

10 May 2016

Devolution support to councils

Purpose

For information and comment.

Summary

This paper summarises the LGA's devolution support to councils up to April 2016, which is led by the City Regions and People and Places Boards. It also sets out future plans in this area.

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the Board's work programme, particularly paragraphs 4 and 7.

Action

Officers to feed the Board's comments back to the City Regions and People and Places Boards.

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Devolution support to councils

Background

1. The LGA's work on devolution is led by the People and Places and City Regions Boards. Under their direction, the LGA has sought to support councils with their devolution ambitions in three main work streams:
 - 1.1. negotiating a deal;
 - 1.2. moving from a deal to implementation;
 - 1.3. sharing knowledge and best practice.
2. This is supported by our ongoing policy and lobbying work to make the case for devolution to Government and its agencies, and contributions to the wider constitutional debate through the All Party Parliamentary Group on Reform, Decentralisation and Devolution, for which the LGA is the secretariat.
3. Our direct work with councils has been demand-driven. The main themes that have emerged are support on governance, political facilitation, crafting a proposal and negotiating with Whitehall. As more deals are signed, the sector is starting to look for support on moving from the signing of a deal to implementation. This is likely to include requests for support in ongoing conversations with Whitehall, developing effective governance, engaging councillors at all levels, exploring new models of leadership, and re-designing newly devolved public services.

Devolution support

4. The LGA's recent and upcoming support is included as a table **attached**. This has involved not just the devolution policy team, but also health policy colleagues, the communications and marketing teams, the leadership and localism team and others. The Principal Advisers play a key role in sharing intelligence and brokering conversations with colleagues. Andrew Campbell, Associate Director at the LGA on secondment from DCLG, has been supporting a number of areas with both their negotiations and with moving towards implementation.
5. The LGA has positioned itself as a leading source of knowledge on devolution. Our first major publication on devolution, "English Devolution: local solutions for a successful nation" is the LGA's most-downloaded document. The [DevoNext Hub](#) provides a 'one stop shop' for local government colleagues and stakeholders to get all the information they need about devolution including tools and resources. In the past 12 months, there have been 48,562 unique page views (with 69,457 overall page views). In past six months, there have been 33,820 unique page views (with 47,116 overall page views) – demand appears to be increasing. Our '60-second explainer' videos on devolution¹ and combined authorities² have also been popular, with 692 and 1,984 views respectively. The Hub was also praised by the Communities and Local Government Select

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYJuYyVkJfk>

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtzL12d2eGk>

Committee.³ New content for the Hub is constantly being developed. **Members' suggestions for future content would be welcome.**

6. As well as the core offers outlined above, the LGA is also developing specialist support in areas including health and social care devolution, communications, and governance (in partnership with the Centre for Public Scrutiny).
 - 6.1. **Health and care:** two events have taken place, the first for health and care leads to learn from Greater Manchester's early work in this area, and the second to brief health providers and voluntary and community groups on devolution and the changing local government landscape. Reports have been produced following both events and further work in this area is planned.
 - 6.2. **Communications:** two roundtable discussions have been delivered (in London and Manchester) as have two events (in Somerset and Birmingham) for local government colleagues and stakeholders to explore the future devolution landscape, what local communications will look like in the future and how to communicate devolution effectively to local residents, businesses and other stakeholders. A further devolution event will take place in Newcastle on 26 May 2016. So far, 128 people have attended the roundtable discussions and events that have taken place.
 - 6.3. **Governance:** as well as commissioning information and good practice for the Hub and hosting a national event, the LGA has worked with the Centre for Public Scrutiny to support places with devolution deals to develop robust governance. A report sharing the lessons from this work will be published shortly.
7. Our future support work will build on the successful base established thus far. With devolution deals now in place in nearly a dozen areas of England, the LGA is working to ensure it is engaging effectively with places at all stages in the devolution process. This includes bespoke support to those with deals to support them in moving to implementation, continuing our support for those negotiating deals, making information available to all places to help them consider their ambitions for devolution, and sharing the lessons from those further ahead as they emerge. We will also look to bring together those leading devolution work in places to support them as a cohort. Ahead of the Mayoral elections in May 2017, the devolution team will be working closely with the political groups to ensure that the LGA is visible to and valued by candidates, particularly those who have not come from a local government background.
8. Officers are also considering how the LGA's sector-led improvement work can be extended to include combined authorities and other areas like Cornwall who have secured a devolution deal. In the first instance, we will be exploring the possibility of a combined authority peer challenge in partnership with one or more combined authorities. **Members are invited to comment on other aspects of the sector-led improvement and wider LGA improvement offer that could support combined authorities.**

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Next steps

9. Members are asked to comment on the current and future work programme. Comments will be fed back to the City Regions and People and Places Boards to inform their next meetings in June 2016, at which they will discuss the improvement offer.

