

Devolution Update

Purpose

For discussion and direction.

Summary

This paper provides members with an update on the LGA's devolution improvement support offer to established and aspiring Combined Authorities (CAs) and provides the latest on the Government's Devolution Framework, due to be published before the end of the year.

Recommendations

Members of the City Regions Board are asked to:

1. **Consider** the current scope of the LGA's Devolution Improvement and Support Offer and suggest any further areas for development
2. **Note** the context for the LGA's work relating to the Devolution Framework and **agree** for the People and Places Board to take the active lead in developing work in this area, with the City Regions Board playing a supporting role, as appropriate

Action

1. Subject to the comments from Members, officers will continue to monitor the progression of the Devolution Framework and develop the LGAs devolution improvement support offer.

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Devolution Update

Improvement support to Combined Authorities

1. As members will be aware from the June 2018 meeting of the Board, the LGA has continued to develop and deliver a bespoke offer of improvement support for existing and prospective Combined Authorities (CAs). This support is funded by the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) improvement grant to the LGA.
2. The nature of the support provided varies in response to the needs of individual areas. However, key elements of the support provided to date include:
 - 2.1 **Mayoral Forum** – An opportunity for the Mayors to meet collectively with relevant government ministers and officers. The last forum was held earlier this year in February. The next Forum is currently being planned for early next year.
 - 2.2 **CA Chief Executive Network** - chaired by Eamonn Boylan, Chief Executive of Greater Manchester CA, the network continues to provide an opportunity for chief executives and chief officers to share learning and experiences, have space to discuss practical challenges and focus collectively on some of the key areas of policy development emerging within CAs.
 - 2.3 **Officer Networks**- There are a number of policy networks for officers which have been set up and are supported by the LGA. Three networks, each of which have already met at least twice, are organised by the LGA and are focused on the following policy areas:
 - 2.3.1 Finance
 - 2.3.2 Employment & Skills
 - 2.3.3 Housing & Planning
 - 2.3.4 A fourth network focused on transport issues is supported by ADEPT, the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport.
 - 2.4 **New Networks** – A couple of new networks have been set up since the June Board meeting and are due to meet for the first time in November. These are:
 - 2.4.1 HR
 - 2.4.2 Governance and Scrutiny –The Centre for Public Scrutiny will run this network on the LGA's behalf.
3. Each of these networks apart from the HR, but including the CEX network, have been given a budget to commission a piece of improvement work to support their policy area. The projects will need to be improvement focussed and be of interest and use to established and aspiring CAs. It is hoped that the projects will be scoped before Christmas and will be reported back to a future meeting of the City Regions Board.
4. The improvement support offer also includes bespoke and tailored peer support to each CA. Work is still in progress to create a peer led tool to support CAs in a similar way to the LGAs Corporate Peer Challenge process. This tool will use the principles of sector led improvement, but will be tailored and appropriate for CAs and likely to be launched in 2019/20.

- 5. Members are asked to consider the current scope of the LGA's Devolution Improvement and Support Offer and suggest any further areas for development.**

Devolution Framework

6. Since 2014, devolution in some parts of England has meant a transfer of power and funding from national to local government. In line with the government's preferred model for devolved governance, in all but two areas, Cornwall and London, this transfer of power has been contingent on the creation of a Mayoral Combined Authority.
7. There are now seven Mayoral Combined Authorities across England which are mostly concentrated in urban areas. Devolution deals have also been agreed with Combined Authorities in the North East, West Yorkshire and also with Cornwall.
8. The eighth Mayoral Election will take place in North of Tyne in May 2019. Recent signals from within government have strongly indicated that there is limited Ministerial appetite for further deals of this type.
9. The Cabinet reshuffle earlier this year has seen a further change in MHCLG leadership and potentially ministerial priorities. Several months later, it remains unclear when a direction of travel for devolution policy will emerge.
10. A commitment to develop a common devolution framework - interpreted as a mechanism to access local devolution in England outside the Mayoral Combined Authority governance model - was contained in the Conservative Manifesto.
11. Early indications suggest that it is likely to focus on public service reform and elements of devolution that sit outside the economic growth agenda, but is unlikely to be on a similar scale to the previously established process of negotiating devolution deals.
12. Government has indicated that it is planning to publish the Devolution Framework before Christmas 2018. We understand that no firm decision has been made in regards to the content of the framework, but a broad direction of travel as indicated above is beginning to emerge.
13. Lead Members of the People and Places Board have already expressed an interest in seeking to influence government thinking on this issue, reflecting the currently limited level of devolution to non-metropolitan areas.
14. Given this interest and within the context of a limited window of opportunity it is proposed that the People and Places Board take the active lead in developing future work in this area, with the City Regions Board playing a supporting role, reflecting the shared ambition for all places to be able to access devolution opportunities at their own pace.
15. Once the Framework has been published Members of both boards will have an opportunity to review and consider the LGA's future lobbying work in this area.
- 16. Members are asked to note the update regarding the Devolution Framework update and agree for the People and Places Board to take the active lead in developing work in this area, with the City Regions Board playing a supporting role, as appropriate.**