

Note of last City Regions Board meeting

Title:	City Regions Board
Date:	Tuesday 22 March 2022
Venue:	Hybrid meeting (via Microsoft Teams & Victoria Room, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ)

Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions
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1	Chair's Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes and Declarations of Interest
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The Chair welcomed Members, officers, and guests to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Cllrs Gillian Ford, Joanne Laban and Danny Thorpe.

Cllrs Liam Billington and Phélim Mac Cafferty attended the meeting as substitutes.

No declarations of interest had been received.

2	Changes to Membership
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Board Members formally noted that Cllr Bev Craig had replaced Sir Richard Leese, CBE as a Board Member, and welcomed her to her first meeting of the Board.

3	Minutes of the last meeting
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The minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

The Chair asked a question which related to the Business in the Community (BITC) update item, which had been deferred from the 12 January meeting due to connectivity issues. Esther Barrott, Policy Adviser, confirmed that an update would be provided at the next Board meeting on 15 June, following the publication of the BITC report.

4	UK Cities Climate Investment Commission (UKCCIC)
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The Chair welcomed Steve Turner, Director of the UKCCIC to the meeting, and invited him to share a series of presentation slides with the

Board. The presentation slides set out the following key points:

- Background information related to UKCCIC.
- The UKCCIC's vision to support local authorities in securing the necessary long-term finance for achieving Net Zero.
- Governance structures and associated arrangements.
- UKCCIC's five-year programme.

Ian Hughes, Director of Policy, set out the following key points:

- The LGA had been working to ensure that the Membership was extended beyond Cities.
- The statement contained within the Net Zero strategy which related to local government was welcomed.
- It was recognised that there needed to be a better structure in place to bring local government and central government together as one to tackle climate change, there was a commitment to set up a forum to build upon expertise.
- It was also recognised that there were too many funding streams currently in place across the UK to implement climate change initiatives. The LGA would continue to work with colleagues within the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS) in relation to funding streams.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- The pace of change and the need for more ambition within government.
- The need for a mixture of opportunities to suit authorities of all areas.
- The British Business Bank's involvement in the local central forum and the joining up of opportunities.
- Board Members' engagement directly with the UKCCIC.
- The importance of supporting businesses to transition skills into new sectors was emphasised.

Ian and Steve responded to Board Members' comments, setting out the following points:

- Board Members were thanked for their continued collective leadership.
- The importance of structured engagement with the financial community was emphasised.
- The UKCCIC's vision was open to all authorities to reflect all economic geographies.
- UKCCIC had been a partnership between Core Cities, London Councils and the Connected Places Catapult since its establishment on 1 July 2021.
- The Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SME) Group would work locally with businesses to help them to prepare for Net Zero and a greener economy.
- A number of engagement events were scheduled to take place, such as Core Cities' Council Summit, the LGA Annual Conference,

Regional Investor events, and a dinner with the City of London Corporation, critical partners of UKCCIC.

- The importance of the Connected Places Catapult project, and the need to spread the word, was emphasised.
- BEIS were being encouraged to set up a local central forum as soon as possible which would focus on issues related to small businesses and access to finance.

Board Members were encouraged to alert the officers within their own authorities of the work that UKCCIC continued to undertake and to reach out to UKCCIC if they wished to be involved in upcoming projects and engagement events.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

5 The Future of Cities

The Chair invited Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, to introduce the report.

Philip introduced the report which provided an outline of the discussion that took place at the LGA's first Urban Summit. It set out three questions for Board Members to reflect on and proposed that a vision for the future of cities be prepared for the LGA's Annual Conference.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- It was welcomed that the Urban Summit had taken place in person, which allowed Members to meet face-to-face post-pandemic and network.
- The Summit was not as well attended as Members had hoped, but it was rich in terms of input and activity. The board was encouraged to attend future events.
- Lord Kerslake, Chair of the UK 2070 Commission, had attended and spoken at the Summit and had been invited to continue the discussion at the LGA Annual Conference.
- The importance of local authorities having the power to develop their cities and develop a long-term vision for the future development of the country.
- The importance of close working relationships with partners.
- The opportunity to look more closely at the unique, specific role of cities and regions whilst taking the challenges onboard.
- 55 per cent of world's population lived in cities, this would grow to 80 per cent by 2050, underlining the importance of this debate

Chris Murray, Director of Core Cities UK, supported the work of the LGA and said that Core Cities UK would further assist in any way possible.

Philip and Ian Hughes, Director of Policy responded to Board Members' comments, setting out the following points:

- Engagement from Members was encouraged to ensure that the positive discussions could continue.
- Officers would continue to think about the high-profile, cost-intensive, social economic challenges that cities and urban areas were faced with.
- The importance of raising the profile of the debate over the next year was emphasised.
- LGA officers would continue to work with partners and organisations having similar debates to share ideas and best practice.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to share the Urban Summit presentation slides with Board Members.

6 Levelling Up and Devolution

The Chair invited Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser, to introduce the report.

