

Note of last City Regions Board meeting

Title: City Regions Board
Date: Wednesday 30 September 2020
Venue: Online via Zoom

Item Decisions and actions

1 Chair's Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed members to the first board meeting of 2020/21.

2 City Regions Board 2012/21: Terms of Reference, Membership and Appointments to Outside Bodies

Thomas French introduced the Terms of Reference for the City Regions Board 2020/21 and asked members to note the continuing membership of the board.

Decision

Members noted the membership and agreed the Board's Terms of Reference for 2020/21.

3 Board Work Programme 2020/21

Sonika Sidhu introduced the Board Work Programme and stated that the report reflects on the major policy developments which have taken place over the past year and anticipates the key areas of focus for the future work of the LGA.

Decision

Members agreed the Board Work Programme 2020/21.

4 Devolution update

Philip Clifford introduced the report and highlighted to members the policy and public affairs activity relating to further devolution for members to comment on.

Members made the following comments:

- Discussion before the pandemic was very different on devolution to how it is discussed now. We can learn from how local government has functioned during the pandemic and what that means for devolution.
- Getting a commitment to move away from centralisation from government is very key, as seen in Wales.
- The paper shows that local government has a clear vision, but this will need to

be updated after the pandemic.

- Work needs to be done to highlight what local government gets right, to make a better case for devolution.
- Devolution and the relationship with sub national bodies needs to be worked out to understand what functions local government will take on during the devolution journey. Transport still is one of the best-case studies of the reason for greater devolution.
- The role of local government as a voice of accountability needs to be seen through the devolution policy work.
- Authorities have been working together more to get better deals for their regions, and this is how local government can make the case for devolution.
- Local government is seen as patch work on devolution and council leaders will ask for different approaches based on the needs of their communities.
- The local lockdowns during the pandemic show that local government needs to be heard when it comes to regional decisions.

Decision

Members noted the report and agreed the draft principles.

Action

Health devolution to come to a future board as an item.

5 Cross cutting issues

Jo Allchurch presented the report on National planning reforms, highlighting the two separate government consultations:

- The Planning for the Future White Paper
- Changes to the current planning system

Members made the following comments:

- On zoning there needs to be community engagement. As with design codes, there should not be a one size fits all approach.
- Government needs to be clearer when starting large projects, what the engagement with local government will be.

Decision

Members noted the updates.

6 A Vision for Urban Growth and Recovery

Ellie Law set out some of the headline issues around how urban areas have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and proposed that the Board commission a piece of research to explore how these issues be responded to so that urban areas can have a strong and sustainable recovery.

Members made the following comments:

- Economic recovery and what that means will be a local question that can only be answered by local government.
- The LGA should be developing a tool kit on this paper for leaders to roll out in their communities.
- Core Cities, Key Cities and other stakeholders should be consulted with and

involved in this project.

Officers responded

- Feedback from members will be fed into the project and developed going forward.

Decision

Members agreed to commission external research to support the development of a vision for urban growth and recovery.

7 Sub National Bodies

Lord Jim O'Neill, Vice Chair Northern Powerhouse Partnership reflected on the report and shared his thoughts regarding the proposition of a new Growth Board for the North with members.

Members made the following comments:

- Levelling up across local government as promised by government, needs to be pressured to see completion.
- Sub national bodies do not work if there is not greater devolution across the country. This is strongly felt in the north of England.
- Working partnerships with regions is important to integration within government departments and building up greater support for devolution.
- There needs to be greater co-design on bodies by local and national government.

Lord Jim O'Neill responded:

- Local government needs to keep making the case for greater investment and devolution seen in the north east
- Government does seem to be holding back on allowing devolution, despite what positive comments previous governments have made.

Decision

Members noted the presentation.

8 Board update paper

Sonika Sidhu provided members with a brief update on issues and policy areas not covered by other items on the agenda, including:

- UK Shared Prosperity Fund
- Local lockdowns
- Sustainability
- Spending Review

Decision

Members noted the contents of the report.

9 Urban Cost Pressures

Philip Clifford summarised research commissioned during the last political cycle into the

distinct cost pressures faced by urban local authorities and sought direction from the Board on the next steps.

Members made the following comments:

- Homelessness and the pandemic is a growing concern, especially as landlords are now allowed to order evictions.
- There needs to be more quantifiable data in the report, evidence-based research that members can use to lobby.
- Now would be a good time to cover the cost element, given how members have all done work in this area and have measurables in terms of cost and numbers.

Officers responded:

- There are data limitations around the extent to which costs can be quantified at a national level.
- Officers will work to ensure this evidence is presented to Government as soon as possible.

Decision

Members noted the report.

10 Employment and skills update

Jasbir Jhas introduced the report on employment and skills, including recent developments on Job and skills recovery.

Bushra Jamil presented the soon to be published report on Supporting youth participation for the present and next generation.

Decision

Members noted the report and draft publications.

11 Note of the Previous Meeting

Members agreed the notes of the Wednesday 17 June 2020 Board meeting.

Appendix A -Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Sir Richard Leese CBE	Manchester City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Abi Brown	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
	Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
	Cllr Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Gillian Ford	Havering London Borough Council
Members	Cllr Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr Donna Jones JP	Portsmouth City Council
	Cllr Joanne Laban	Enfield Council
	Cllr Toby Savage	West of England Combined Authority
	Mayor Joe Anderson OBE	Liverpool City Council
	Cllr Shaun Davies	Telford and Wrekin Council
	Cllr Martin Gannon	Gateshead Council
	Cllr Timothy Swift MBE	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Sean Fielding	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Anthony Hunt	Torfaen County Borough Council
Cllr Gareth Roberts	Richmond upon Thames London Borough Council	