

People and Places Board Work Programme 2015/16

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This report sets out a proposed work programme for the People and Places Board for 2015/16. The work programme seeks to:

- Reflect the broad remit for the Board and provide continuity; and
- Reflect the LGA's Leadership Board commissions, specifically for the People and Places Board (in partnership with the City Regions Board) to focus on devolution and the future shape of local government in non-metropolitan areas.

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment upon and agree the draft work programme for 2015/16.

Action

Officers to take forward actions in line with Members' steer.

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People and Place Board Work Programme 2015/16

Background

1. Established in February 2014, the People and Places Board represents the interests of non-metropolitan councils at the LGA. Its membership is drawn from the County Councils Network, District Councils Network and any non-county unitaries not represented by those two bodies.
2. To date, the work of the Board has covered devolution, skills and employment, the Independent Commission for Economic Growth and the Future of Public Services in Non-Metropolitan England, digital connectivity, public service transformation and has input into the LGA's work on housing. The Board has worked closely with other relevant LGA Boards on shared organisational priorities (in particular the City Regions Board with which it developed the LGA's recent work on devolution) making strong representation for devolution to non-metropolitan areas.
3. Next month, the Government will use the Spending Review to announce an initial set of second phase devolution deals and is also predicted to deliver another tough financial settlement for local government. After setting the radical devolution of powers to local areas in England as a key priority, the Government received 34 bids from areas across the country. It is clear from this that there is a huge appetite for devolution across England in key policy areas including housing, skills and transport, but also in new areas of interest such as rural services and children's services.
4. It is in this context that the People and Places Board are asked to agree a draft programme for the year. **Members are asked to consider:**
 - 4.1. **The work that the LGA Leadership Board has asked the Board to undertake.**
 - 4.2. **Specific policy priorities based on the Board's remit.**
 - 4.3. **The balance and prioritisation of activity within the proposed work programme.**

Leadership Board policy commissions

5. As part of the recent member-led review of governance, the LGA Executive and Leadership Board have been asked to commission work from the LGA's policy Boards where a clear corporate priority has been identified or where an important policy issue straddles more than one Board.
6. The Leadership Board met in July 2015 and agreed the following remit for the commissioning of policy work from Boards on behalf of the LGA leadership:
 - 6.1. The Leadership Board's commissioning is related to the most important (current and future) issues for LGA membership.
 - 6.2. The issues commissioned cover the terms of reference of more than one Board.
 - 6.3. There will be a limited number of corporate commissions, no more than five.
 - 6.4. Boards will continue to set policy priorities based on their specific terms of reference.
 - 6.5. These will be reported back to the LGA Executive.
7. The following cross-cutting areas of work were agreed and are being commissioned from relevant Boards in 2015-16. Specific Boards have been asked to lead this work, as

indicated below, and report back to the LGA Executive. Lead Boards will be having detailed discussions about the projects at their first meetings of this Board cycle. All policy Boards are invited to consider their contributions to the four projects.

- 7.1. **Devolution and future shape of local government** (jointly led by People and Places Board and City Regions Board). It is likely that this work will focus on supporting councils to develop and implement bespoke devolution deals, including governance, the evidence base for devolution, and working with Whitehall once the Cities and Local Government Bill has been enacted. Members might like to note the Leadership Board felt that the LGA's strong focus on devolving skills and employment support should continue throughout the next phase of work.
 - 7.2. **Housing** (led by the Economy, Environment, Housing and Transport Board), will include a focus on addressing housing need, building on the LGA's leadership of this debate.
 - 7.3. **Finance** (led by the Resources Board) will be driven largely by the outcome of the Spending Review and will look to build on our successful Future Funding Outlook work.
 - 7.4. **Promoting health and wellbeing** (led by the Community Wellbeing Board). Continued moves towards an integrated health and care system remains at the top of councils' and the Government's agenda, and getting these new arrangements right for councils and citizens remains a significant opportunity for the LGA. This work should: draw on the wider role of other local services such as schools, children's services, the fire service, public health, housing, transport and leisure; and play in promoting wellbeing across the life course and keeping people physically and mentally healthy, in work, and in their own homes. It should raise the profile of social care as an equal to the NHS, and build a business case for council-led investment as part of a much wider integrated approach to improve health outcomes and address health inequalities, as well as keep pressure off the NHS and other expensive services. This work should also consider the role of citizens and communities in supporting themselves and each other and promoting resilience and independence.
8. Other Boards will also have an interest in exploring the opportunities devolution presents for their policy areas. It is suggested that officers work closely with colleagues across the Finance and Policy directorate to ensure that we maintain a good understanding of the connections between Boards' workstreams. Equally, Board Chairs and Lead Members might wish to meet their counterparts to discuss areas of shared concern, for example to share non-metropolitan perspectives where appropriate.