Philip introduced the report which, following the recent publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, proposed three issues for the Board to consider as part its work programme over the remaining political cycle: further devolution deals and the devolution framework; the UK Shared Prosperity Fund; and the expected levelling up and devolution bill. It also asked Members for their views on the emerging work related to the government's commitment to streamline growth funding.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- The devolution legislation set out within the white paper and the timescales for the legislation.
- The awaited UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).
- Priority three within the UKSPF and the need to address 'people' elements much earlier.
- How much government had grown centrally in order to 'administer devolution'.
- Existing combined-authorities and mayoral areas' consideration of the role of the Regional Schools Commissioner.
- The lack of clarity in relation to the role of districts set out within the devolution legislation.
- Additional financial support for London boroughs.

Philip and Paul Green, Adviser, responded to Board Members' comments, setting out the following points:

- Timescales re the devolution legislation set out within the white paper would be confirmed by LGA officers as soon as they had

received more information.

- A paper had been produced recently by the National Audit Office (NAO) which focused on growth in local government, financial allocation, and capacity.
- As part of the LGA's improvement offer next year, there would be a focus on concentrating powers in the right places. Further information re the improvement offer would be submitted to a future meeting of the Board and raised at the LGA's Annual Conference.
- In relation to the UKSPF's timescale, LGA officers had received messages from civil servants confirming that more information would be released within the next two weeks. Timetables would be adjusted accordingly.
- With regards to priority three of the UKSPF, Mayor Rees and Cllr Bentley, Chair of the People and Places Board, had recently written to the Secretary of State relaying concerns that councils had raised in relation to the gap.
- It was anticipated that there would be a significant amount of flexibility regarding the investment planning process.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to submit a report to a future meeting of the Board re streamlined growth funding and continue to provide regular updates.

7 Demography and Levelling Up

The Chair invited Ellie Law and Esther Barrott, Policy Advisers, to introduce the report and set out a series of presentation slides.

Ellie and Esther presented a series of slides which provided an update on the findings of LGA officer research into demographic changes resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and set out the implications of the findings for the levelling up agenda.

Board Members made comments which related to the following points:

- An increase in planning applications, reflecting a possible desire from residents to expand their housing but remain in the same place.
- The need for fairer salaries and reasonable working hours, and how this related to the Government's Levelling Up agenda.
- Changes in rental prices following the pandemic, and how this could be taken into account in the work.
- How this work could tie into other work of the board, including the Levelling Up Locally inquiry and the future of cities.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to feed Board Members' comments into the inquiry and provide regular updates cross-referencing more up-to-date census data to the Board.
- Officers to link the work of the inquiry and the comments made by Board Members to the Future of UK cities project.

8 Retrofit Skills and Employment

The Chair invited Jacob Coburn, Adviser, to introduce the report.

Jacob introduced the report which set out the current barriers to the retrofit sector, the implications that retrofit would have on the work undertaken by councils, and changes that could be implemented to support retrofit skills and employment to develop effectively and at speed. In parallel, officers of the LGA's Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board continued to look at approaches to 'whole-place' street/neighbourhood decarbonisation, including buildings and transport. The Board's work would make recommendations to policy makers, national and local partners, and local authorities across the UK. Both pieces of work would give the LGA a clear policy position and strategy for retrofit.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- The importance of creating a market with adequate capacity for investment in the skills base.
- Businesses transitioning skills-wise to become green and sustainable for the future.
- Long-term certainty and growth.
- Skills collaboration.
- Technical and management skills.
- The government's Energy Company Obligation (ECO) scheme and the need to retrofit homes appropriately.
- The lack of capacity for colleges to offer specific training courses.

Jacob responded to Board Members' comments. He confirmed that the Employment and Skills report had been submitted to the EEHT Board, who had used the information contained within it to shape a place-based, retrofit paper. The paper and its findings would be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to submit an update report to the next meeting of the Board.
- Officers to liaise with Cllr Hinchcliffe outside of the meeting

regarding the challenges of the ECO scheme.

9 Forward Plan

The Chair invited Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the report.

Rebecca introduced the report which set out a draft agenda for the final Board meeting in June.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

10 Health devolution update

Please refer to the confidential minutes document for more information related to this item.

Appendix A - Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Mayor Marvin Rees	Bristol City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Abi Brown	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
	Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Gareth Roberts	Richmond upon Thames London Borough Council
Members	Cllr Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr Barry Anderson	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Toby Savage	West of England Combined Authority
	Cllr Samantha Dixon	Cheshire West and Chester Council
	Cllr Graeme Miller	Sunderland City Council
	Cllr Elise Wilson	Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Jason Brock	Reading Borough Council
	Cllr John Merry CBE	Salford City Council
	Cllr Anthony Hunt	Torfaen County Borough Council
	Cllr David Mellen	Nottingham City Council
	Cllr Bev Craig	Manchester City Council
	Cllr Bob Cook	
	Cllr Carl Cashman	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Martin Fodor	Bristol City Council
Apologies	Cllr Joanne Laban	Enfield Council
	Cllr Danny Thorpe	Royal Borough of Greenwich
	Cllr Gillian Ford	Havering London Borough Council
In Attendance	Cllr Liam Billington	Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr James Swindlehurst	Slough Borough Council
	Cllr Phelim Mac Cafferty	Brighton & Hove City Council

