

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

2018-19 Work Programme

1. The primary objective of the City Regions Board remains the devolution of power and resources to local government. The Board has agreed a work programme for the 2018-19 political cycle that seeks to support this objective.
2. Reflecting the current national context, the Board's 2018-19 work programme consists of four key components:
 - 2.1. **Delivering devolution** – overseeing work to support the delivery of devolution deals already agreed and to ensure that the lessons from those in the 'vanguard' mayoral combined authority areas are captured and shared with councils more widely;
 - 2.2. **Driving devolution** – advancing the case for devolution through national Government's place-based growth agenda e.g. the Industrial Strategy and on a Department-by-Department basis, such as skills and employment, and trade and investment;
 - 2.3. **Future devolution** – building the policy arguments and stakeholder networks to support devolution that goes beyond the current Government's ambitions e.g. greater fiscal autonomy, with a view to influencing future manifestos.
 - 2.4. **Urban leadership** – assembling a coalition of interested and relevant parties to consider and re-articulate the distinct concerns and opportunities of urban authorities across England to a national audience.
3. The Board will oversee a wide range of policy and improvement activity in pursuit of each of these four components.

Urban Leadership

4. In line with the agreed work programme, activity will be undertaken to assemble a coalition of interested and relevant parties to consider and re-articulate the distinct concerns and opportunities of urban authorities across England to a national audience in the lead up to the 2019 Spending Review.
5. As an initial step, the Board has agreed to commence engagement with partners to identify potential joint lobbying lines arising from the established policy positions of relevant representative bodies, such as London Councils, Core Cities and Key Cities.

Industrial Strategy

6. The Board continues to progress work relating to the key place-based elements of the Industrial Strategy – the Government's Review of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), the development of Local Industrial Strategies and the design of UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
7. Following the publication of the conclusions of the LEP Review in July, Members have expressed particular concerns regarding the Government's position on future LEP geographies

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and the potential dilution of democratic accountability on LEP Boards resulting from the recommendations of the review. In response, the Chairman of the People and Places Board and I have written to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy seeking urgent clarity on both these issues.

8. Work continues to engage Whitehall officials on the key issues for councils relating to the Industrial Strategy, including Local Industrial Strategies and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This follows recent LGA lobbying successes including the confirmation that every area will be invited to agree a Local Industrial Strategy with government and the announcement that funding for EU programmes will be guaranteed until the end of 2020 in the event of a no deal Brexit.

Skills and Employment – Work Local

9. The City Regions and People and Places Boards continue to push forward the LGA's Work Local proposals for skills and employment devolution to Government, Opposition and key stakeholders.
10. As part of this, we have established a new Skills Taskforce made up of LGA Board members which will aim to engage a range of stakeholders during a series of roundtables. Our aim is to build relationships with external organisations around the skills and employability agenda.
11. Following on from positive discussions in the summer with the Rt Hon Anne Milton MP, Skills and Apprenticeships Minister, we are also continuing to pursue a strategic DfE/LGA political and operational partnership on post 16 skills to benefit both devolved and non-devolved areas. This is in progress with Whitehall officials.

Devolution Improvement Support Offer

12. The City Regions board will continue to develop the LGAs sector led improvement offer for Combined Authorities (CAs). This includes a number of key policy networks that allow CA's to share best practice and look at key collective issues. The next round of network meetings will take place in October and November. As agreed at the June board meeting a Governance and Scrutiny network and a HR network have also now been set up.
13. The LGA's improvement offer is available for all CA's as well as bespoke and tailored support. Further work is being carried out in regards to a sector led peer offer similar to peer challenge with a view to having a tool in place by 2019/20. Scoping is also being carried out for the LGA to host commercial proposition workshops for CA's within this financial year which will be discussed at the next CA CEX meeting in November.

Trade and investment

14. The City Regions Board will continue to work alongside the People and Places Board to develop the LGA's approach to trade and international investment, by working with the Department for International Trade to understand and strengthen the existing sub-national trade and investment landscape, building an evidence base of place and sectoral priorities for future trade deals and agreeing with Government how the views and international relationships of local government might be harnessed during these deals.

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15. To inform this activity, a survey of the LGA's membership has been undertaken to highlight the depth and diversity of trade and other international links established between councils and global partners, with a view to strengthening the role of sub-national government in future trade and investment activity.
16. In addition to this, the LGA is undertaking a piece of improvement work to outline the role councils can play in attracting foreign capital investment. It will capture sectoral best practice and develop a set of resources to support councils and their private sector partners to maximise foreign capital investment opportunities and consider how to develop a longer-term pipeline of projects to meet a range of international investor needs.

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