

Note of last City Regions Board meeting

Title: City Regions Board
Date: Friday 6 October 2017
Venue: Rooms A&B, Ground Floor, Layden House, 76-86 Turnmill Street,
London, EC1M 5LG

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as [Appendix A](#) to this note

Item Decisions and actions

1 Welcome, introductions, apologies and declarations of interest

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming new members to the Board and giving thanks to those no longer on the Board.

Apologies were received from Cllrs Dixon, John, Swift and Mayor Joe Anderson.

The Chair noted that this was the last meeting of the City Regions Board in Layden House and that all future meetings would be held at the refurbished Local Government House, which has now been renamed 18 Smith Square.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Membership and Terms of Reference 2017/18

The Chair introduced this item, asking members to note both the membership and the terms of reference for the City Regions Board for the 2017/18 meeting cycle.

Decision:

Members **noted** the membership and terms of reference.

3 Work programme and policy direction

The Chair outlined the various priorities noted in the paper and made a comment on a potential issue relating to the proposed work around community cohesion and Prevent. It was noted that the responsibility for this policy area rested with the Safer and Stronger Communities (SSC) Board and work needed to be done to see if there were any particular urban aspects of cohesion that could be expanded without replicating work already being done by the SSC Board.

The Chair asked Ian Hughes, Head of Policy at the LGA, to provide an update on Brexit. Ian explained that the LGA had developed an expansive work programme which sought to ensure the priorities of councils were being recognised and address by Government. It was suggested that one of the biggest questions currently was around

the future of EU funding and how this might be maintained if a transitional period meant the UK was still part of the EU when the next EU funding round began. Ian noted that current EU laws would be transferred directly into UK law, but that it was important for councils to put together a list of EU laws that might be amended, retained or scrapped as part of any future review. Ian also expanded on the LGA's position that any repatriated powers must not simply be returned to Westminster, Holyrood, Cardiff Bay and Stormont, but instead should be devolved to local communities.

On the work programme and policy direction of the Board, members made the following comments:

- Members endorsed the strong focus on devolution and felt it was important that the benefits of devolution were highlighted in ongoing Brexit discussions. Members were clear that more transparency was required from Whitehall departments in terms of what would happen to EU funding and where any potential gaps could be once the funding is stopped. Concerns were raised about the Government blaming any funding gaps on the lack of EU funding and areas without devolution being at a disadvantage if post-Brexit funding was eventually devolved to local areas. A further point on devolution was made about the challenge of developing devolution deals with a mix of authority types. It was pointed out that successful devolution deals made so far were mostly in areas with unitary authorities.
- A discussion was had about homelessness, people sleeping rough and begging. Members suggested that the Board could consider whether there was any research it would be helpful to do in terms of what the current issues were and what local authorities were doing to address it. Other members supported prioritising homelessness and the housing crisis as a policy area but it was noted that other areas also need looking at within this topic, including: education, mental health services, families, welfare and benefits, and public health concerns relating to the use of drugs and alcohol. It was suggested that if a research project were to be carried out, it ought to include combined authorities and homeless charities. The Chair noted these points and suggested that this issue could be looked at within the context of how city centres are managed given that there is a greater concentration of homelessness within city centres.
- A number of members were keen to discuss the sustainability of university cities and towns. It was noted that up to a quarter of residents in some towns or cities could be students and that this had often lead to the loss of businesses and business rates in cities. Members said that there were both positives and negatives to being a university city but it was widely agreed that local authorities do not make, but rather lost income because of the considerable proportion of students living in their areas. It was explained that students and funding issues related to them were not included within the terms of reference of the Board but that the issue should continue to be raised through the political groups so that it could be focused on by the LGA as a whole rather than only by the Board. It was also suggested that this was not purely an urban issue and that sometimes the smaller the town, the more disproportionate the impact of universities would be.
- Members noted that the LGA's campaign to lobby the Government on social care had some success in the form of an enhanced care fund and the adult social care precept. The LGA Executive had decided to shift the focus towards addressing the underfunding of children's social care budgets. Members

wondered whether the City Regions Board could help shape the Executive's view on this due to the disproportionate number of families in crisis in cities across the UK. It was suggested that it could be helpful for members to provide insight on this issue to the Children and Young People's Board.

- It was suggested that the Board might want to look at the future of local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and how their governance might be changed in the context of Brexit and forthcoming Industrial Strategy.

Decision:

Members **noted** the work programme and policy direction of the City Regions Board over the coming year.

Action:

Officers to considered members' comments and proceed as directed.

4 Employment and skills update - Work Local campaign

LGA Senior Adviser, Jasbir Jhas introduced this item, providing members with a background on the topic and reminding members about the piece of work which was commissioned last year to identify the challenges of the existing national employment and skills system and develop a solution that drew on the strength and position of local councils – Work Local. It was noted that this had been well received and contained a five year plan which contained a number of tangible recommendations.

Work Local consultation response were being analysed and would be circulated to the Board once available. Board members agreed campaign activity needed to take the Work Local proposals forward. It was agreed that working in partnership with Core Cities and others should be explored.

The Chair asked if members should provide officers with case studies from their respective areas and Jas agreed that this would be helpful.

Members made the following comments in response to this item:

- The paper mapped out the work other Boards were doing around skills and employment and that where appropriate/relevant, links should be made.
- Members felt the suggestion of holding roundtable events was a good idea.

Decision:

Members **agreed** the recommendations outlined in the report.

Action:

Officers to proceed as directed.

5 Trade and investment

LGA Senior Advisor, Philip Clifford, spoke to this paper and provided a brief outline of

the issue for new members of the Board. He outlined the research which had been commissioned to support the development of a strengthened sub-national approach to trade and investment policy. Philip drew members' attention to paragraph 8 of the report, which contained three proposed workstreams designed to build a shared understanding of the nature of the challenge and develop a solution better aligned with local priorities for growth.

In response to the paper, members made the following comments:

- A concern was raised about ending up with a final product which wasn't clear enough in saying what cities need. It was felt that the proposals were quite general and could be more specific.
- On point 8.2, it was suggested that case studies must be properly evaluated before a toolkit is produced because a one size fits all approach would not be successful.
- Members welcomed the suggestion to explore the viewpoint of businesses and said it would be helpful to know what businesses find the main issues to be.
- Some members did not feel the need for a toolkit but understood that other colleagues could find one useful.

Decision:

Members **noted and agreed** the recommendations set out in the paper with the exception of the toolkit.

Action:

Officers to proceed as appropriate.

6 Note of the previous meeting

Members **agreed** the minutes as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Sir Richard Leese CBE	Manchester City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Robert Light	Kirklees Metropolitan Council
	Cllr Abigail Bell	Hull City Council
	Cllr Liz Hazell	Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council
Members	Cllr Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr Abi Brown	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
	Cllr Donna Jones JP	Portsmouth City Council
	Cllr Tim Warren	Bath & North East Somerset Council
	Cllr Martin Gannon	Gateshead Council
	Mayor Marvin Rees	Bristol City Council
	Cllr Jean Stretton	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Jon Collins	Nottingham City Council
	Cllr Simon Letts	Southampton City Council
	Cllr Debbie Wilcox	Newport City Council
	Cllr Warren Morgan	Brighton & Hove City Council
	Cllr Sue Jeffrey	Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council
	Cllr Paul Crossley	Bath & North East Somerset Council
Apologies	Cllr Samantha Dixon	Cheshire West and Chester Council
	Mayor Joe Anderson OBE	Liverpool City Council
	Cllr Peter John OBE	Southwark Council
	Cllr Timothy Swift	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council