

Note of last City Regions Board meeting

Title: City Regions Board
Date: Wednesday 17 June 2020
Venue: Online Meeting, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

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

Item Decisions and actions

1 Chairs Welcome, Apologies, Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and thanked LGA Officers for their hard work during the pandemic.

2 LGA statement on local government's commitment to tackling racism

The Chair introduced the item, giving a short statement on the state of equality in the communities across the UK, while noting the progressive road that Local Government is on.

Mayor Marvin Rees updated members on the local picture from Bristol and reflected that tackling poverty was a key aspect of working towards greater equality.

Decision

Members noted the statement.

3 Urban Cost Pressures

Steve Hughes, WPI Economics gave a presentation on commissioned research looking at Urban Cost Pressures, highlighting five main messages for Local Government:

1. Welfare reform is regarded as having made a major contribution to homelessness increases in urban areas.
2. Effective prevention is essential to being on top of homelessness problems.
3. There are barriers to building the homes that urban areas know that they need.
4. Urban housing markets can change quickly, and for a variety of reasons.
5. Suitable quality housing is a constant worry when addressing homelessness.

Members made the following points:

- There needs to be a greater sense of wraparound care to those who present as homeless, with all their layered problems. Cities are places where homelessness can really grow unchecked.
- The points raised in this presentation needs to be shared with health and wellbeing colleagues to ensure other sectors within local government understand the greater impact.
- There needs to be more evidence-based research for the government to listen, as well as a greater look at the impact at Covid-19

Steve Hughes responded

- From the interviews with stakeholders, homelessness and the link with cities will have a place within the report.
- Rough sleeping and Covid-19 will be an important dynamic going forward, and greater funding for these rough sleeping schemes need to be fulfilled by central government.

Decision

Members agreed following the presentation the direction for the concluding phase of this work.

4 Sub-national Bodies

Ben Lucas, Metro Dynamics gave a report on subnational bodies and highlighted that political and economic circumstances have significantly changed in 2010, 2016, and again since the 2019 election:

- City regions have grown
- There has been a new focus on towns and left behind places
- The UK has left the EU and is looking to new trading relationships with the world
- The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will be felt across the country

Members made the following comments:

- Sub national bodies like Transport for the North are not the best examples of democratic engagement. There needs to be greater scrutiny of these bodies and more democratic elements.
- There needs to be a strengthening of sub national bodies, like the Northern powerhouse, to support a wider devolution powers from Westminster.
- This presents an opportunity to set out what is needed to make that shared presence as effective as it needs to be for transport sub national bodies.

Decision

Members noted the presentation and approved the direction of the final report.

5 Past the Peak

Esther Barrott gave a presentation highlighting the findings of the research and set out how Members can better understand the impact of COVID-19 on their local areas to assist with long-term sustainable economic resilience.

Decision

Members noted the presentation

6 Employment and skills recovery

Ian Hughes introduced the report and commented on the employment and skills concerns throughout the recovery during Covid-19. Ian Hughes highlighted the high

numbers of those joining universal credit, councils need to see support nationally and locally to work with those who are unemployed. New ways of working need to be identified to ensure support is offered across the country

Ian Hughes concluded that work is still ongoing on what to do next, but the board will be a critical part of the work.

Members made the following comments

- Newcastle and other northern councils have been talking to DWP regionally to try and understand the changing picture for employment and the risks in the area. The DWP needs to engage strategically around the national labour market interventions. The LGA is ideally placed for these discussions and there is also some potential for some direct conversations with local authorities
- A dialogue is needed from national government on how to go forward to ensure that a strategy is not rolled out, without greater local government input.
- As BAME residents are seeing disproportionate levels of unemployment right now, plans are needed to address this issue.
- The Apprenticeship Levy is a good example of making more of existing resource that already sits in the system.

Decision

Members noted the update and agreed the LGA's current position

7 Project on Place Based Employment and Skills Commissioning

Jasbir Jhas introduced the report and highlighted how the agenda has moved from policy work, to practical elements of employment and skills for member councils to make use of.

Decision

Members noted the report

8 Case study report on evolving commissioner role of combined authorities

Jasbir Jhas introduced the case study report that the Learning and Work Institute commissioned the LGA to develop, charting this evolving commissioning role.

Decision

Members noted the report

9 UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Growth Funding

Paul Green provided members with an update on the UKSPF and the European Structural and Investment Fund programme considering the COVID-19 pandemic and local economic recovery.

Members made the following comments

- There is no agreed position on if UKSPF will come straight to Welsh local government or via the devolved government. It would be best placed within local government.

Decision

Members noted the update.

10 End of Year Report

Thomas French introduced the report, which provides an overview of the issues and work the board has overseen during the last year.

Members made the following comments

- Recovery and growth after covid-19 needs to be a strong priority in 2020/21.

Decision

Members noted the report.

11 Note of the Previous Meeting

Members agreed the minutes of the previous meeting.

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 |
| | Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe | Bradford Metropolitan District Council |
| Deputy-chairman | Cllr Anita Lower | Newcastle upon Tyne City Council |
| | Cllr Gillian Ford | Havering London Borough Council |
| Members | Cllr Robert Alden | Birmingham City Council |
| | Cllr Donna Jones JP | Portsmouth City Council |
| | Cllr Joanne Laban | Enfield Council |
| | Cllr Toby Savage | West of England Combined Authority |
| | Mayor Joe Anderson OBE | Liverpool City Council |
| | Cllr Shaun Davies | Telford and Wrekin Council |
| | Cllr Martin Gannon | Gateshead Council |
| | Mayor Marvin Rees | Bristol City Council |
| | Cllr Debbie Wilcox | Newport City Council |
| | Cllr Peter John OBE | Southwark Council |
| | Cllr Danny Thorpe | Royal Borough of Greenwich |
| | Cllr David Mellen | Nottingham City Council |
| | Cllr Sean Fielding | Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council |
| | Cllr Shama Tatler | Brent Council |
| | Cllr Gareth Roberts | Richmond upon Thames London Borough Council |
| Apologies | Cllr Julie Dore | Sheffield City Council |
| | Cllr Timothy Swift MBE | Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council |