

# Minutes of last City Regions Board meeting

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## City Regions Board

Wednesday, 25 January 2023

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>Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest</b>
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Apologies were received from Cllr Toby Savage, Cllr Bev Craig, Cllr Satvir Kaur, Cllr John Merry CBE and Cllr Chris Penberthy.

Cllr Bob Cook and Cllr Brenda Dacres served as substitutes

There were no declarations of interest.

<b>2</b>	<b>Theme 1: Future of Cities</b>
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**a & b) Future of Cities Microsite (Verbal Update) & Update on Urban Summit**

The Chair outlined the discussion, reminding Members they would follow the five themes: future of cities, levelling up, urban resilience, green jobs and growth funding. **Eleanor Law, Adviser**, introduced this item and outlined key points for consideration, including the draft agenda and potential speakers.

Members made the following comments:

- It was noted the desire to invite both Michael Gove, Minister of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, and Lisa Nandy, Shadow Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. A Member said that if the Minister or the Shadow Minister are unable to attend, then it should be made clear that they can have another Member of their department represented.
- A Member noted her pleasure at the inclusion of women in the programme of speakers.
- A Member requested that efforts be made to ensure a plurality of parties on these panels, in order to ensure cross-party representation.

The Chair made several comments:

- There is a growing realisation that people need to proactively work

with cities as particular levers within the national and international economy.

- It is important that the Board and the LGA should not end with different groups who are looking at cities and urban Britain having parallel conversations without engagement.
- He asked if invitations had already been sent to key stakeholders. Eleanor Law confirmed that a save-the-date had been sent out to City Regions Board Members and all those who had previously taken part in the RSA's Urban Futures Commission.
- He invited the Board to offer suggestions of people they think would be interested in this agenda. He recommended Members contact them directly, but also send their names to the Policy Team.
- He suggested that some of those key principals of the Urban Summit be represented at the LGA conference. Eleanor Law confirmed that a slot has been reserved at the LGA conference.

**Decision:**

Members **provided** a steer on the timings, draft agenda and suggested speakers proposed for the Urban Summit and **would like** to see an event at LGA annual conference.

**Action:**

Officers **will invite** speakers and attendees to the Urban Summit in line with the agenda outlined above.

**3 Theme 3: Urban Resilience**

**a) City Systems & Data (Presentation)**

**Eleanor Law** introduced **Lucy Vilarkin** and **Alex Minshull** to present to ongoing resilience work at **Bristol City Council**.

They made several key points, including:

- In the current decade, they are expecting a few days of heat comparable to those at the height of the 2022 summer.
- The Vulnerability Index provides projections until the late 2070s.
- There are some concerns regarding public health risks to the population.
- Through the UK Climate Resilience Program, Bristol City Council was able to access expertise from the Met Office to generate the climate maps.
- The research considers the different drivers for heat vulnerability that relate to people in to their homes as well as their outdoor environment.
- Demographic considerations included older people and younger people as well one-person households.

The Chair invited comments:

- A Member queried ongoing efforts to mitigate against climate change.
- The challenge of wilding in parks and the risk of fires in urban areas.
- A Member asked how dynamic the tool is and how often it changes. Lucy replied that it is not a dynamic tool and that there are decisions to be made and there are going discussions about how you update it because new data will become available.

Eleanor reminded Members that the government published a new national resilience framework in December, and that there was a summary of the key points in the appendix to the paper.

#### **b) Urban Areas and the National Resilience Framework**

**Eleanor Law, Adviser**, introduced the paper, providing background about the National Resilience Framework. Key points from her update included the following:

- The government published a new framework in December. She pointed out that there was a summary of the key points in the appendix to the paper.
- She highlighted the necessity of understanding around risk.
- The work crosses the remit of several boards and the response to the national resilience frameworks is being led by the Safer and Stronger Communities Board. The Policy Team will address this topic with the Board at a later date.
- She asked for Members of the Board to contact her if there were any opinions they wished to feed in on the framework.

#### **Decision:**

Members **noted** the report and presentation.

#### **Action:**

That officers **would use** comments from this Board, as well as the Safer and Stronger Communities Board, to engage with the Government on plans to take forward the proposals in the newly published national resilience framework.

### **4 Theme 5: Growth funding**

#### **a) Streamlining funding – (Verbal Update)**

**Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser**, updated Members on streamlining funding. Key points included:

- The report by Shared Intelligence, which captured the findings from the last 20 years of place-based pilots, was discussed at the Board meeting in November.
- At that meeting, Members of the Board suggested including A Better Start, a Heritage Lottery Fund programme that had recently concluded.

- Shared Intelligence were contacted about this and will now add an appendix that will be completed by the end of January. Once completed, the paper will be published.

Members **noted** the update.

#### **b) UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) – (Verbal Update)**

**Paul Green, Policy Adviser**, provided an update on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to the Board. Key points he made included the following:

- Following LGA lobbying, DLUHC announced that there will be flexibility between year spending, depending on lead authorities presenting government with a credible plan
- The DLUHC led officer taskforce, which had representation from London Councils, Core Cities, the District Councils' Network (DCN) and County Councils Network (CCN), continues to meet.
- The LGA has commissioned Shared Intelligence to deliver action learning sets to support lead authorities in developing and delivering UK Shared Prosperity Funds.
- Members to continue to feedback how UKSPF is being introduced in their councils.

Members **noted** the update.

#### **c) Projects to help local government deliver economic growth**

**Jasbir Jhas, Senior Advisor**, introduced the paper, which provides an overview of two projects to help local government deliver economic growth which are being delivered by Shared Intelligence (Si) as part of the LGA's Government-funded support offer.

She discussed the first project, which explores the future skill needs of councils' economic development teams. Key points raised included:

- Councils have a great role in promoting prosperity for communities, residents, and businesses.
- The first project with Shared Intelligence explores the future capacity and skill needs of councils' economic development teams.
- The project feeds into a wider piece of work that Heather Wills is leading on around workforce capacity challenges, which will be brought to the Board at a later date.

**Esther Barrott, Adviser**, updated Members about the second project, which focuses on supporting the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) integration process, before introducing **Ben Lee** and **Lisa McCance** from **Shared Intelligence** to present their emerging findings. Key points from the presentation included the following:

- Shared Intelligence was involving offices and Members through interviews and working groups, with LEPs and local government, including combined authorities.

- Risk mitigation, in terms of councils taking advantage of opportunities, was discussed.
- Members were asked if they had identified any core opportunities to LEP integration in their council areas.

Members made the following comments:

- A Member asked for caution to ensure central government does not conclude that councils and devolved authorities do not have the capacity to do carry out their role.
- It would benefit the research to show some individual cases of what local authorities are doing to regenerate and develop, with a focus on what councils can do better than central government.

#### **Decision:**

Board Members **noted** the two pieces of commissioned work: the future skill needs of councils' economic development teams (paragraphs 2-10); and the integration of LEPs (paragraphs 11-19). The Board **considered** the questions posed at the end of the report to aid discussion with Shared Intelligence (paragraph 20).

#### **Action:**

LGA officers and Shared Intelligence **will incorporate** Members' perspectives into the two projects and have asked Members to email them directly if they would like to be involved in further discussions about LEP integration.

#### **d) Councils' Future Role in Driving Growth and Prosperity**

**Philip Clifford, Senior Adviser**, introduced **Steve Hughes, Associate Economist at WPI Economics**, to say a little bit about the organisation's experience of working with the LGA.

Steve made the following points:

- WPI Economics, an economics consultancy and public policy consultancy, has previously worked with the LGA on matter such as fiscal devolution and urban cost pressures.
- One of the key things that WPI Economics recognises will underpin the entire research is the concept of additionality in designing local growth interventions.
- There should be consideration of the roles local government plays uniquely in the delivery of growth and prosperity.

The Chair made the following observations:

- He asked if there was a specific civil servant, minister, shadow minister or journalist being targeted with this piece of work.
- Key people from the main parties need to be considered as well as the Civil Service.

Philip said in reply:

- The next general election and its potential outcome were factors in the current thinking around this work.
- He clarified that it was a wide-ranging and long-term project.
- He said that there was interested in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in the governing capacity and the role of local authorities in driving forward growth.

**Decision:**

Members **noted** the decision to commission a piece of research into councils' future role in driving growth and prosperity. Following a successful procurement, the chosen supplier will attend the Board meeting to take an initial steer from members.

**5 LGA Corporate**

**a) Workforce capacity in local government**

**Heather Wills, Principal Adviser (Improvement)**, presented on behalf of Naomi Cooke, Head of Workforce, who was unable to attend the meeting, a report which summarises the LGA's policy and improvement activity to address workforce capacity challenges in local government.

Her presentation included the following points:

- Workforce capacity challenges are a widespread and impacting across all government services.
- Factors such as pay are common to all services, but there are also other issues which are specific to individual services.
- The report is being brought to all the Boards for consideration. It highlights the skills and capacity challenges that are faced by economic development teams.
- She asked Members about actions to address the challenges, including prioritisation.
- She referred to a slight error in the paragraph numbers in the financial implication section, which should have referred to paragraphs 38 and 39.

Members made the following points:

- There is an ongoing trend of people with marketable skills being lost to the private sector, which affects ability for local authorities to shape the places we represent.
- Pay and persistent low growth were also cited as key factors as well as variance in rates between authorities and the impact of the pandemic on working arrangements. The impact on staffing levels in the aftermath of the UK's withdrawal from the European Union was also mentioned.
- There is a generational difference in attitudes and motivation, particularly around pay and work packages.
- A Member mentioned that for hybrid working, the home environment of

younger workers should be considered (sharing rooms with siblings, inadequate space, etc.).

- A Member believed the problem was partly due to local government being talked down over a long period of time has not helped with the recruitment.

**Decision:**

That Board members **fed back their views** of the priority issues for future policy and improvement activity to address workforce capacity challenges and how the LGA delivers those priorities in preparation for consideration of this paper by the Executive Advisory Board.

**6 Forward Plan & Work Programme**

**a) City Regions Board meetings forward plan & Work Programme**

The Chair invited **Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser**, to introduce the report which sets out future Board dates with proposals for discussion topics.

**Decision:**

Members **noted** the Forward Plan and Work Programme.

**7 Theme 2: Levelling Up**

*Please refer to the confidential minutes documents for information relating to this item.*

**8 Theme 4: Green Jobs**

*Please refer to the confidential minutes documents for information relating to this item*

**9 Note of last City Regions Board meeting - 23 November 2022**

The minutes of the meeting were approved as a correct and accurate record.

**Appendix A - Attendance**

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Mayor Marvin Rees	Bristol City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Deputy-chairman		
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 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 Anthony Hunt	Torfaen County Borough Council
	Cllr Ian Ward	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr David Mellen	Nottingham City Council
	Cllr Denise Scott-McDonald	Royal Borough of Greenwich
Apologies	Cllr Toby Savage	West of England Combined Authority
	Cllr Bev Craig	Manchester City Council
	Cllr Satvir Kaur	Southampton City Council
	Cllr John Merry CBE	Salford City Council
	Cllr Chris Penberthy	Plymouth City Council
Substitutes	Cllr Bob Cook	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
	Cllr Brenda Dacres	Lewisham London Borough
In Attendance		
LGA Officers		