

## Minutes of last City Regions Board meeting

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### City Regions Board

Wednesday, 23 November 2022

Hybrid Meeting - 18 Smith Square and Online

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#### Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A**

Item	Decisions and actions
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<b>1</b>	<b>LGA Plan 2022-25</b>
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Mayor Marvin Rees (Chair) welcomed members, officers and guests to the meeting.

Apologies were noted and there were no declarations of interest.

The Chair outlined the route of discussion under each individual theme and asked that colleagues also consider resilience under each individual topic.

Rebecca Cox, LGA Principal Policy Officer, introduced this item and outlined key points for consideration.

Members noted that although the overall LGA Plan for the next three years is final, they were invited to consider any changes to their own workplan that they felt was needed, in order to reflect the overall LGA direction and priorities.

In the discussion that followed, Members raised several comments:

- The voice of Local Government needs to be heard much more loudly and problems around social care costs and other issues need to be re-enforced via media and other channels.
- The LGA speaks quite strongly on behalf of local government, however it needs to be bolder and ensure regular and reliable attention from colleagues in Whitehall in order to ensure credibility.
- Is there anything in place to measure achievements of the objectives set?
- Consideration of concrete issues should be included in the workplan, and heat maps produced as a visual summary of important information and reference around this.

Rebecca thanked colleagues and agreed to feedback to the wider organization, including relevant Boards. Members were reminded that social care concerns had been reflected in the LGA media response and informed them of weekly meetings held between the LGA Chairman and Ministers in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.

Colleagues were assured that conversations will continue with government.

She invited members to contact her directly with any other suggestions.

The Chair acknowledged members' concerns and said that teams should discuss who should be targeted under each workstream. He suggested a discussion with colleagues from Communications as an item for a future Agenda.

**Decision:**

- Members agreed the work programme subject to additional suggestions.

**Action:**

- Officers to feedback members' comments and investigate the suggestion to invite colleagues from the Communications team for discussion as a future Agenda item.

- a) LGA Plan 2022-2025
- b) October LGA City Regions Board Work Programme 2022/23 (see attached spreadsheet)
- c) City Regions Board meetings forward plan

## **2 Theme 2: Future of Cities Update**

The Chair invited Eleanor Law to introduce the report and members were given an update on progress since their last meeting on the Future of Cities.

The Board heard about plans to hold a second urban summit – in conjunction with Core Cities and the RSA in March 2023, with the aim of bringing together the complementary strands of works from these and the Board as well as other work . being carried out by London Councils and Key Cities. The purpose is to agree a series of propositions which would then be used for joint lobbying to Government and to influence political manifestos ahead of the next general election.

Eleanor referred to the planned launch of the series of City Citizen videos and updated colleagues on filming progress to date.

She shared a first edit with colleagues about opportunities and benefits of diversity in Birmingham. Having watched the video, members made several comments:

- It was really good to showcase cities, but they were confused

about the key purpose of the project.

- The videos need to showcase real problems.
- The example viewed lacks focus and a diversity of voices.
- Work is needed to ensure that final versions incorporate the importance of key - as well as core cities - as centres of innovation.
- Is there any evidence to show how any similar project like this has been received in the past?
- The particular video was a bit depressing.

Ellie reminded colleagues that this is part of a larger project to hear the voice of real people and to inform propositions to be discussed at the urban summit. Members were informed that there are six videos in total and together they are wide-ranging and diverse with authentic voices participating.

The Chair made several comments:

- It is vital that the videos have traction and influence.
- The work of Board and Core Cities around the urban summit needs to be pulled together and aligned with the work of the RSA.
- Cities must be seen as a national asset - the tone must look at potential, and not just what is lacking.

Members noted plans to hold the summit in either the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week of March 2023. The Chair asked for confirmation of the date and suggested pinpointing the same time each subsequent year and focus on ensuring attendance.

The Board were invited to submit any comments and suggestions directly to Eleanor.

The Chair asked that his appreciation be forwarded to the filmmakers and that progress and development be shared with the Board.

**Decision:**

- Members noted progress on the *Future of Cities: City Citizens* videos.

**Action:**

- Officers to continue to liaise with the RSA, Core Cities and other key stakeholders to arrange the urban summit.
- Members to forward suggestions to Eleanor Law  
[Eleanor.Law@local.gov.uk](mailto:Eleanor.Law@local.gov.uk)

**3 Theme 5: Autumn Statement (to follow)**

Philip Clifford summarised details of the report. He outlined the work undertaken in order to take forward issues around levelling up and reminded them that the LGA has recently written a submission to the Levelling Up Select Committee on the cost of competitive funding, which

Cllr Kevin Bentley (Chair, People & Places Board) will be giving evidence to in the next week.

Members were reminded of constraints around resources and how much they can advocate. They were asked to consider any implications and issues that might feature in the Board's work.

The Board made several comments:

- Remit is around devolution and City Regions; they would appreciate an item on Greater Manchester and the West Midlands.
- Advocate cross party concerns and the need to work together to promote fair funding for all.
- To what extent is the LGA working to present concerns to DWP about finding solutions to this challenge?
- There is a perceived positive cut-through on the campaign by LGA – however, there is still a need to rely on council tax and we need to reflect that it is not sustainable. The reality is that the vast majority will have to make cuts.
- Members referred to different dynamics around devolution and lessons to be learnt.
- Council tax is not a sustainable way to fund social services.

Philip responded to these points and acknowledged that there is still more work needed.

He suggested that the item on devolution be put on the agenda for the March Board meeting.

Jasbir Jhas, LGA Advisor, was invited to respond to the points made around economic inactivity and provided an update on the work being done. She referred to a programme of work with suggestions made by the LGA in Work Local and progress in looking at joined up working.

**Decision:**

- Members noted the report.

**Action:**

- Officers to take forward members' comments with a plan for further discussion and updates at the Board meeting in March 2023.

The Chair moved onto confidential items. Observers were noted.

#### **4 Theme 2: Levelling Up**

Esther Barrott, LGA Adviser introduced Simon Kaye, Director of Policy at Reform and contributor to the LGA's Levelling Up Locally Inquiry.

Esther outlined Simon's involvement and invited him to present his work to members.

Simon updated colleagues on work being done to emphasise reform and make the case for much deeper devolution and a much more co-productive state and clarify terms of leadership.

He made several key points, including:

- The need to make the most of councillors.
- It is clear that the current model of devolution within the levelling up agenda needs to be explored.
- It is very clear that personality has broken down barriers around devolution. But greater clarity is needed about what responsibilities should fan out to local authorities.
- Setting up collaborations is crucial to make a success on levelling up agendas.
- Re-imagining the way that the state works is needed. There is the potential for a different model, visible already in collaborations already seen.
- There needs to be a joint ambition to work collaboratively that transcends differences.
- It is clear that there is an important role for local authorities in creating more devolution opportunities, greater accountability systems and greater autonomy locally.

Simon thanked colleagues for the opportunity of presenting to them.

The Chair invited comments:

- There is some scepticism around central government's commitment to devolution.
- They were unsure about what the relationship will be between directly elected mayors and local authorities.
- The subject of devolution and clarity on criteria used to support particular projects needs much greater discussion.
- The government need to be aware of the cost of not levelling up. Have we quantified the cost of poverty to the country?
- It is a very important debate which needs to continue in the months ahead.
- Running whole city regions is very complex and to do it effectively and we need to look collectively at dialogue.
- More conversation around place-based regeneration models will be useful.

Mr Kaye responded to concerns and agreed that there are barriers with a lack of faith amongst civil servants. He informed colleagues that meetings are now taking place with officials in Whitehall and commented on variability.

He agreed that a combination of clarity around responsibility and delivery is needed and that a good programme of devolution should do this.

Members agreed support for the work being done.

Mayor Rees and Members discussed complexities and the importance of

proactiveness of government in supporting devolution to a local level and prioritising the cost of not doing devolution.

**Decision:**

- Members noted the update.

**Action:**

- Officers to take forward members' comments.

**5 Theme 2: Update on Health devolution**

Eleanor Law introduced this item and outlined the LGA's work to date on health devolution. She referred to the rollout of Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) and invited colleagues to comment on the report and whether concerns previously noted had been proved correct.

Members noted a report from Michael Wood (Head of Health Economic Partnerships, NHS Confederation) and asked colleagues to consider inviting him to provide an update at the January meeting.

Members discussed issues around place-based partnership levels and problems within their own areas.

The following points were made:

- Concerns that social problems might be medicalised.
- There is a potential for devolution under ICS models providing the right people are in place and the balance is correct to allow them to make the decisions.
- It needs to go further in order to act upon priorities and concerns of local residents.
- There is huge potential, but democratic oversight is an issue and the response to the amount of meetings quite fragmented because of inability to attend.
- Concerns around funding pressures and around acute and primary care – must not lose sight of population health.
- There are opportunities around joint funding but there is a risk.

