

People and Places Board – report from Cllr Mark Hawthorne (Chairman)

1. The new membership of the LGA People and Places Board will meet for the first time on 19 October 2015 at which members will decide on a work programme for the upcoming year.

LGA Annual Conference 2015

2. At our annual conference in Harrogate the LGA hosted several sessions covering the remit of the People and Places Board, including two on devolution. They were all well attended.
3. At the largest session, former People and Places Board Vice-Chair Cllr Anne Western addressed delegates on 'devolution in practice' and discussed how the roles of elected members and senior officers might evolve and what new powers and funding places stand to secure from Whitehall under future arrangements.

Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill

4. Members of the People and Places Board have continued to feed into the LGA's lobbying on the Cities and Local Government Bill (the Bill) as it passed through the House of Lords. We have successfully pressed for amendments to the Bill in the Lords that would help to bring more transparency and consistency to the deals process. The Bill is expected to be introduced in the Commons within weeks, and Members have provided officers with their views on the next proposed lobbying strategy for this latest stage.
5. The LGA has also submitted evidence to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Select Committee inquiry on the Cities and Local Government Devolution Bill, with the key messages that:
 - 5.1. for the full potential of devolution to be realised the Bill must be backed up by the political will to deliver;
 - 5.2. decisions must be made transparently and in consultation with local areas;
 - 5.3. devolution must be backed up by the fiscal tools to generate investment in infrastructure and services;
 - 5.4. reforming our care and support system is vital for all places to be able to meet current and future challenges, but there is no single template for health devolution.

Devolution

6. Since the last Chair's report, the LGA has re-launched a new online 'devo hub' to help councils find out what has been achieved in different areas of England, what is possible and a toolkit to assist in planning for future devolution. The 'hub' is a resource for technical information, updates on the most recent activity at local and national government level, and key documents from devolution frontrunners. This can be found at <http://www.local.gov.uk/devolution>

The LGA support offer¹

7. The LGA formally launched its support offer for councils to help them secure the benefits of devolution for their residents with a menu of support to assist councils with:
 - 7.1. establishing governance and accountability arrangements;
 - 7.2. developing their evidence base for proposals;
 - 7.3. negotiating with Whitehall departments.
8. Officers will also be holding a series of events tailored to different areas of the country. The first, to be held in Birmingham on 21 October, will focus on helping councils communicate with the public and stakeholders about devolution.
9. Finally, we have also launched a [powering productivity infographic](#) which sets out what businesses could gain from devolution. It argues for the Spending Review to hand local government the fairer funding and powers to unleash the full potential of local businesses and economies.

The evidence base for devolving of employment, skills and welfare

10. The People and Places Board and City Regions Boards have commissioned the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion (Inclusion) to develop the detail of a devolved employment model for the most disadvantaged jobseekers / ESA claimants which devolves support in the right way and could be flexible enough to apply in all areas across England.
11. Alongside the model, the LGA will publish an evidence based report on the merits of a local approach to support people with physical and mental health conditions into work, and those with 'treatable' conditions drawing on case material from Cornwall, Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire and Sussex among others.

Broadband

12. The Board oversaw the LGA submission to the Culture Media and Sport Select Committee inquiry into establishing world-class connectivity throughout the UK. Key messages in the submission included:
 - 12.1. Broadband is as important a strategic consideration as electricity, planning, housing and transport, for living and doing business in the twenty-first century. Achieving 100 per cent fast and reliable broadband coverage is vital for supporting growth in both urban and non-metropolitan areas.
 - 12.2. To secure value for money from the considerable public investment in superfast broadband, Ofcom and the Government need to ensure there is adequate competition in the work to extend it to hard-to-reach areas.
 - 12.3. In order to maximise value for money, all future public funding for superfast broadband and mobile broadband should be devolved to councils.

¹ More information can be found at www.local.gov.uk/devolution/support.



Councillors' Forum

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