

Note of last City Regions Board meeting

Title: City Regions Board
Date: Tuesday 2 April 2019
Venue: Westminster Room, 8th Floor, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item Decisions and actions

1 Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.

The Chair paid tribute to Cllr Clarence Barrett who passed away on Friday 2 March. Cllr Barrett was the Leader of the Upminster and Cranham Residents Association at London Borough of Havering and the Deputy Chair of the City Regions Board. He also held other positions within the LGA structure and had been closely involved with LGA work for the last 10 years. The Board thanked Cllr Barrett for his work and dedication to this Board.

The Chair noted apologies received, and substitutes in attendance.

No declarations of interest were made.

2 Whitehall Policy Developments

The Chair welcomed Ian Hughes, Head of Policy, to the Board.

Ian Hughes (IH) updated the Board on recent Whitehall announcements and where the LGA anticipates the direction of future announcements, and explained that as Brexit preparations continue to dominate central Government departments, many policy announcements are being held back. Therefore, officers would like members' steer on the LGA's policy position on the three pieces of work related to this Board, and their view on the preparation for these announcements.

The following discussion took place with members:

- The Board agreed that the future policy direction of central Government was unclear. Should a general election be called, the Board would need to make use of a short term opportunity for main parties to commit to a devolution agenda in potential manifestos. With regards to other alternative scenarios, the Board's ambition remained clear: continue to engage local and combined authorities on post-16 skills and building industry alliances that go beyond the

sector. With regards to the devolution agenda, the Board's asks also remain clear, but the Board need to keep building alliances and maintain pressure.

Decision:

That the Board are in agreement with the Board's work programme set out in paragraph 15.

3 Trade and Investment

Chair welcomed Dan Gardiner, Adviser, to the Board.

Dan Gardiner (DG) gave members a brief update on the LGA's recent policy and public affairs activity in the area of trade and international investment.

DG informed the Board that the Chairman of the LGA's Brexit Task Force Cllr Kevin Bentley met with Department for International Trade (DIT)'s Minister for Investment, Graham Stuart MP. While there was no firm offer from the Minister of a defined role for local government in national trade policy development, there were opportunities to pursue and the Minister was keen to hear more examples and evidence of councils leading on this agenda.

DG then introduced Marian Sudbury, Director of UK Regions at DIT who gave a presentation on the Department's place-based work across the UK regions.

Marian Sudbury (MS) presented an overview to the Board of DIT's vision and aims on how government departments, local authorities and businesses can collaborate effectively and efficiently.

MS outlined that the function of DIT is to help businesses export, drive inward and outward investment, negotiate market access and trade deals, and champion free trade. MS explained that the UK Export Strategy, launched by Baroness Fairhead, had four components:

1. To encourage and inspire more businesses to begin export plans
2. To inform businesses by helping them to access the right information, advice and practical assistance
3. To connect UK businesses to overseas buyers and markets
4. To ensure that UK export plans are financially stable.

MS went on to explain the logistics of how DIT operates in and outside of the UK before moving on to focus on DIT's domestic work in the UK regions.

MS outlined that the core role of DIT in the UK regions is to provide international support for UK business at a local level by using resources in a targeted way to maximise impact on UK regional economies, and by using the Department's convening power to help increase the combined impact of central government and commissioned providers.

For example, MS outlined DIT's Capital Investment (CI) Strategy led by CI teams that seek to connect the demand for CI opportunities with supply. MS urged members of the Board to read the DIT brochures and regional investment portfolios available online, and to identify contact details for regional DIT International Trade Advisors (ITAs) and to get in touch with them for further detail of regional activity and communications (specifically newsletters).

MS highlighted that international trade is often a crowded landscape for businesses, and it is therefore important to bring the array of local and national stakeholders together and to aim to operate as a collective unit.

It was explained that Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) are DIT's primary regional partners, but MS noted that DIT have received feedback from local authorities that this arrangement is not the most effective from a council point of view in some areas.

MS concluded that all organisations are stronger if local stakeholders operated as a collective unit, as then DIT could link companies and opportunities to overseas markets and investors, and support regional businesses most effectively. In order to achieve this, MS explained to the Board that local authorities need to support DIT to simplify the landscape for business, simplify local authority engagement with DIT, and share competitive strengths with other regions.

The Chair thanked Marian Sudbury for taking the time to present to the Board and opened up a discussion with the Board. The following discussion took place with members:

- Members from some regions noted challenges around a lack of information on the regional DIT offer and local contacts.
- Members acknowledged the need for coordination between groups of local authorities and combined authorities but highlighted a need for support in understanding what the architecture is within the region in terms of the Department's work and engagement.
- MS acknowledged these points and recognised a need for clearer communication from the Department to councils and other local stakeholders on the work it is doing within the region and opportunities to engage.
- Members welcomed this offer and noted the need for greater clarity regarding the mechanisms for LEP areas to work together on trade and investment.
- An example of positive cross-border working between English and Welsh local government was raised, and there are plans to expand this work with the involvement of DIT.
- Members raised a query regarding how to engage DIT when councils identify a business or group of businesses that are interested in exporting. MS indicated that businesses should be signposted to online resources in the first instance and then councils should reach out to the Department.
- One member highlighted a particular challenge of partnerships across different LEP geographies and the challenges this presented. MS advised members to get in touch with their

regional DIT team on this, specifically the ITA for their area (details for which are available on the DIT website).