Ellie thanked members for their comments and said that these challenges could be fed back to Mr Wood at the January meeting.

Alison Morley (Senior Adviser, LGA's Community & Wellbeing Board) joined the discussion at this point and updated colleagues on the current policy position and work with DHSC.

She asked members to note that the government's integration white paper was focussed on place-based partnerships and with re-structuring, it has been stalled. but LGA has been lobbying for more information on integration. She referred to the announcement that Patricia Hewitt will be conducting a review on the autonomy and accountability of ICBs, and members noted that the LGA have been asked to be involved in the

review. She acknowledged members' concerns and will be pushing for assurance that focus of ICBs is outward towards residents and public and not just government.

The Chairman summarised suggestions and thanked Ellie for the report, asking that comments be passed to Mr Wood in advance of his attendance.

He shared the following with colleagues:

- The UK Government expect to launch a national resilience strategy in next few months.
- The scope will focus on understanding risks, prevention and a whole systems approach.
- Get a senior colleague from government working on this to attend a meeting soon.
- Conversations are also happening around accessing finance, both international and national.
- City Resilience Network were at CoP and alignment with them would be useful.

The Chair agreed that this should be an item on the next agenda and requested officer colleagues to facilitate any Zoom/ Teams conversations in advance.

**Decision:**

- Members noted the update.

**Action:**

- Officers to invite Michael Wood to attend the January Board meeting, to discuss how the NHS envisages ICSs working with councils to promote better health and economic outcomes for places, and how this can be integrated into a wider programme of health devolution.
- Officers to facilitate Zoom / Teams meetings as opportunity for members to provide further feedback and collate these in advance of the next Board meeting for Mr Wood to comment on.

**6 Theme 4: Green Jobs: Retrofit Skills and Green Jobs Delivery Group Update**

Paul Green, (LGA Adviser) provided a brief update on current work with the Green Jobs Delivery Group. Members noted that the planned meeting had been postponed to December.

Paul outlined LGA work to grasp opinions of stakeholders and the plan for a subgroup to look at wider green jobs and the capacity and capability of local government.

Members discussed issues around the government's announcement to increase the scale of retrofitting and the need to respond to issues. They

made further comments around opportunities for place-based solutions and asked how the LGA seeks to influence the energy efficiency task force (EETF).

Paul informed colleagues of the work being done with the LGA's Environment, Economic, Housing and Transport Board to influence the EETF and agreed to feed back to the Board.

He invited members to contact him directly with examples of best practice.

## **7 Theme 5: Learning from 20 Years of Place Pilots**

Philip Clifford provided a summary of the report and asked colleagues for their comments on the draft. He notified that the report will be published on the LGA website and more widely to civil servants.

Members made the following comments:

- There were some concerns about the age of some of the pilots.
- They suggested including 'A better Start' as an additional pilot and the learnings gathered from this.

Philip agreed to take members' suggestions forward.

### **Decision:**

- Members noted the report.

### **Action:**

- Officers to take forward members' comments ahead of publication.

## **8 Note of last City Regions Board meeting 30 September 2022**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as read.

The Chair added that colleagues should consider thinking about individuals to be targeted with relation to the different workstreams. This would help to build an important audience and ensure that the LGA is seen as a point of leadership and is trying to deliver on meaningful devolution.

There was no further business, and the meeting was ended.



**Appendix A -Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Mayor Marvin Rees	Bristol City Council
Vice-Chairman		
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Gareth Roberts	Richmond upon Thames London Borough Council
	Cllr Gillian Ford	Havering London Borough Council
Members	Cllr Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr Barry Anderson	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Joanne Laban	Enfield Council
	Cllr James Moyies	Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
	Cllr Bev Craig	Manchester City Council
	Cllr Nazia Rehman	Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Graeme Miller	Sunderland City Council
	Cllr Kerrie Carmichael	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Jason Brock	Reading Borough Council
	Cllr John Merry CBE	Salford City Council
	Cllr Ian Ward	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr David Mellen	Nottingham City Council
	Cllr Denise Scott-McDonald	Royal Borough of Greenwich
	Cllr Satvir Kaur	Southampton City Council
	Cllr Carl Cashman	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Martin Fodor	Bristol City Council
Apologies	Cllr Anthony Hunt	Torfaen County Borough Council
In Attendance		
LGA Officers		