

## Note of last City Regions Board meeting

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**Title:** City Regions Board  
**Date:** Wednesday 18 November 2020  
**Venue:** Online via Zoom

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### Attendance

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

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome, Apologies &amp; Declarations of Interest</b>  Cllr Sir Richard Leese (Chair) welcomed members to the meeting and gave a brief reminder of etiquette in remote meetings.  The following apologies were noted: Cllr Anita Lower, Cllr Iain Malcolm  There were no declarations of interest.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Business Plan 2019/22 - 2020 Review &amp; Update</b>  The Chair explained that the update reflected changes to the Business Plan as a result of the ongoing COVID pandemic.  <b>Decision</b> The members of the City Regions Board noted the update.  <b>Action</b> Officers to proceed with delivery of Business Plan	
<b>3</b>	<b>COVID Headlines</b>  The Chair invited Sonika Sidhu (Principal Policy Adviser) to discuss the report. In her update, Sonika noted that the document is updated on a weekly basis and outlines the COVID related issues that the LGA are currently lobbying the Government on.  In the subsequent discussion the following points were raised by members;  <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Concerns were raised with poor coordination between the local and national testing systems.</li><li>- Ensuring that individuals and households contacted through the Tracing system apply for and receive the financial support they are entitled to.</li></ul>	

- Members questioned the criteria that will be applied to determining the risk level of individual areas.
- Members noted that the use of terminology around mass testing was somewhat inaccurate. It was stressed that Lateral Flow testing would provide an additional tool rather than an outright solution given the targeted approach used so far and technical skill of those expected to administer it.
- Children's Services was highlighted as an area for further lobbying, particularly the provision of judicial capacity. A deal of staff and member capacity is being absorbed by custody arrangements that would normally be handled in private court.
- Continued uncertainty around financial support for businesses was highlighted. Members noted concerns with the short-term nature of funding and access to discretionary funding based on COVID alert level at the end of the national lockdown.
- The Chair added that conversations with the Government held locally have suggested powers for inspection and closure of non-COVID compliant businesses could be available to local authorities.

#### **Decision**

The members of the City Regions Board noted the report.

#### **Action**

Officers to proceed in line with members comments.

## **4 Devolution Update**

The Chair Invited Philip Clifford (Senior Adviser) to discuss recent work and announcements on devolution. In his update, Philip noted the following points;

- Further delays are being seen to the Devolution White Paper, wouldn't expect publication until after the 2021 Local Elections.
- Noted that it is the role of the LGA to push for an ambitious settlement through on devolution. Given such Philip asked for specific comments on the following;
  - o a steer on whether there are any significant gaps in the list of existing devolution asks
  - o comment on the proposal to consider whether these powers might be devolved to a single or multi-council area;
  - o reflect on the potential to develop a 'recovery deal' model; and, how best to expand the menu of devolution asks to take account of the unfolding national context.
- Noted that the APPG on Devolution was due to sit on 18/11/20 with Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe (Vice-Chair) due to give evidence on

behalf of the LGA.

- Gave further details on the upcoming Health Devolution Workshop

In the subsequent discussion the following points were raised by members:

- Members discussed the Government's preference for the creation of combined authorities. The Chair added that the combined authority model used in Greater Manchester was tailored to very specific considerations on the local economy, community, geography and governance structures.
- Members stressed the importance of engaging local authorities and communities in negotiations around the devolution process. It was suggested that such enabled greater buy-in and the creation models tailored to local needs. The need to ensure powers are distributed correctly was also noted.
- Comments were also made on the engagement and enthusiasm within central Government for local devolution.

#### **Decision**

The members of the City Region Board noted the report.

#### **Action**

Officers to proceed in line with members comments.

## **5 Board Update**

The Chair invited Sonika Sidhu to introduce the update. Sonika noted that the update discussed work not covered in the substantive reports including planning reform and the EU Exit process.

