

## **Draft Forward Plan 2019/20**

### **Purpose of report**

For discussion.

### **Summary**

This paper provides an outline of initial thinking on next year's work programme priorities.

#### **Recommendations**

Members are asked to consider the draft forward plan set out at paragraphs 9 - 11 and provide a steer to officers on those areas which might be developed over the summer ahead of the start of the 2019/20 Board cycle.

#### **Actions**

Officers will develop the Board work plan for 2019/20 in line with the recommendations of City Regions Board.

**Contact Officer:** Philip Clifford  
**Position:** Senior Adviser  
**Telephone No:** 07909 898327  
**Email:** [philip.clifford@local.gov.uk](mailto:philip.clifford@local.gov.uk)

## **Draft Forward Plan 2019/20**

### **Overview**

1. The last board meeting of the 2018/19 political cycle provides an opportunity to reflect on the progress made over the last year and look ahead to 2019/20.
2. This paper provides an outline of initial thinking on next year's work programme priorities with a view to agreeing with members those areas, which might be developed over the summer in advance of the first board meeting of the next cycle.

### **Context**

3. Over the last year the Board has overseen a work programme with four components:
  - 3.1. **Delivering devolution** – overseeing work to support the delivery of devolution deals already agreed and to ensure that the lessons from those in the 'vanguard' are captured and shared with councils more widely;
  - 3.2. **Driving devolution** – advancing the case for devolution through national Government's place-based growth agenda e.g. the Industrial Strategy and on a Department-by-Department basis, such as skills and employment and trade and investment;
  - 3.3. **Future devolution** – building the policy arguments and stakeholder networks to support devolution that goes beyond the current Government's ambitions e.g. greater fiscal autonomy, with a view to influencing future manifestos.
  - 3.4. **Urban leadership** – assembling a coalition of interested and relevant parties to consider and re-articulate the distinct concerns and opportunities of urban authorities across England to a national audience.
4. Good progress has been made in many of these areas: councils are increasingly embedded in the design and delivery of local industrial strategies; the LGA's Skills Task Force has built a credible and diverse coalition of partners to support our Work Local proposals; work on trade and investment has significantly increased our profile with the Department for International Trade; and work to advance the case for greater fiscal autonomy has continued, providing a platform to bring together a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in urban authorities.
5. As reported at the last board and widely covered in the national press, this work has proceeded within an uncertain and often tumultuous political context. This has meant key pieces of Government policy, such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Devolution Framework have been delayed and the general 'pause' detected in the national devolution agenda has continued.
6. At the time of writing the broader national context is no less certain. However, there have been strong indications that events might move swiftly once the form of the UK's withdrawal from the EU has been agreed by Parliament, with a new Prime Minister expected to take office within the short term.

### **Looking ahead to 2019/20**

7. Events at the national level have in recent months exhibited a remarkable degree of unpredictability. They are likely to continue to do so for the next few months at least. However, while this depth of uncertainty makes it difficult to forecast the future policy direction of Government, the level of disruption this uncertainty has created across Whitehall presents a greater opportunity than usual to shape this future direction.
8. It is therefore proposed that the work programme for the board in 2019/20 includes elements that are agenda setting; grounded in the challenges directly affecting urban areas; and, go with the grain of the good progress made over the last cycle.
9. Restarting the English Devolution Debate:
  - 9.1. Developing an English Devolution Bill that puts English devolution on a footing equal to the settlements in Scotland, Wales and North Ireland, that underpins the settlement reached through the devolution deal process and that expands devolution to those areas outside the metropolitan combined authorities.
  - 9.2. Advancing the case for fiscal devolution on an incremental basis, through the introduction of a tourism levy and more ambitiously, through proposals such as the localisation of income tax.
10. Driving Place Based Growth:
  - 10.1. Further advancing work to secure a locally devolved employment and skills system
  - 10.2. Building an understanding of the opportunities and challenges of creating inclusive economies and, through a mix of improvement support and policy development, preparing a case to Government for resources to deliver locally.
  - 10.3. Supporting councils to play an active role in the delivery of local industrial strategies and, if the opportunity arises, exploring how the repatriation of EU laws might present opportunities for greater local flexibility in driving growth.
  - 10.4. Successfully lobbying for the UK Shared Prosperity to be an financially commensurate, place-based and locally devolved replacement for EU Funding
  - 10.5. Maintaining an appropriate level of engagement in the area of Trade and Investment, recognising that the scope of this work will flex in line with the form of the UK's departure from the EU
  - 10.6. Exploring the specific digital connectivity challenges and opportunities for urban areas

11. Demonstrating Urban Leadership:

- 11.1. Highlighting to Government as part of the expected Spending Review the particular cost pressures facing urban areas
- 11.2. Exploring the particular opportunities and challenges for urban areas arising within the context of a renewed focus on sustainable development.

**Next Steps**

12. Respecting both the timing of this report and the current level of national political uncertainty, Members are asked to consider the proposed forward plan set out above and provide a steer to officers on those areas they would like to see developed over the summer ahead of the first Board meeting of the next cycle.