



## City Regions Board – report from Sir Richard Leese (Chair)

### Devolution – the LGA support offer

1. The LGA's devolution support offer, drawn up with direction from City Regions Board and the People and Places Board continues to receive positive feedback from the sector. The Board have steered officers to continue to position the LGA as the key provider of devolution support to councils. Recent activity includes:
  - 1.1 Working with the Centre for Public Scrutiny to support areas to develop their governance arrangements and [produce a guide](#) on the related learning.
  - 1.2 Officers continue to update The DevoNext Hub which has received more than 12,000 unique visitors in the last two months.
2. The following tools and resources are due for completion imminently, and will be available in time for Annual Conference:
  - 2.1 A 'plain English' guide to Combined Authorities, developed in partnership with Shared Intelligence. This guide combines details on the legislative provisions for combined authorities, detailing practical suggestions and advice on setting up a CA.
  - 2.2 Professor Robin Hambleton's report on executive models of governance- an examination of international governance arrangements, highlighting lessons and key learning points for those establishing devolved governance structures in England.
  - 2.3 'Don't Be left in the Dark'- a set of FAQs that provide a high level overview of the main questions and answers that have arisen in relation to the devolution agenda. A specific set of FAQs for MPs is also being developed.
3. In addition to the above, the following events to assist councils with their devolution arrangements have either been delivered or are due to be delivered during the period March-June:
  - 3.1 [An event for communications officers in the South West](#)
  - 3.2 [An event for communications officers in Newcastle upon Tyne](#)
  - 3.3 [Devolving and Delivering: a new relationship for principal and local councils](#). This is a joint event hosted by the LGA and NALC

- 3.4 [Devolution- a new type of leadership](#). A day of practical advice and discussion exploring the roles of members at all levels in newly devolved areas.

Further development of the offer

4. The City Regions Board continues to work with officers to build the LGA's devolution support offer further.
5. The New Economics Foundation has been commissioned to assist with the development of policy and resources around the role of communities and the VCS in devolution. This work will ensure good practice is shared and councils are better equipped to engage citizens and their community representatives on this agenda. Resources will be made available via the DevoHub by September 2016.

**Employment and Skills**

6. A priority for this and the City Regions Board is to ensure DWP's new Work and Health Programme (WHP) – designed to get more long term unemployed and those with physical or mental health conditions in to work - has as much local government involvement as possible. Ten devolution deal areas are already working bilaterally with DWP on the design and commissioning of the WHP in their local area.
7. All other areas outside of a devolution deal area will be subject to a DWP WHP national offer. We need to make sure we get that right, so we learn from its predecessor Work Programme. To support the sector's engagement in the development of it, the LGA and DWP are working together. We successfully lobbied DWP to consult all councils through a series of national events across England during May in London, Exeter and Leeds. A joint letter of invitation signed by the Employment Minister and LGA Chairman was issued to all council chief executives. Cllr Robert Light chaired the event in Leeds.
8. Alongside the above, the LGA established a working group of officers drawn from local areas across England without a devolution deal to help influence the design of the offer and put forward recommendations for the WHP. The group met three times during May to ensure it put forward recommendations which will inform DWP's decision making process in June. Work continues with devolved areas to understand how their negotiations are progressing.
9. City Regions Board Lead Members attended a joint meeting with People and Places Lead Members on Skills and Employment on the 10<sup>th</sup> May to discuss priorities in taking the work forward.

**RSA Inclusive Growth Commission**

10. The new RSA Commission on Inclusive Growth was [launched](#) on 28 April. The LGA is one of the project sponsors alongside Core Cities, Key Cities, London Councils.
11. Building on the success of the RSA City Growth Commission, the new Commission will examine how the state needs to change - centrally and locally - to enable different parts of the country fully to realise the potential of devolution. A key focus will be geographical inclusion: making sure that the benefits of the place-based approach to growth are widely shared. The Commission will be chaired by Stephanie Flanders (JP Morgan Chief Market Strategist and former BBC Economics Editor) and will report in Spring 2017.

**Leading Places Project**

12. With input and steer from both the City Regions and People and Places Boards, the LGA is working to deliver a programme of leadership development for both the higher education and local government sectors in support of devolution, public service reform and economic growth in partnership with Universities UK and the Higher Education Funding Council for England. Universities, local authorities and other institutions in six pilot areas are currently working together to decide a priority challenge theme which addresses an issue where the existing knowledge base in local universities is strong, as well as a strategic context. Projects will provide pilot areas with real opportunities for national and international peer review and transfer of learning and best practice. I attended a meeting with HEFCE, UUK and LGA officers, and leaders from the proposed pilot areas at Local Government House on 24<sup>th</sup> March. The programme was [launched](#) at the beginning of May.

**Contact officer:** Rebecca Cox

**Position:** Principal Policy Adviser

**Phone no:** 0207 187 7384

**E-mail:** [Rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk](mailto:Rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk)