metropolitan Commission. The sessions were well attended and I received positive feedback on the Board's work.

Skills, Employment and Welfare Reform

5. The People and Places and City Regions Boards commissioned the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (Inclusion) to provide a series of reports which set out the future skills and employment challenges that will hit the desk of an incoming (or returning) minister. The first report, which was published in July, focused on place and looked at whether current employment and skills policy would deliver skills for future jobs in a range of cities. Interim findings from the second Inclusion report looking at the current national skills, employment and welfare system from the perspective of individuals was shared with Board members on the 15th January. A third and final report giving conclusions to the research papers will be delivered in March.

6. I joined the Chairs of the City Regions and Children and Young People Boards to provide a joint foreword to a report the LGA commissioned from the National Institute of Economic Research (NIESR), published on the 12 January, which reviews the advantages of local delivery from council-led employment schemes supporting people towards work. It reveals that the local schemes support some of the most vulnerable groups in society.

International housing and good practice

7. The People and Places Board highlighted the potential to learn from housing activity outside England. A report was developed for the Board with international examples of housing activity under key themes of land release, housing finance, making best use of existing stock and building quickly. The report has been published on the LGA website:

http://www.local.gov.uk/housing/-/journal_content/56/10180/6716725/ARTICLE

8. New housing case studies from non-metropolitan areas have been added to the housing pages of the LGA website. The new look for the case study pages include an option to search for case studies from non-metropolitan and rural areas.

<http://www.local.gov.uk/housing>

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