

Combined Authority Mayors

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

To provide an update on the recent election of combined authority mayors and the LGA membership offer.

Recommendations

That the LGA Leadership Board:

- i. note the update on the outcome of the combined authority mayoral elections;
- ii. note activity to support combined authorities;
- iii. note early engagement with combined authority mayors and the development of the mayoral support offer; and
- iv. provide a steer on future work, outlined in the report.

Action

Officers to action members' comments as appropriate.

Contact officer: Ian Hughes
Position: Head of Policy
Phone no: 0207 664 3101
Email: Ian.Hughes@local.gov.uk

Combined Authority Mayors

Background

1. The emergence of combined authorities and directly elected mayors has signalled a change in the structure of local governance in some parts of England.
2. The LGA has considered for some time how we ensure that the new Combined Authorities and their directly elected Mayors become and feel part of the LGA and the wider local government family. This work started with the Combined Authority Working Group convened in response to the LGA Executive's request for some "early thinking about the place of Combined Authorities in the LGA". The working group's recommendations, which were endorsed by the Leadership Board, resulted in the development of a comprehensive support offer for combined authorities (CAs), as well as support for mayoral candidates in the run up to elections in May 2017 and beyond.
3. This paper provides an overview of the outcome of the mayoral elections, the extensive work already undertaken to support CAs, early engagement with mayors and the development of the LGA mayoral support offer. It also seeks views from members on next steps to build on our current offer.

Outcome of combined authority mayoral elections

4. On the 5 May 2017 the following six mayors were elected:
 - 4.1. James Palmer (Conservative) – Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CA
 - 4.2. Andy Burnham (Labour) – Greater Manchester CA
 - 4.3. Steve Rotherham (Labour) – Liverpool City Region CA
 - 4.4. Ben Houchen (Conservative) – Tees Valley CA
 - 4.5. Tim Bowles (Conservative) – West of England CA
 - 4.6. Andy Street (Conservative) – West Midlands CA

Targeted improvement offer for combined authority mayors

5. The LGA's devolution improvement offer builds on the comprehensive support offer already in place for councils and is open to all councils considering or negotiating devolution deals, including counties.¹ We will of course be reviewing this offer as the new Government's devolution policy develops.
6. Building on early work to support devolution areas and based on recommendations from the LGA's CA working group, the Leadership Board was keen to ensure that the LGA establishes itself as the obvious 'home' for the new directly elected mayors and that a package of support be put in place for mayors, both as individuals and as a collective. As Chairs of their Combined Authority, it was agreed Mayors would automatically be members of the LGA.

¹ www.local.gov.uk/devolution-our-offer-support

7. In the run up to the Mayoral elections, the LGA provided support to Mayoral candidates through programmes led by the political group offices. Feedback from candidates suggests this was successful and the LGA is now well positioned to work with the new mayors.
8. We have engaged with all of the new Mayors since the election. This has included:
 - 8.1. Telephone calls to CA Mayors by Group Leaders during the weekend following the elections.
 - 8.2. A letter sent from the Chairman to all CA mayors congratulating them on their election, welcoming them to the LGA, outlining our support offer and highlighting the programme of key mayoral events.
 - 8.3. Telephone calls between the LGA Chief Executive and each CA chief executive to identify any further support needs.
 - 8.4. Andrew Campbell, in his LGA consultancy role, met the West Midlands mayor Andy Street at the request of the West Midland Combined Authority (WMCA) and provided support for the preparation of a WMCA day one mayoral briefing.
9. From early feedback from CAs, the LGA has refocused our offer. This has included:
 - 9.1. **Support to coordinate joint Mayors and CA work:** we already convene and support a network of mayoral CAs. We have organised a seminar for Mayors (14-15 June) to be hosted in partnership with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum in London. The event will bring new mayors together for the first time. It will act as a taster for the type of support that the LGA can offer mayors and a welcome to the wider LGA family. At LGA annual conference (4-6 July), mayors have been invited to participate in our debates.
 - 9.2. **Bespoke political support:** available through the LGA group offices.
 - 9.3. **Leadership development:** the transition to a mayoral combined authority will require a new way of working for mayors, council leaders and frontline councillors. The LGA has discussed the possibility of leadership development support with a number of combined authorities, and hopes to be able to pilot this in the coming months.

