

Note of last City Regions Board meeting

Title: City Regions Board
Date: Monday 7 April 2014
Venue: Westminster Suite, 8th Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Declarations of Interest No declarations of interest were made.	
2	Introduction to the LGA City Regions Board Sir Richard Leese, Chair of the Board, welcomed all members to the meeting and introduced Sir Merrick Cockell, Chairman of the LGA, to provide an introduction. Sir Merrick formally welcomed members to the first meeting of the City Regions Board. He explained that the Board presents an opportunity to give city regions a greater voice within the LGA and tap into the skills of the members seated around the table. He said that he looks forward to seeing how the Board develops over the coming year. Sir Richard introduced the other lead members of the Board and explained that the LGA had changed its governance structure following a challenge from the Core Cities. It is now up to the City Regions Board to contribute to the new structure. He said that the Board will be reviewed after its first year and needs to show that it has developed implementable propositions and has influenced 2015 election manifestos. Therefore the work programme focuses on big issues where the Board can make a difference in that time frame. Representatives from London Councils and Key Cities voiced their support for the creation of the Board and reiterated the need for it to create measurable impact.	
3	Minister of State for Cabinet Office (Cities and Constitution), The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP Sir Richard Leese welcomed The Rt. Hon. Greg Clark MP, Minister of State for Cabinet Office (Cities and Constitution), to the meeting and invited him to address members.	

The Minister spoke about the increasing consensus around returning powers to cities but acknowledged that policies have been slow to reflect that. Cities are a large source of economic potential and for the country to succeed, every city must succeed as well.

The Minister said that he has endeavoured to drive home recognition across Whitehall that every place is different, with different industries, histories, etc. and so they cannot be treated the same, as is Whitehall's default approach. He therefore reminded the Board that they must consider when pushing their agenda not to present such uniformity across cities that it gives Whitehall an excuse to think that policy needs to be delivered uniformly. Instead, emphasising the difference between places could bolster the case for local solutions. His advice would be to resist the urge to make devolution a purely constitutional issue as this would be likely to hold up progress. The Minister urged members to support colleagues that are undertaking unique projects that are not being done in other cities, and to champion these.

The Minister also highlighted the opportunity the Board presents for members to share best practice. He advised that the LGA should do more to raise the profile of city successes since these are insufficiently known in Whitehall.

Lastly, the Minister said that his ambition is to carry on doing what has already been started, but with greater pace and success. He expressed his hope that he would be able to return to address the Board at another meeting in the future.

Members raised the following points:

- City regions are keen to work with Greg Clark to progress this agenda and increase support within Whitehall for local devolution.
- The debate also needs to be about financial devolution and take into account the fiscal position of city regions.
- Other city regions should be provided the scale of devolution offered to London.
- There is a need to harness enthusiasm for devolution in the private sector.

Members also sought clarity on the Growth Deals negotiation process. The Minister indicated that he is going through the Strategic Economic Plans submitted by Local Enterprise Partnerships at the end of March. He has found the SEPs greatly improved since the first drafts, but anticipates about 2 to 3 more months of work to confirm commitments and priorities. He hopes to announce the first allocations from the Local Growth Fund for 2015-16 in July, after which discussions will begin on the following years.

Sir Richard thanked the Minister for attending and offering to speak again, and summarised some of the key points of the discussion. He also told the Minister that the LGA would like to work with officials in the Cabinet Office on some of these issues, and the Minister agreed.

4 RSA - City Growth Commission

Sir Richard welcomed Jim O'Neill, Chair of the RSA City Growth Commission. He explained that the Board needs independent evidence to back up its work and the RSA Commission would provide this.

Jim O'Neill handed over to Charlotte Aldritt, Secretary of the Commission for a brief presentation before he took questions.

Charlotte began by explaining that the City Growth Commission is examining how UK city-regions (or 'metros') can be given greater freedoms to thrive – reforming public services and creating inclusive economic growth.

The Commission is chaired by Goldman Sachs Asset Management Chairman, Jim O'Neill, and includes 11 experts with experience in finance, government, public/private sector and academia. The Commission is a 12 month independent inquiry that will use the weight of its expertise, political engagement and research findings to challenge the status quo and push the debate. The Commission will inform the manifesto writing process and influence the policy debate in the build-up to the General Election.

