

City Regions Board - End of Year Board Report

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

Skills and Employment

3. The City Regions and People and Places Boards joined forces to take forward LGA employment and skills lobbying. Members of both Boards decided the LGA should design an offer to Government which was strategic in nature covering the whole employment and skills landscape. It was on this basis that Work Local was developed, which aims to make the current national system more integrated and localised and for the sector to benefit from a devolution deal process offering real freedom and flexibility.
4. In March 2018, Chair of the City Regions Board Sir Richard Leese and Chairman of the People and Places Board Cllr Mark Hawthorne attended a meeting with the Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships the Rt. Hon. Anne Milton MP. The meeting was extremely productive, and foundations were laid to form a strategic and systematic relationship between the Department of Education and the LGA. An additional meeting was held on Thursday 7 June with the Skills Minister, to further discuss the LGA's vision for a more localised skills system.
5. Both the City Regions and People Places and Board also agreed to establish a new 'skills taskforce', whose purpose will be to dedicate specific time to, and have oversight of the LGA's employment and skills work, and re-focus LGA work to provide place-based solutions to Brexit and the Industrial Strategy. Both Boards have agreed it should draw in expertise from within the sector and engage a range of stakeholders. Establishment of the Taskforce is well underway, drawing on expertise from Members of the relevant LGA boards.

Devolution

6. At the start of the 2017/18 board cycle, Members reflected on the apparent 'pause' in the progress of the Government's devolution agenda and took the decision to pursue work supporting the case for specific instances of devolution in areas such as skills, trade and investment and fiscal reform.
7. The Board has continued to seek to advance the case for reform of the sub-national trade and investment landscape. With much of the UK's future trading relationship contingent

on the form and timing of Britain's departure from the EU this work has had a degree of overlap with the LGA's Brexit Task and Finish Group. It is anticipated that this work will gain increased traction following the EU summit in October 2018.

8. The Board has also held a series of discussions with a view to exploring how the case for fiscal reform might be advanced in the run-up to the next general election and following Britain's departure from the EU.

Industrial Strategy

9. The Government published the Industrial Strategy White Paper in November 2017. The White Paper contained a number of announcements relating to the role of LEPs, which included a review of the roles and responsibilities of LEPs and a pledge to bring forward reforms to leadership, governance, accountability, financial reporting and geographical boundaries.
10. Since the launch of the White Paper, Government's focus has been on the LEP Review (see below) and the Board has, in turn, concentrated on making the case for local government leadership and further devolution through this process. Stephen Jones, Director of the Cities and Local Growth Unit, will be in attendance at the June Board meeting for a discussion regarding the Government's proposals. This is expected to include further details regarding the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and future Local Industrial Strategies, both of which are likely to be key priorities for the board in the coming months.

Local Enterprise Partnership Review

11. The LEP Review has been overseen by the LEP Advisory Panel, established by Jake Berry MP and Margot James MP in December 2017. Altogether, four meetings of the Panel were held, and it is anticipated that final recommendations from the LEP Review will be published prior to the summer recess.
12. On 15 March, the LGA hosted a joint roundtable event with the LEP Network following a previous joint working commitment between the two organisations. The event provided an opportunity to identify common ground between councils and LEPs and to strengthen their strategic relationship ahead of the publication of the Government's LEP Review.
13. Following the roundtable a letter was sent to the Secretary of State for the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which was signed by three LEP Chairs, along with Chairs of the EEHT, City Regions and People and Places Board.
14. The letter requested support from national government in three key areas: unified funding, local leadership and greater local flexibility. A response to the letter was received on 6 May 2018 and the Board is continuing to pursue Government on these issues.

Leading Places Project

15. Over the past year, the Board has continued to support work to strengthen the strategic relationship between local government and higher education at a local and national level.
16. Most notably, the Board has overseen delivery of the second phase of the Leading Places programme which has been funded by the LGA and delivered in partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Universities UK.
17. Phase 2 of the programme has seen 15 project partnerships across the country made up of councils, universities and other anchor institutions, such as the NHS, explore the development of collaborative approaches to tackling local priorities in public service reform and driving inclusive growth.
18. The LGA has also worked with HEFCE, Universities UK and the NHS Confederation to support delivery of the Local Growth Academy which is a leadership development programme focused on collaborative delivery of local growth and targeted at representatives from higher education, local government and the NHS.
19. Both programmes concluded at a national event in March attended by nearly 200 delegates from across the higher education, health and local government sectors.

City Centre Management and Community Cohesion

20. As part of its 2017/18 work programme the Board expressed an interest in exploring the role of councils in managing town and city centres and facilitating improved community cohesion, particularly in light of their leadership role, responding to the terror attacks in 2017. In the discussions that followed, members touched on a variety of subjects including homelessness, rough sleeping, aggressive begging and town and city centre regeneration.
21. Over the course of the 2017/18 cycle, officers have identified a variety of topics within the city centre management and community cohesion space and have provided members with the opportunity to feed into the development of policy and lobbying activity currently being advanced in these areas both across the LGA and by other organisations. In light of this activity, members will use the June Board to discuss whether they wish to dedicate Board capacity to take forward a new piece of work in these areas over the next political cycle.

Programme of work and priorities 2017/18

22. The Board will continue to take forward the LGA's lobbying work on skills, both making the case for the Work Local model, and implementing a successful and effective strategic relationship with the Department for Education.
23. The Board will seek to ensure the key elements of the Industrial Strategy – Local Industrial Strategies, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the LEP Review – are

developed and implemented in line with the priorities and ambitions of metropolitan authorities within and outside of Mayoral Combined Authorities. Related activity will be delivered through a range of lobbying and improvement support activity led by the LGA and, where appropriate, in collaboration with our national partners.

24. The Board will seek to build a more substantive case for specific instances of devolution, such as trade and investment and fiscal reform in the build-up to the next general election and following Britain's departure from the EU.
25. Subject to discussion at the June Board, members may seek to dedicate Board capacity to pursue additional priorities over the next political cycle, particularly in relation to city centre management and community cohesion.

Financial Implications

26. All work programmes are met from existing LGA budgets and resources.