

City Regions Board – report from Sir Richard Leese CBE (Chair)

Industrial Strategy

1. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) published the Industrial Strategy White Paper on Monday 27 November 2017. The White Paper is structured around five pillars: Ideas, People, Infrastructure, Business Environment and Place.
2. In order to establish how the Government's approach to place-based growth relates to the role of councils, LGA officers met with officials from BEIS, the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Communities and local Government (DCLG). Consequently, Alexandra Jones – Director of Industrial Strategy at BEIS - attended City Regions Board on 23 November 2017, providing an overview of the themes included in the White Paper to members and signalling a strong commitment to engage councils as the Strategy moves towards implementation.

Town and City Centre Management and Community Cohesion

3. Following discussion at the Board meeting in November, members steered LGA officers to take forward a wide-ranging programme of work on town and city centre management across four different work streams: a joint piece of work alongside Core Cities on city centre management enforcement powers available to local bodies; a deeper exploration into rough sleeping and aggressive begging, including examining best practice at councils in urban areas and feeding into the Government's development of its National Rough Sleeping Strategy; investigating holistic approaches to city centre management with a focus on making public spaces more vibrant and welcoming; and exploring the role of urban councils in fostering Community Cohesion once the Government publishes its response to the Casey Review.

Fiscal Devolution

4. In line with the Board's work programme, members agreed to commission two pieces of technical work in support of making an enhanced case for Fiscal Devolution. First, officers will proceed to commission a piece of messaging analysis, drawing on the expert advice of an external consultancy to identify how the LGA can shift stakeholders' perceptions and most compellingly present the case for fiscal devolution to key audiences, in particular HM Treasury.
5. Secondly, officers will commission econometric modelling support, to spell out in detail what a specific instance of fiscal devolution would look like in practice. Members of the City Regions Board have also agreed to establish a small steering group so that this work might be monitored and informed by Members.

Skills and Employment

6. Following on from the last forum, a meeting has been scheduled in January 2018 with the Rt. Hon. Anne Milton MP (Minister of State for Skills and Apprenticeships), myself and Cllr Brown of the People and Places Board. This meeting aims to discuss the valuable role councils can play in supporting the Department of Education to both join up existing and new elements of a careers support system more effectively across places, balancing national priorities with the

varying needs of local communities and businesses, including small and medium-sized enterprises. The meeting with the Minister will be an excellent opportunity to broaden and deepen our political and operational relationship with the Department of Education, so we can work together to deliver an effective skills system.

7. A Work Local campaign plan to step up engagement with decision makers and influencers, has been agreed by Lead Members of both Boards. The aim is to enable councils and combined authorities to be progressively at the heart of planning and commissioning employment and skills provision around local need.

Contact officer: Alex Thomson
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone no: 0207 664 3312
Email: alex.thomson@local.gov.uk