Next steps

10. The Leadership Board wanted to ensure that mayors found a home within the LGA and the wider local government family. Members will be keen to ensure that momentum is maintained and that mayors and CAs are provided with bespoke support to work at pace and deliver their devolution deals.
11. Of course, the work with mayoral CAs is part of a wider devolution agenda. At the time of writing, the national manifestos included new proposals relating to devolution and constitutional reform. There will be a separate paper at the Leadership Board which looks at the results of the General Election and the policy implications for local government. This will include a review of the new Government's devolution agenda.

12. While it is likely to be too early to have a detailed direction of travel on devolution from a new Government, members may wish to reflect on some of the issues where LGA support will be most needed by mayors, CAs and other councils in the coming year.
13. For example:
- 13.1. **Support to mayoral CAs (MCA) over the next year:** members from MCAs may have insights on where LGA support would be best placed.
 - 13.2. **Support to rural and non-metropolitan areas:** this could include reviving a clear menu of the policies and delivery areas which are better delivered locally and which formed part of devolution proposals in Sept 2016.
 - 13.3. **Addressing capacity challenges for CAs:** devolution is bringing about new challenges for political leaders and senior officers in relation to local policy formulation; with many taking greater responsibility for policy development across a much wider geography and across different agencies and partnerships. We are considering with CAs how these challenges are addressed and what support the LGA can offer.
 - 13.4. **Support for non-mayoral city CAs:** clarity will be needed for those city authorities who have decided not to follow the mayoral model.
 - 13.5. **Broadening the devo asks from councils:** there are new policy boundaries which could form the core of a next wave of devo deals. This could include a debate on wider fiscal devolution – for example a local share of VAT or stamp duty.

Financial implications

14. Proposals are deliverable within existing resources.

Implications for Wales

15. Welsh local government has its own devolution journey. Following the decision of the Welsh Government to end its policy of reducing the number of councils through local government restructuring, councils in Wales have been asked to develop proposals for shared services. We are working with the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) to support its work with councils through sharing the learning from English councils and new combined authorities.
16. More generally, we have developed joint work with the WLGA and the associations in Scotland and Northern Ireland to ensure that powers repatriated after Brexit are not centralised in Whitehall, Holyrood, Stormont or Cardiff Bay. We have jointly called for EU powers to be passed to local communities through local government.

Appendix A

Overview of mayoral devolution deals

Although each deal has bespoke elements, a consistent pattern or ‘core offer’ has emerged in the mayoral combined authority deals. Broadly, the common elements are set out below:

- a single investment fund enabling pooling of central and local funding streams for economic growth, “seeded” with an annual allocation of central government funding for 30 years
- full devolution of the adult skills budget by 2018/19
- control over the post-16 further education system and the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers
- co-design with Department for Work and Pensions of future employment support for harder-to-help claimants
- greater tailoring and engagement of city regions on UK Trade and Investment services
- Intermediate Body status for the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund²
- power to pursue bus franchising
- pooled and devolved local transport funding allocated as a multi-year settlement
- introduction of smart ticketing across local modes of transport
- devolved approaches to business support
- powers over strategic planning and to establish public land commissions to influence decisions about the disposal of public assets.

CA mayoral powers

The role of the directly elected mayor has some core characteristics shared across the MCAs and the mayor chairs the combined authority cabinet. However, CA mayors have differing degrees of power over different matters and in most areas, they will have an effective veto over some decisions.

Under most current deals, mayoral spending plans are to be subject to rejection by cabinet members on a two-thirds majority. Where powers to create a spatial strategy are available, this will require unanimous approval from the mayor and combined authority members.³ With the consent of all appropriate authorities, the role of Police and Crime Commissioner can also be merged with the mayor, although only Greater Manchester CA has done this to date, and in some areas the mayor is a member of the Local Enterprise Partnership.⁴

²The devolved powers in relation to both ERDF and UKTI will be affected by Brexit. The LGA has already started to work to develop a proposal for a UK local regeneration fund after we leave the EU and this work is being led by the Resources Board. DExEU have been informed that future trade policy must be undertaken in conjunction with councils. Whilst Central Government has not needed skills for trade deals since 1973, local government has undertaken much work on bilateral agreements with cities and regions across the world. Government will need to tap into its own skill base.

³ House of Commons Library, Devolution to local government in England. November 2016

⁴ West Midlands, West of England, Liverpool City Region