Financial Implications

10. Support will be undertaken within the agreed budget.

Current LGA support activity	Audience	Intended outcome	Timing / dissemination
Publications and reports			
Governance models: review possible executive arrangements and different mayoral models (Professor Robin Hambleton)	Senior officers and members in councils, especially those in combined authorities.	Raising awareness of different models of governance, sharing knowledge on how to evaluate different models.	Report to LGA end of April, dissemination online and through existing events in June/July.
Analysis of the implications of the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 for the formation of combined authorities and practical advice for those considering a combined authority (Shared Intelligence)	Senior officers and members in councils, especially those considering combined authorities.	Councils are better informed on the practicalities of forming a combined authority.	Report to LGA early May, dissemination online and through officer network in first instance.
Briefing note on health devolution and the implications for providers and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) (builds on briefing event on 1 March)	Councils, health partners and VCS groups.	Better awareness of how health and care devolution fits into the wider transformation landscape. Co-branded with NHS Clinical Commissioners and NHS Confederation.	March, dissemination online and through relevant networks.
Sharing the experience of Greater Manchester council and health partners of their health and care devolution experiences (from roundtable event February 2016).	Councils with an interest in health and care devolution.	Learning is shared across the sector. Co-branded with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Greater Manchester NHS and Public Sector Transformation Network.	April, dissemination online.
LGA DevoNext hub	Wide.	LGA continues to be the leader in sharing knowledge on devolution in England.	Ongoing.
Interviews and analysis of	Members and officers in	Learning from frontrunner deals is	Report to LGA end of March.

Current LGA support activity	Audience	Intended outcome	Timing / dissemination
devolution deal process to date (New Economy)	councils, LEPs, civil servants and Ministers.	captured, recommendations made for improving the process where possible.	Publication post purdah.
Think pieces: the role of communities and the VCS in devolution (partner to be confirmed)	Councils and voluntary and community organisations.	Good practice is shared and councils are better equipped to engage their community representatives on devolution.	Report to LGA in the summer.
Work with places			
Bespoke engagement with places	Demand-driven.	Places benefit from the most up to date information on devolution and 'critical friend' challenge.	Ongoing.
Governance support to councils (Centre for Public Scrutiny)	Council members and officers.	Some places are directly supported to develop their governance arrangements, and learnings are shared with all.	Dissemination post-purdah, workshop with devolution network, session at member event.
Higher education: programme of engagement with Universities UK	Initial work focused on small group of leaders from both sectors. Lessons to be shared with councils, combined authorities and LEPs.	Better understanding of how universities and higher education partners can play a role in place-based services.	Scoping meeting in March, potential for 12-month programme.
Lobbying			
Engaging with MPs to share key messages about devolution	All MPs.	MPs are better able to engage constructively in local discussions.	To accompany main publication at annual conference.
Events			
Officer devolution network	Council officers involved in devolution deals.	Learning and advice is shared between peers. Knowledge and information can be targeted to key	Next meeting 28 April. Ongoing activity, including thematic workshops.

Current LGA support activity	Audience	Intended outcome	Timing / dissemination
		individuals.	
Member devolution event	All members, especially backbench members.	Members are better informed about the national context on devolution and can engage more effectively in local conversations.	21 June.
Joint event with NALC (National Association of Local Councils)	Principal and town and parish councillors.	The sector is aware of the opportunities for onward devolution to town and parish councils. Town and parish councils better understand the wider local government context.	1 June.
Devolution sessions at LGA annual conference	All delegates.	A mixture of workshops and plenary sessions are being confirmed.	5-7 July.
Local devolution communication events	On demand from places.	Comms officers are better able to communicate with their residents about devolution.	Three events in train for the spring.
Devolution communications roundtables	Communications professionals.	A strategic conversation takes place across the sector about communications that are fit-for-purpose in a devolved context.	Two roundtables have been held.
Tools			
Analysis and sharing of tax and spend data tool for all councils, plus guides on how to use effectively	Council officers negotiating or implementing a devolution deal or working on public service transformation.	Councils are better able to make the case for transforming public services.	LGA currently reviewing first drafts. Dissemination online once QA checks have been completed.
Local devolution communications tools	Communications officers in councils and combined	Communications officers are better able to communicate with their	Project is currently being scoped.

Current LGA support activity	Audience	Intended outcome	Timing / dissemination
	authorities.	residents about devolution.	
LGA corporate work			
Ongoing development of the broader support offer on devolution to ensure it remains relevant to all places	Various.	Various, with a focus on ensuring our offer remains relevant to councils at all stages of the process.	Ongoing.
Combined authority working group recommendations	Internal.	The LGA reflects the changes in local government and puts in place a persuasive offer to Mayors elected in 2017.	Ongoing following report to Leadership Board in April.