

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

Industrial strategy

1. Together with the People and Places Board, the City Regions Board has overseen the LGA's joint work with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to support local areas in the development of local industrial strategies. The LGA has held well-attended masterclasses on inclusive growth, effective collaboration with businesses and stakeholders, and developing a place-based narrative. It also hosted a series of action learning sets with officers from around the country. Write-ups from these events alongside learning notes and a good practice toolkit to support the creation of a robust evidence base will be available on the LGA website by late June.
2. We have continued to respond to developments arising from the Government's review of Local Enterprise Partnerships. Recent activity has included responses to work led by the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee into LEP progress. This has included a focus on strengthening LEP accountability, particularly in light of changes to LEP board composition.

Trade and investment

3. In April, Marian Sudbury, Director of UK Regions at the Department for International Trade (DIT), attended the City Regions Board to talk about the Department's sub-national work. The Board discussed with Marian how councils could most effectively contribute to the Department's work and highlighted examples from across the country of the important role for councils in supporting exports and inward investment.
4. This activity at the Board has been supplemented by Parliamentary activity including written questions on trade from the LGA Chairman and a meeting between Cllr Kevin Bentley and Graham Stuart MP, Minister for Investment.
5. The LGA has also worked with DIT on improvement support to councils on this agenda and we will shortly be publishing a guide for local authorities looking to attract investment from both domestic and foreign sources into local capital projects. We will continue to work with DIT to explore opportunities for further commissioned work that would support the efforts of the sector in this area.

Skills and employment

6. The final LGA Skills Taskforce roundtable, established by this Board and the People and Places Board, took place on 28 March. It focused on the future of work: how changing skills needs of sector-specific industries will play out in the local economy. A total of 22 leading stakeholders, industry and sector representatives attended. A write-up of the roundtable can be viewed on our [skills taskforce page](#).
7. As part of our efforts to engage more with stakeholders on skills, the Board invited David Hughes, the Association of Colleges' Chief Executive to the April Board to discuss how councils, combined authorities and colleges could collaborate more nationally and locally.

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8. Issues discussed included how to support young people with post-16 choices and the need for investment in adult education. These are areas which could merit joint work in the future. David invited members to engage in the Independent Future Colleges Commission, which the Board agreed.
9. The Government's National Retraining Scheme, set up to advise and reskill adults vulnerable to economic change is being developed now by the DfE, CBI and the TUC (the National Retraining Partnership). Councils and combined authorities can play a role in supporting this. To this end we – the LGA, Learning and Work Institute and the National Retraining Partnership – organised a roundtable in May which included a mix of combined authorities, councils, stakeholders and industry leads to get a better understanding of the scheme and to inform its development.
10. The LGA and 23 leading signatories wrote an [open letter](#) to the Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP, Secretary of State for Education, which called for a series of reforms to support councils and combined authorities to deliver quality apprenticeships locally. This included calls on the Government to pause plans to begin clawing back unspent Apprenticeship Levy funding following delays to the standards in adult care, early years and building control against which the Levy funds must be spent. The letter was featured in the Financial Times. The LGA has also [welcomed](#) a recent Public Accounts Committee [report](#) raising concerns about the apprenticeship programme, having previously [submitted written evidence](#) to it.

Contact officer: Rebecca Cox
Position: Principal Policy Adviser
Phone number: 0207 7187 7384
E-mail: rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk