

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

Industrial Strategy

1. Stephen Jones, Director of the Cities and Local Growth Unit, MHCLG, attended the last Board on 18 June 2018. Stephen updated Members on progress with the design and implementation of key place-based policies announced in the Industrial Strategy, including Local Industrial Strategies and the LEP Review.
2. Members may recall the LGA hosted a roundtable event with the LEP Network on 15 March, attended by representatives of the People and Places, City Regions, and Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport (EEHT) Boards as well as LEP Chairs. Following on from this event, the LEP Network and the LGA wrote to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, setting out our joint offer to work with him and his Department on securing an ambitious Industrial Strategy that works for the whole country.
3. Subsequently, in the light of the limited information that has emerged regarding the process and principles underpinning key elements of the Industrial Strategy we have written again to the Secretary of State requesting further clarity regarding the geographic extent, scope and timings of local industrial strategies, as well as requesting a meeting before Parliamentary recess.

Skills and Employment – Work Local

4. At the last Councillors Forum, the Rt. Hon. Anne Milton MP (Minister of State for Apprenticeships and Skills) talked about the latest DfE skills policy reforms. It was clear from the Q&A session which followed that the discussion could have gone on for longer. We will look for further opportunities to do this.
5. Immediately afterwards the Forum, Cllr Mark Hawthorne and myself met her to discuss how the DfE, LGA and our members can work together more effectively on the design, commissioning and delivery of post 16 skills. This was the LGA's second meeting with her since February. It was a positive meeting, at which we agreed next steps to support more collaborative working.

Devolution Improvement Support Offer

6. At the last board meeting, Members received a paper on the LGA Support offer for established and aspiring Combined Authorities (CA). This included updates on the existing CA networks and the potential of a governance network to be set up. Members were particularly keen to provide support around scrutiny and also associate membership. Members were also advised about the improvement support work that was being steered by the CA CEX group.
7. There was a Mayors plenary at the LGA conference which focussed on the first year of office. Andy Burnham as the elected mayor for Greater Manchester CA was the key speaker and he covered what had worked well and any lessons that had been learnt for the future.

Higher Education

8. In light of the conclusion of the second phase of the Leading Places programme as well as recent changes to national higher education governance, the City Regions and People and Places Boards have jointly agreed to refocus the LGA's higher education engagement activity.

7 June 2018

This engagement will now focus primarily on the Industrial Strategy, and related activity will include the continued delivery of improvement support to local partnerships, engagement with the UPP Civic University Commission and the exploration of strategic collaboration on cross-sector priorities such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Fiscal Devolution

9. Work has progressed on research commissioned by the Board into modelling and messaging relating to fiscal devolution. These research projects are nearing completion and officers will report findings to the Board in September.

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