- The Chair noted that while there was some value in producing prospectuses and pitch books, these only capture a relatively limited range of opportunities. As these provide a 'shop window' rather than an inventory, it is important that local leaders have a greater say about what is in the shop window to reflect local knowledge of opportunities. MS acknowledged this and agreed to reinforce this point to the CI team.
- Members highlighted the need for DIT to pursue a whole-UK approach that goes beyond focusing on London. MS acknowledged this and made a specific point regarding a review of the Southern DIT region.

Decision:

Members noted the LGA's recent activity relating to trade and international and the feedback provided by MS at the Board.

Action:

Marian Sudbury's contact details and relevant DIT contacts to be circulated to the Board.

4 Urban Leadership Research

The Chair welcomed Philip Clifford, Senior Advisor, to the Board.

Philip Clifford (PC) provided a brief update to the Board on progress in relation to the Urban Leadership Campaign.

A confidential discussion followed.

5 Skills and Employment update

The Chair welcomed Jasbir Jhas, Senior Adviser, to the Board. She provided the Board with an update on the recent activity on the LGA's employment and Skills work. This included the Skills Taskforce roundtables, the last of which took place at the end of March. A key issue arising from them was the need to more effectively engage relevant stakeholders. One of these is the Association of Colleges (AoC).

Jas introduced David Hughes (DH), Chief Executive of the AOC. David talked about the AoC work, and its campaign work.

David Hughes (DH) explained the challenges that further education (FE) colleges face. He explained that colleges had suffered a 30 percent funding cut, and that the AoC had just recently launched an independent commission on the future role of colleges.

There was then a discussion about how the LGA and AOC can work together more collaboratively on the skills agenda both nationally and locally on issues such as apprenticeships, investment in adult learning,

and a coordinated post 16 learning offer.

The following discussion took place with members:

- Difficulty in meeting demand for more expensive courses when faced with significant budgetary constraints.
- The Board agreed to feed into the AOC's independent Future of Colleges commission.

Decision:

Members noted the report and steered officers on ideas for using the momentum of the Taskforce to further develop the LGA campaign.

6 The UK2070 Commission

The Chair welcomed Lord Bob Kerslake to the Board to provide further details on the UK2070 Commission's work.

Lord Kerslake outlined that the commission is an independent inquiry into city and regional inequalities across the UK that looks at the spatial issues related to the UK's long-term city and regional development.

The commission is designed to have three distinct features:

1. A strong evidence base to avoid diversion from key areas they are facing.
2. To be intentionally long-termed by looking forward and back 50 years to provide context on decisions.
3. To establish the case for a spatial framework in the UK.

The focus is to look at the evidence of what has happened and what might shift the dial on inequalities. The commission is also supported by a research partnership.

The commission plans to publish the first report in May 2019, ahead of a national symposium to be held in Leeds on 13 June 2019 which will look at sharing the views of stakeholders to use towards the final report.

The aims of the agenda is to reinforce agenda for cities, regions and nations to maximise their potential for sustainable and inclusive growth; add value to the emerging range of national strategies for planning, housing, industry, land use, environment and infrastructure – through greater integration and clarity in their place-based implications; develop more inclusive and empowering approaches to national and strategic decision-making; and investment for regions, cities, towns and communities; and to draw on UK and international experience in tackling issues of spatial inequalities.

Decision:

The Board supported the Commission's work and committed their involvement in further progress.

7 City Regions- Policy Update

Rebecca Cox provided the Board with an update on the activity relating to a range of policy areas relevant to the City Regions Board.

Decision:

Members noted the update and the progress of the work being undertaken on behalf of the Board.

8 Note of the Previous Meeting

Members noted the minutes from the previous meeting dated 25 January 2019.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Sir Richard Leese CBE	Manchester City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Abi Brown	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Abigail Bell	Hull City Council
	Cllr Jason Zadrozny	Ashfield District Council
Members	Cllr Tim Warren	Bath & North East Somerset Council
	Cllr Sean Anstee CBE	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr John Beesley	Bournemouth Borough Council
	Cllr Martin Gannon	Gateshead Council
	Mayor Joe Anderson OBE	Liverpool City Council
	Cllr Jon Collins	Nottingham City Council
	Cllr Timothy Swift MBE	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Debbie Wilcox	Newport City Council
	Cllr Sue Jeffrey	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
	Cllr Julie Dore	Sheffield City Council
	Cllr Linda Thomas	Bolton Council
	Cllr Paul Crossley	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Apologies	Cllr Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Mayor Marvin Rees	Bristol City Council
	Cllr Peter John OBE	Southwark Council
	Cllr Roger Lawrence	City of Wolverhampton Council
	Cllr Darren Rodwell	

In Attendance

LGA Officers