Suggested priorities and work programme for 2015/16

9. Since its inception the Board has been an authoritative voice for the non-metropolitan areas and has played an important role developing the LGA's recent devolution work and lobbying positions. The paper at item 4 updates members on progress on devolution since the Board's last meeting and proposes work in this area.
10. The Board also expressed a strong interest in continuing its work on employment and skills, broadband and digital access, and exploring models of transport provision for rural areas. Note that agenda items 5 and 6 give members the opportunity to more fully

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discuss proposals on broadband and employment and skills. Members' comments are invited on further work on rural transport.

11. The Board has a strong history of commissioning evidence to support non-metropolitan councils and it has the resource to pursue a similar programme this year. Some possible themes are included in the grid below for Members' comments and steer.

Next steps

12. Members are invited to comment on and agree the Board's priorities and work programme.

Financial implications

13. The draft work programme can be delivered within existing resources.

Priority	Research Project	Outcomes	Timescales
Devolution	Undertake research into models of governance that can support devolved service delivery, especially in a non-metropolitan/two tier setting, including learning from international models where appropriate and looking at the role of other public service leaders.	Greater understanding of accountability structures within non-metropolitan areas in order to inform non-metropolitan areas wishing to agree devolution deals with Government.	Short term –paper to be drawn up by next Board
Employment and skills	To develop a devolved model for an employment support programme for the most disadvantaged jobseekers and Employment Support Allowance claimants.	To influence the commissioning of employment support from 2017 when current Work Programme contracts expire.	Final model to be delivered by early November to influence Spending Review decisions. Members' views sought at the October Board. Draft to be submitted for members' approval at the end of October.
	Undertake a piece of analysis regarding the role of Job Centre Plus, given contracts will expire in 2018. This might explore its link with local economies, the National Careers Service, perceptions of users etc.	To support LGA lobbying for a more locally relevant public employment service.	Short term – proposal paper to be drawn up by next Board

Broadband and the digital divide	Undertake an analysis of the current picture of superfast broadband coverage across the country and whether the publicly funded rollout has achieved, or is on course to achieve, what it set out to do. Establish lessons learned and collate ways that councils are planning to extend coverage to hard to reach areas.	Establish a firm picture of the current situation on the ground, and use this as a basis to inform and evidence proposed ways forward and lobbying activity including reflecting back to government what has worked and what hasn't.	Short term – update to be drawn up by next Board
	Undertake exploration of future delivery models in rural geographies for spreading provision to hard to reach areas. This would include exploring what the devolution of digital infrastructure funding might look like; exploring different technologies available; and the current status of the procurement market and what this would mean for roll out.	Establish a firm foundation for future lobbying asks on behalf of members and disseminate learning on innovative ways to widen the provision of superfast broadband infrastructure to councils, government and BD UK to inform re-procurement processes.	Medium term
	Build on work undertaken by the Improvement and Innovation Board to study the efficiencies and improvements to public services that have been achieved so far in rural areas through better digital connectivity. This could take the form of: case studies from non-metropolitan areas; a range of online resources; and media releases outlining how councils are benefiting from better connected residents and infrastructure.	Make the case for parity of Government investment between non-metropolitan areas and cities to encourage and support digital innovation in rural areas	Medium to long term

<p>Rural transport</p>	<p>With the Government expected to produce a Buses Bill in the near future, the LGA's Economy, Environment, Housing and Transport Board have published a report "Missing the bus? Councils and the future of the bus in non-metropolitan areas" on how devolving transport powers can help improve local bus services</p> <p>Using this report as a basis, members may wish to suggest areas of work which could build on this publication and take the debate further.</p>	<p>Develop further the case for transport planning and funding to be devolved to non-metropolitan areas.</p>	<p>Medium term</p>
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People and Places Board

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