Since launching, the Commission has:

- Run a call for evidence, hearing from over 50 organisations and individuals;
- Conducted two out of three formal evidence hearing sessions in Manchester and Bristol;
- Launched their first report, '*Metro Growth; the UK's Economic Opportunity*';
- Embarked on a research programme covering skills, infrastructure and fiscal devolution; and,
- Hosted a series of seminars with leading policy experts and practitioners.

The Commission still intends to do the following:

- Publication of research outputs in June (skills), July (infrastructure) and September (fiscal devolution);
- Private roundtable events during the Autumn party conferences;
- Continued media activity and stakeholder engagement;
- Final report due in October 2014.

Charlotte finished by showing the Board a short video from one of the Commission's evidence sessions in Manchester.

Members raised the following points and questions:

- What work the Commission has done to identify work that has already been done in this area and not to replicate it.
- The need to champion the principle of devolution even if it does not lead to growth.
- The rationale behind selecting the RSA Commission to do this work for the Board.
- How the Commission will include the work of smaller cities, not just Core Cities.

- What added value the Board's contribution would enable the Commission to achieve.

Sir Richard thanked Jim and Charlotte for attending and addressing the Board.

5 Work Programme

Sir Richard emphasised the importance of the 12-month period the Board will be assessed on and the strategy of identifying a small number of areas where it can make a positive difference. In this context, the advantage of the RSA Commission is that it will definitely report within this timescale.

Carolyn Downs explained that the LGA has worked with officers of the Board's constituent bodies to come up with a specific and focused work programme. The Board should remember that as well as party manifestos, there is also a Comprehensive Spending Review in 2015, and it is important to influence this, especially if there is a coalition government after the next General Election.

Ian Hughes outlined the three areas of work which the programme covers:

1. Devolution for economic growth and public service reform
2. Skills, employment and welfare reform
3. Trade and investment policy

Members raised the following points:

- The proposed work programme reflects the priorities and interests of the constituent organisations of the Board, who were heavily involved in its development.
- There is a need to identify 3 or 4 big asks and focus the work programme on those
- There should be more incorporation of infrastructure in the public service reform workstrand.
- It will be important to demonstrate how city regions are coming up against the limits of existing policy to transform public services.
- The focus on trade and investment was welcomed and the Board should move quickly to identify the issues and opportunities for city regions.
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- To prevent our core messages from being diluted, the LGA should try to ensure that local government representation at party conferences delivers common messages.
- Sponsorship of the City Growth Commission should be contingent on its work reflecting all members of the Board, including smaller cities.
- The Board will be looking for its contribution to the City Growth Commission to make a real difference to the debate and add value to the existing work being undertaken by the sector.

Mayor Joe Anderson invited the Board to hold its next meeting in Liverpool, to coincide with the city's hosting of the International Festival of

Business.

Decision

Members agreed to a £50,000 sponsorship for the RSA City Growth Commission with the proviso that it also examines smaller cities in its work.

Action

Officers to look at moving the location of the meeting in July to Liverpool.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Sir Richard Leese CBE	Manchester City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Marco Cereste OSSI OMRI	Peterborough City Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Abigail Bell (via telephone)	Hull City Council
Members	Cllr Roger Symonds Cllr Richard Kemp CBE Cllr Ravi Govindia Mayor Jules Pipe Cllr Andrew Geary Cllr Paul Bayliss Cllr Paul Watson (via telephone) Cllr Peter Box CBE Cllr Peter Rankin Cllr Adrian Andrew Cllr Nick Forbes Cllr Sir Albert Bore Mayor Joe Anderson OBE	Bath & North East Somerset Council Liverpool City Council Wandsworth London Borough Council Hackney London Borough Council Milton Keynes Council Derby City Council Sunderland City Council Wakefield Metropolitan District Council Preston City Council Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council Newcastle upon Tyne City Council Birmingham City Council Liverpool City Council
Apologies	Mayor George Ferguson CBE Cllr John Beesley Cllr Jon Collins Cllr Keith Wakefield Cllr Tudor Evans	Bristol City Council Bournemouth Borough Council Nottingham City Council Leeds City Council Plymouth City Council
LGA Officers	Carolyn Downs, Ian Hughes, Piali DasGupta, Donna Davidson	

