

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

Non-Metropolitan Commission

1. Building on the findings of the interim report, published in November 2014, the Commission publishes its final report on 5 March. Copies of the report will be available on line.
2. There were a number of issues raised at the Board meeting on 15 January 2015 in a discussion on the interim report, published before Christmas, as follows:
 - 2.1 Councils would be keen to undertake greater powers on economic development and skills. Non-metropolitan areas needed to be empowered.
 - 2.2 Local authorities have done a great deal of valuable work in public service integration and multi-agency working. This was particularly the case in areas such as LEP, social care and health.
 - 2.3 Democratically elected authorities should 'hold the ring' and a rebalancing of powers between central and local government was needed. There should not be an emphasis on structures and governance alone.
 - 2.4 Local authorities cannot raise monies as they see fit and a financial model needed to be acceptable and accountable to local electorates. What were the areas that we would like to see devolved from central government?
 - 2.5 There was potential for devolving to non-metropolitan areas, e.g. LEP boundaries should be redefined. The LGA should have been consulted on this.
 - 2.6 Local Government needed to offer central government ways to demonstrate clearly how it had been cost-effective and had borne cuts of 40% but increased efficiency. Local Government had been successful in making savings and can demonstrate to central government that it could be trusted to undertake more devolved tasks.

Public Service Reform

3. At the January Board meeting, Members discussed the emerging findings from the public service transformation research project. Our external research partner, RAND Europe, has worked with 9 places to map their approach to locally-led transformation. In particular, they have analysed the drivers that enable improved outcomes for residents and savings for the exchequer and identified the barriers that stop faster progress. It is clear that places are building upon a strong track record of partnership working around economic growth to re-shape public services around the needs of people, with some impressive results already evidenced. For example, the Cornwall case study shares how identifying older people at risk from dependency on health and social care, and putting in place preventative measures to help mitigate those risks, resulted in a 40 per cent reduction in costly long-term hospital admissions, and a 30 per cent fall in emergency admissions, amongst the client group.

4. The March Board will discuss the implications of the research for the LGA's wider campaigning on devolution and the support that we offer to councils on service transformation. This is a joint project with the City Regions Board and they will also be discussing the findings at their March Board.

Employment, skills and welfare

5. Members of the People & Places Board were shared an advance copy of the second in a series of three LGA Commissioned reports written by Inclusion. Its focus is on the impact of current national skills, employment and welfare systems from the perspective of individuals, which will be published soon.
6. The City Regions and People & Places Boards commissioned the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion to analyse the skills and employment challenges to be faced by an incoming or returning Government, and offer a proposed local government solution including options for devolving the work programme in 2017. Board Members commented on the second in a series of three reports (to be published in coming weeks). It focuses on the obstacles, confusion and disincentives that the current employment, skills and welfare system presents, demonstrated through various touch-points and interactions from the perspective of the unemployed and people with low skills. It will be published in coming weeks. The LGA and Inclusion will then move into the third and final stage to prepare a model for how a local government solution will offer solutions to those challenges, which is being developed with a number of councils. The work should be completed before purdah, and a final draft format should be ready for lead members comment towards the end of March.
7. In parallel, we are also working with DWP to inform their thinking on successor arrangements to the Work Programme, ran a joint workshop with the national network of employment providers (ERSA), and working with a range of other stakeholders to ensure that our wider proposals have support wider than this sector.

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