

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

Trade and Investment

1. Within the context of greater devolution, the Government's Industrial Strategy and the uncertainty surrounding Britain's departure from the European Union, the City Regions and People and Places Boards jointly commissioned research in support of a stronger sub-national approach to trade and investment. The independent report 'Strengthening Sub-National Trade and Investment' was presented to members at the June board meeting. Following members' comments an engagement strategy to bring the work to the attention of senior ministers is now being developed.

Skills and Employment

2. This year, with the People and Places Board, the Board commissioned work from the Learning and Work Institute (LWI) to develop a local government vision for an integrated and devolved employment and skills service which will bring agencies together so they work for everyone that needs support to progress. The draft final report on this work was presented at the June board meeting, and I was pleased to launch the final report – Work Local – at the LGA Annual Conference in Birmingham on Wednesday 5 July during the Parallel Plenary Session 'Industrial Strategy- the local response'. We now have a dedicated [Work Local webpage](#), and the proposal is open for consultation until 5 September. The LGA is grateful to the twelve local areas who contributed to the report and the Learning and Work Institute who helped shape the vision. The launch was covered in the Independent newspaper.

Devolution

3. Following the election of the new combined authority mayors on the 4 May, the LGA hosted a seminar for Mayors on the 14 and 15 June in partnership with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. The event brought the new mayors together for the first time and acted as a taster event for the type of support that the LGA can offer mayors, including presentations on the LGA's recent work on skills and employment and trade and inwards investment.

Leading Places project

4. Capitalising on the success of Phase 1 and in recognition of the growing currency of work to strengthen collaboration between universities and councils, a second phase of the Leading Places Project is now progressing in 15 areas. Furthermore, in recognition of the strong appetite for the programme the LGA is also working with HEFCE and the LGA's network of principal advisers to consider what support might be provided for areas which were unsuccessful in the bid to participate, but wish to develop their work in this area.

RSA Inclusive Growth Commission

5. I was pleased to attend the launch of the RSA Inclusive Growth Commission's final report with recommendations on the 7 March. The Inclusive Growth Commission was set up in April 2016 to identify practical ways to make inclusive growth a reality, and the City Regions

Board has supported this work. Board members attended this event after the March Board Meeting, which was also held at the RSA.

Gender representation and devolution

6. The Board has supported a research project conducted by the Institute for Public Policy Research to examine gender representation in local government as devolution progresses. The research compares countries that have devolved political systems, how they perform on gender diversity measures and their strategies and activities to improve representation and make recommendations for what political leaders in local government and national government and other key actors can do to help build a stronger pipeline of female talent. A draft of the report will be discussed at a roundtable discussion held on the 18 July in Manchester.

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