

End of Year Board Report

Purpose of report

For information and discussion.

Summary

This report provides an overview of the issues and work the **City Regions Board** has overseen during last year. It sets out key achievements in relation to the priorities for the board in 2016/2017 and looks forward to next year's priorities.

Recommendations

That the City Regions Board:

1. **Note** the achievements against the board's priorities in 2016/2017, and;
2. **Note** the board's proposed priority areas for 2017/18.

Action

Officers to action as appropriate.

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Background and Context

1. The City Regions Board was created to provide a clear voice and resource for city regions within the LGA and to advocate on behalf of English cities.
2. Members are asked to consider the achievements of the board over the last year against the use of allocated resources and to reflect on whether the board is continuing to meet its purpose in response to the emerging priorities of metropolitan areas.

Priorities and Achievements

Devolution

3. Board members have continued to influence the devolution agenda - steering the LGA's support offer, informing work to prepare new combined authorities for the mayoral elections and advancing the case for greater local freedom to drive economic growth and public service reform.
4. Bespoke support packages have been provided to a range of areas. This has included the development and implementation of deals, policy support, leadership development, governance, communications and civic engagement.
5. A network of combined authority chief executives has been created to share policy and practice between established and emerging combined authorities. The LGA has worked with political group offices to support the establishment of combined authority mayors.
6. The board has contributed to the LGA's response to Britain's departure from the European Union, leading on work to secure the future position of English local government and overseeing proposals for the devolution of powers repatriated from the EU.
7. Finally, with a steer from the City Regions Board, the LGA commissioned research into the development of a strengthened sub-national trade and investment policy. The research makes the case for an integrated approach to trade and investment and will be used to influence the new government and support local good practice.

Devolving Skills and Employment

8. Securing further devolution of skills and employment support has again been a key focus of the board this year. In partnership with the People and Places and Community and Wellbeing Boards, the board commissioned the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion to develop a devolved employment model for the most disadvantaged jobseekers to influence the design and commissioning of the Work and Health Programme (WHP).
9. In September, the Chairs met Penny Mordaunt MP, the previous Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, to discuss the concerns regarding the WHP design, and propose a way to allow the launch of the WHP with the backing of local government. Given the range of concerns, the LGA was unable to endorse the national offer.

10. In December, the People and Places and City Regions Boards commissioned the Learning and Work Institute to develop a vision for an integrated and locally accountable employment and skills service. The final report will launch at LGA Annual Conference.
11. In February, together with the Community Wellbeing and People and Places Boards, the Board responded to the previous Government's ['Improving Lives: the work, health and disability Green Paper'](#) and recommended the need to address the complexity and inadequacies of the current national system through public service reform and devolution.

Leading Places Project

12. In partnership with Universities UK and the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the LGA has overseen a project to develop collaborative leadership across the higher education and local government sectors.
13. [Launched in May 2016](#), six pilot areas have developed local partnership and project arrangements to meet a variety of local challenges.
14. Following a competitive application process 15 new and continuing partnerships have now been selected to participate in Phase 2. These areas will begin work over the summer to take forward action against each of their locally identified themes.

RSA Inclusive Growth Commission

15. Board members sponsored the RSA Inclusive Growth Commission which sought to understand and identify practical ways to make local economies across the UK more economically inclusive and prosperous. The Commission, chaired by Stephanie Flanders was launched in April 2016 and delivered its final report in March 2017.

IPPR Research

16. The board supported a research project to examine gender representation in local government as devolution progresses, conducted by the Institute for Public Policy Research. A final report will be launched in July 2017.

Programme of work and priorities 2017/18

17. The board will continue to develop and expand the policy case for local devolution and support metropolitan areas to progress with devolution in England within the context of a newly elected government.
18. Officers will undertake a programme of work to take forward the integrated devolved employment skills service model presented at the LGA annual conference.
19. The board will monitor the work of the Leading Places project and explore how emerging good practice in collaborative leadership might be shared more widely.