



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

### Devolution

1. The LGA's devolution support offer, with direction from the City Regions Board, continues to go from strength to strength, with the LGA's Annual Conference providing a good showcase of recent activity, including:
  - 1.1 The launch of a key note discussion paper: [What next for devolution?](#) This draws on ideas from board members and councillors across the sector and has been written to provoke a wide-ranging debate about the future direction and scope of devolution. The paper highlights the importance of public service reform and the need for local leaders to play a greater role in shaping the next phase of devolution. Councillors, government and others are encouraged to respond with their views over the next few months via the LGA's Devonext 'microsite' – [www.devonext.org](http://www.devonext.org)
  - 1.2 The publication of a ['plain English' guide to combined authorities](#), developed in partnership with Shared Intelligence, combines an overview of the relevant legislative provisions, with practical suggestions and advice on setting up a combined authority.
  - 1.3 The launch of [Professor Robin Hambleton's report on Executive Models of Governance](#), which examines international models of sub-national governance and highlights lessons for those establishing devolved governance structures in England.
  - 1.4 The release of ['Don't Be left in the Dark'](#) - a guide which provides answers to some of the key questions about devolution and what it means for councils, their residents and communities.
2. Looking ahead, the summer will also see two further publications, aimed at responding to the specific concerns of members:
  - 2.1 In late July the LGA plans to publish commissioned research by New Economy Manchester that charts the experience of officers and members in the development of devolution deals agreed so far.
  - 2.2 In conjunction with the New Economics Foundation LGA officers will continue to explore the role of communities and the voluntary and community sector in devolution with a research report planned for publication via the DevoHub in September 2016.
3. The LGA has also recently organised two well-attended events on devolution:
  - 3.1 On 1 June, the LGA jointly hosted an event with the National Association of Local Councils: [Devolving and Delivering: a new relationship for principal and local councils](#), this examined how all tiers of local government could benefit from

devolving powers and functions, as well as how services can be improved through closer working.

3.2 On 21 June the LGA hosted, [Devolution – a new type of leadership](#), which considered new and emerging forms of local leadership within the context of devolution.

4. At the LGA Conference in July, City Regions board members participated in a number of key sessions:

4.1 Cllr Judith Blake chaired the workshop session 'Devolution deals: from design to delivery', in which the panel discussed the devolution process and models of governance. Cllr Blake also spoke at the session 'Powering the Powerhouse', where devolution and business rate retention were discussed, as well as ensuring that councils can create the right conditions for economic growth and investment.

4.2 Cllr Sean Anstee, was part of the panel in the workshop session 'What next for combined authorities?' The panel spoke about their ambitions for delivering public services through a combined authority, identifying challenges ahead and setting out what they believe are the keys to success.

### **Employment and Skills**

5. The board continues to work with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) on the new Work and Health Programme (WHP). The programme is designed to assist the long term unemployed and those with physical or mental health conditions into work with as much local government involvement as possible. Ten devolution deal areas continue to work bilaterally with DWP on the design and commissioning of the WHP in their local area. All other areas outside of a devolution deal area will eventually be subject to a WHP national offer.

6. 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 put forward recommendations which to help inform DWP's decision making process in June.

### **Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Network 2016 Meeting**

7. On 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> July, the Board of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) have invited board members to participate in the London meeting of new Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Network: 'Successful, safe and sustainable cities: making cities fit for the future' which will cover the following policy areas: making cities inclusive, resilient and safe; addressing the migrant crisis; encouraging social cohesion and combatting extremism. Members will have the opportunity to discuss cities as engines of economic growth and centres of finance and innovation.

### **RSA Inclusive Growth Commission**

8. Work continues on the RSA Commission on Inclusive Growth Project which the LGA is co-sponsoring. Chaired by Stephanie Flanders, the commission builds on the success of the RSA City Growth Commission, and 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. It will report in Spring 2017. The Commission has now launched its [Prospectus of Inquiry](#).

**Leading Places Project**

9. With input and steer from both the City Regions and People and Places Boards, the LGA is continuing to work with HEFCE and UUK to deliver the [Leading Places Project](#): a programme of leadership development for both the higher education and local government sectors in support of devolution, public service reform and economic growth. The six pilot areas have progressed with their work, and three are holding Senior Leadership Team Meetings in July.

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