

## **City Regions Board- report from Sir Richard Leese CBE (Chair)**

### **Devolution**

1. Much of the focus during this period has been on refining policy lines in advance of the now delayed Local Economic Recovery and Devolution White Paper, drawing up a set up broad principles to frame future engagement. We have also continued to take forward work commissioned within the previous board cycle, including: the submission to Government of research by Metro Dynamics into Subnational Governance Structures and hosting a meeting of the Devolution All Party Parliamentary Group on fiscal devolution drawing on research undertaken by Europe Economics, Localis and WPI Economics.
2. Looking ahead, work is underway to provide members of the City Regions Board with an opportunity to engage directly with a Government representative and to use both the HCLG Committee Inquiry and the Devolution APPG Inquiry to further push the case for local devolution and a place based approach across Whitehall. Cllr Susan Hinchliffe Vice Chair of the City Regions Board has been approached to sit on the APPG Inquiry Panel.

### **Urban Issues**

3. Work to explore the additional cost pressures facing urban areas has now completed and the final report drawing on the experiences of councils tackling the issue of housing and homelessness will be sent to the Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government for consideration.
4. Recognising that urban areas have been hard hit by the coronavirus pandemic and the economic consequences of lock down, the board has agreed to commission new work to set out a vision for urban growth, due to be published in late spring.

### **Employment and Skills**

5. This month we published our [Re-thinking youth participation for the present and next generation: education to employment](#). The report culminates our engagement work with the sector and stakeholders on improving youth participation. It has been reviewed with a COVID-19 lens. It sets out our recommendations to Government on improving the education, training and employment offer for young people and the support needed for those are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and disadvantaged groups to aid economic recovery. We are calling for a new Youth Minister to work across Whitehall to tackle youth unemployment, localised investment to help support for those out of work, and much more co-design on programmes including Kickstart

6. The report has been shared widely with sector colleagues, stakeholders and DfE and DWP officials. The LGA has also written to all the relevant Ministers and Shadow Ministers, including Vice-Presidents. A range of [media activity](#) accompanied its publication and received good interest. As part of progressing our policy and lobbying work we are planning an APPG on Youth Employment this Autumn.
7. The LGA has responded to the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee inquiry into employment and Covid-19 which sought views on immediate and longer-term measures needed to protect and create jobs. Our response significantly focussed on the impact of the crisis on young people and what is needed to support them.
8. We have developed resources for the sector to engage with Kickstart. including setting out how [councils](#) can, with the right level of resource, add value to Kickstart. In addition, [Kickstart: what good looks like](#) paper has been developed by the LGA and representative organisations of local government to support local and national discussions on the design, commissioning and delivery of Kickstart. It has been sent to the Employment Minister.
9. The LGA Chairman met with Mims Davies MP, Minister for Employment (8 September) to discuss the added value local government – councils and combined authorities – bring to DWP programmes and recovery through a co-design process including Kickstart and support for the long term unemployed. We have followed up to suggest further engagement opportunities with the LGA.

## **EU Funding/UKSPF**

10. Through the Growth Programme Board and the Performance and Dispute Resolution National Sub Committee, the LGA continued the work in shaping how the COVID time limited flexibilities could be used to support local areas responses to the pandemic and economic recovery. This includes ensuring that the guidance for the Safer High Streets grants is accurate. In addition to this, DWP launched a bolt on option so current ESF funding programmes can purchase IT equipment and WiFi to help tackle the digital divide.
11. The LGA continues to raise concerns about DWP not fully utilising the ESF programme before we leave the ESIF programme. While there have been improvements in the number of projects stuck in the appraisal process, we are still waiting to see the impact of the increased staffing capacity will have on appraisal times, to ensure as much as possible is spent before we leave the programme in 2023.
12. The LGA continues to lobby for a replacement for EU funding through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This includes the EU Exit Taskforce members raising issue with Government Ministers and it is playing a key role in the LGA's submission for the Comprehensive Spending Review. The LGA has hosted a stakeholder event to discuss wider growth funding to inform any future work on the UKSPF.



**Councillors Forum**

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