

Note of last City Regions Board meeting

Title: City Regions Board
Date: Wednesday 27 January 2021
Venue: Online via Microsoft Teams

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes and Declarations of Interest The Chairman welcomed Members, officers, and guests to the meeting. No apologies for absence had been received. No declarations of interest had been received.	
2	Urban Growth and Recovery The Chairman invited Glenn Athey, Principal Consultant - Cambridge Econometrics, and Eleanor Law, Adviser, to introduce the report and present and series of slides to the Board. Eleanor briefly introduced the report which provided Members of the Board with an update on the “Vision for Urban Growth and Recovery” work, which was agreed at the meeting of the City Regions Board on 30 September 2020. Glenn presented a series of slides which set out the project’s progress to date in relation to driving national economy and growth and welcomed comments and questions from Board Members. Members made the following comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How will less offices and increased working from home affect younger people? Age and home conditions need to be considered, there will be implications on staff that need to be recognised.• We need to consider the role of urban areas in relation to the rural areas around them. In terms of regeneration, regenerating an urban area affects the areas around them in terms of the positive nature of the economy that’s created.• Digital exclusion is a problem for our children and young people in terms of accessing education. It will continue to be a problem because the jobs that will be lost are likely to be replaced with jobs	

that need more digital competence than the ones that people had before in hospitality and retail sectors. As city leaders and city councillors, we must ensure that we do all we can to equip people with jobs as we come out of this difficult time.

- In terms of gender balance and equality, I am pleased to see reference to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities but we need to do more, specifically with regards to the economy and the impact on women moving forward (caring professions, flexible working etc).
- Many towns have untapped potential to stimulate the high street and economic growth locally. There is an opportunity for niche businesses to start and if they are supported, we could see business growth, reinvigorate smaller towns and high streets, and make it better for people that live in these smaller areas.
- Towns, cities, and villages need to work in partnership to ensure that residents see the growth that we're all collectively trying to achieve and the success that we want for everyone that we represent.
- In terms of universal credit, how will that impact regeneration?
- We need to look at our relationship with the benefits system in relation to increased poverty in urban areas.
- In order for local authorities to lead the recovery, we need both adequate financial capacity and financial stability, long-term settlement is a key element of that.
- Equality and deprivation issues are predominant within urban areas and must be addressed.
- Covid-19 has decimated public transport. It's important to think about the contribution of severed transport links to impacting and slowing recovery.

Glenn and Eleanor noted the comments and concerns raised by Members of the Board.

Decision:

Members noted the report.

Action/s:

Officers to continue to work with Cambridge Econometrics to submit a further report to the Board in March 2021.

3 Youth Employment and Skills Update

The Chairman invited Bushra Jamil, Adviser, to introduce the update report.

Bushra introduced the report which provided an update on the development of a youth participation and employment and skills policy which related to young people.

Members made the following comments:

- As a result of budget cuts to local authorities and the loss of money experienced from COVID-19, we need to continue to ensure that young people are supported to get on the career ladder and tackle youth unemployment.
- With regards to apprenticeships, only 8 per cent London businesses employ apprentices. The retention scheme is masking a whole wave of youth unemployment to come and we really need to think about what economic recovery looks like.
- This is a complicated part of our work and there must be some evidence which relates to which type of schemes work best in terms of reducing youth unemployment.
- Many of our NEET young people lack foundation-level skills and some provision needs to be in place before they are ready to move onto more technical skills, so there needs to be a mixed provision in terms of how we address the needs of NEET young people.
- In relation to paragraphs 20 and 21 in the report regarding post-16 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND), whilst all local authorities are faced with pressures and overspends on budgets, there is an opportunity here to deliver better outcomes by having provision much closer to where vulnerable young people live, but to deliver it at much better value to the taxpayer. We mustn't lose sight of the potential to do things more efficiently.
- With regards to post-16 SEND provision and apprenticeships, as local authorities, we don't have the powers or funding available to support these complex areas.
- Partnership working is really important with regards to T Levels. There are colleges in the Further Education (FE) sector who are undertaking strong, innovative work and engaging with employers on delivering T Levels, so we need to pick up best practice work closely with the sector.
- With regards to the FE reform white paper, are we engaging with government?

Bushra responded to comments made by members:

- In terms of Kickstart opportunities, we're continuing to work closely with our workforce development team and want to establish career paths for leavers. This is an area that we will be developing and looking at the other available opportunities for these young people. However, this can be challenging within the public sector as there are shrinking workforce-related issues.

- With regards to the FE reform white paper, we are in the process of developing a response to government. It was launched last week so the LGA is working on a position paper and we hope to engage with the DfE in relation to this.

Decision:

Members noted the report and agreed to provide comments/steer in relation to plans for progressing the policy.

Action/s:

Officers to provide an update on the LGA's response to the FE reforms white paper at the next City Regions Lead Members meeting.

4 Local Government preparedness for EU Exit

The Chairman invited Paul Green, Adviser, to introduce the report.

Paul introduced the report which updated the Board on UK-EU Trade and Cooperation Agreement, and the work that the LGA had been undertaking to support councils in preparing for Britain's exit from the EU and the end of the transition period.

Members made the following comments:

- The government should be addressing the issues associated with COVID-19 and Brexit-related costs that local authorities continue to be burdened with. I am concerned about increased bureaucracy at a later stage.
- With regards to paragraph 13 within the report, the more that the LGA liaises with the Welsh LGA (WLGA) the better.

Paul responded to comments made by Members:

- We have raised the issue of increasing demand in regulatory services with government. As checks increase, there will be a lot of demand on their time with a very limited pool of staff.
- The WLGA and the LGA regularly work closely together on the transition board and will continue to do so.

Decision:

Members noted the report.

5 UK Shared Prosperity Fund

The Chairman invited Paul Green, Adviser, to introduce the report.

Paul introduced the report which updated Board Members on the UK

Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and sought Members' steer on engagement with the Government in shaping the fund.

Members made the following comments:

- We need to keep a close eye on the announcement from Robert Jenrick which stated that the UKSPF will go through local authorities and not Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).
- In Robert Jenrick's announcement, he indicated that modelling work would be undertaken to ensure that money was allocated proportionally to the places that needed it most.
- Whilst we all work well with our local MPs and they're good at lobbying nationally for us when needed, from an LGA point of view, there is a bit infringement on local councillors' responsibilities in getting MPs more involved in day-to-day decision making.
- With regards to education and training, this report refers to the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) funding and the specific projects that are in place to keep young people in education and employment, we therefore need to keep a close eye on what's going to happen with the UKSPF. Also, with regards to the Erasmus Programme and the replacement touring in relation to training opportunities, will that be funded separately?
- This needs to be evidence and criteria based. The functions previously carried out by the Committee of the Regions should be brought back to the UK on a non-statutory basis, that's something that the LGA should push back on and insist that local government should have a statutory right to be consulted on issues that impact local government and local communities.

Paul responded to comments made by Members:

- There are concerns that this might be a centralised bidding pot, which is something that we need to flag up further in our lobbying to ensure that the funding is allocated based on need rather than the competitive element.

Decision:

Members noted the report.

6 Update on health devolution and NHS England and NHS Improvement (NHSEI) consultation on integrated care systems (ICSs)

The Chairman invited Eleanor Law to introduce the report.

Eleanor introduced the report which provided Board members with an update on the joint meeting of the People and Places, City Regions, and Community Health and Wellbeing Board Lead Members, and the LGA's response to the NHS England and NHS Improvement consultation on Integrated Care Systems (ICS). She confirmed that she would submit a

further update report to a future meeting of the City Regions Board, should the NHS or the Department of Health provide further information with regards to the NHS bill.

Members made the following comments:

- There is no consistency at all around the country with regards to the proposals.
- We need to have devolved decision-making to have influence over our local health service. Some local authorities have been badly burnt by decisions made in relation to shifting services and continue to take the blame and backlash for decisions that they have not made. It's important to be clear about lines of responsibility and involvement and how we're delivering positive outcomes.
- There is an assumption that the NHS make decisions solely on the basis of medical criteria, but decisions have been made on some occasions because hospitals are fighting for areas of particular expertise.
- There is sensitivity around border areas.
- I hope that we are going to retain the focus on health devolution and sustainable goals in relation to climate and air-quality.

Decision:

Members noted the report.

Action/s:

Officers to continue to work with councils and NHS England/NHS Improvement to look in detail at options proposed and continue to update Members on the outcome of the consultation.

7 Mid-Year Review

The Chairman invited Sonika Sidhu, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the report.

Sonika introduced the report which enabled Members to review the current work programme. It outlined the key issues which were likely to influence the work areas of the City Regions Board in 2021 and provided Members with an opportunity to flag up future areas of interest or any additional focus which they would like within the current work programme.

Members made the following comments:

- With regards to exempt accommodation, what we can do to ensure better regulation and enforcement and bring exempt accommodation-related issues to meetings for discussion?

- In relation to the future of the workplace, public realm and the workplace environment is going to be a crucial factor and clean air for urban places.

Decision:

Members noted the report.

Action/s:

Officers to provide an update to Members of the Board which focuses on exempt accommodation.

8 Spending Review: Key Issues

The Chairman invited Sonika Sidhu to introduce the report.

Sonika introduced the report which focused on the elements of the Spending Review which were of particular interest to the City Regions Board – UKSPF, freeports, levelling up and jobs and skills.

Members made the following comments:

- In relation to freeports, to what extent are we clear that freeports will create new jobs and not just shift jobs around?
- With regards to the levelling up fund, we need to talk about a culture that's much more collaborative and co-operative.
- The report is excellent, and the report response was very well-written.

Sonika noted the comments and concerns raised by Members and confirmed that conversations with central government continued.

Decision:

Members noted the report.

9 Equalities Advocate update

The Chairman invited Sonika Sidhu to introduce the report.

Sonika introduced the report and said that the LGA were developing its approach to equalities issues through the work of its boards. Equalities advocates were being identified for each board in order to drive the equalities work. Cllr Abi Brown was the equalities advocate for the City Regions Board.

Decision:

Members noted the report.

10 City Regions Board Update

The Chairman invited Sonika Sidhu to introduce the report.

Sonika introduced the report which provided Members with a brief update on issues and policy areas not covered by other items on the agenda.

Decision:

Members noted the report.

11 Note of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2020 were agreed as an accurate record.

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 Donna Jones JP	Portsmouth City Council
	Cllr Joanne Laban	Enfield Council
	Cllr Toby Savage	West of England Combined Authority
	Cllr John Merry CBE	Salford City Council
	Cllr Shaun Davies	Telford and Wrekin Council
	Cllr Martin Gannon	Gateshead Council
	Mayor Marvin Rees	Bristol City Council
	Cllr Timothy Swift MBE	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough 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 Anthony Hunt	Torfaen County Borough Council
	Cllr Elise Wilson	Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Gareth Roberts	Richmond upon Thames London Borough Council
Apologies	None	
Substitutes	Cllr Samantha Dixon	Cheshire Council
	Cllr James Swindlehurst	Slough Borough Council
	Cllr Julia Lepoidevin	Coventry City Council
	Cllr Phelim MacCafferty	Brighton & Hove City Council
	Cllr Daniel Fitzhenry	Southampton City Council
	Cllr Barry Anderson	Leeds City Council