In the subsequent discussion the following points were raised by members;

- Concerns were noted with the guidance being provided to local authorities ahead of Britain leaving the EU.
- It was also felt that authorities had not been regularly contacted by MHCLG for assurances purposes on the preparations for the EU Exit.
- Significant concerns were highlighted by members on the impact of the EU Exit on Port Authorities. It was noted that the guidance received by authorities had been confusing and subject to significant delays. Paul Green (Adviser) added that current guidance for Port Authorities would be circulated to members after the meeting. Paul urged members of raise specific concerns with officers for liaison with MHCLG.
- The Chair requested for a written update on planning reform and proposed changes to the new homes allocations to be circulated to the Board's Lead Members.

### **Decision**

The members of the City Regions Board noted the update.

### **Actions**

- Officers to proceed in line with members comments
- Port Authority guidance to be circulated to members
- Planning Update to be shared with City Regions Board Lead Members

## **6 Equality, Diversity & Inclusion**

The Chair invited Sonika Sidhu to provide a verbal update on recent activity. In her update Sonika noted the following;

- LGA has adopted a broader approach to tackling inequalities across the organisation, political groups and wider sector.
- Cllr Abi Brown has been appointed as the Equalities Advocate for the City Regions Board.
- Welcomed feedback and input from members on EDI matters in the policy development process.

## **7 Update on "A Vision For Urban Growth and Recovery"**

The Chair invited Eleanor Law (Adviser) to discuss recent activity and introduce the provider who will be taking the work forward.

Eleanor gave a brief overview of the tender process followed since the last meeting, noting that the tender had been won by Cambridge Econometrics. Eleanor then introduced Glenn Athey (Cambridge Econometrics) to discuss the next steps.

In his presentation Glenn raised the following points;

- The main goals of the project are to: understand the impacts of the COVID pandemic, review past policy creation & delivery and set a vision for recovery & renewal.
- Glenn outlined the project timeline up to the publication of the final report expected in March 2021.
- Provided an overview at the rates unemployment and furlough during across the UK during the COVID pandemic based on employment type, sector, age, gender. Added that young people, ethnic minority groups and low skilled workers have been disproportionately affected.
- Explained that the research will consider and report on Urban-Local Trends before, during and after the COVID pandemic, and

how such links into more long-term trends being seen globally.

- Will put forward reasoned considerations on making policy fit for post-COVID, assisting recovery and setting a new urban agenda. The City Regions Board will be given a significant consultative role.
- Gave a brief overview of the background, values and mission of Cambridge Econometrics. History of working with the LGA and partner organisations.

In the subsequent discussion the following points were raised by members:

- A question was raised on how the impact of Britain leaving the European Union would be accounted for. Glenn explained that CE have previously done dedicated work on this topic for the Mayor of London, the same modelling and analysis will be applied.

The Chair thanked Glenn for his time and presentation.

### **Decision**

The members of the City Regions Board noted the report.

## **8 Employment & Skills Recovery**

The Chair invited Jasbir Jhas (Senior Adviser) to discuss recent activity around employment. In her update Jasbir noted the following points;

- Noted that Paragraph 1 of the report alongside Annex A outline the current LGA position. Jasbir requested specific comments from members on this.
- Discussed the development of a DWP led programme for Long Term Unemployed people, which is expected to override a range of programmes run at a local level.
- Noted that the LGA submitted evidence to a consultation process but is still awaiting a formal response from the DWP. The submission emphasised the importance of appropriate contracting areas to enable proper integration of provisions for LTU.
- A joint meeting between the Minister for Employment and the Lead Members of the People & Places and City Regions Boards.
- Existing Adult Education budgets need to be maximised to provide greatest value for money.
- Further Education White Paper has been slightly delayed. Expected to propose a greater role for local colleges, including an accountability role for other community providers.
- Asked for comments from members on the specific actions recommended on paragraphs 7-9.

In the subsequent discussion the following points were raised by

members;

- Members broadly expressed support for the actions recommended by officers in Paragraphs 8 and 9.
- Importance of local involvement in delivery to communities was highlighted, with concerns expressed that the Government are not considering such.
- The Chair stressed that health should be given equal importance to skills training in considerations around LTU programmes.
- Members agreed that the LGA should lobby for a greater role for local authorities in the commissioning and accountability of Adult Education provision.
- While members voiced support for an expanded role for colleges within Adult Education, it was noted that accountability should sit with democratically accountable councils.
- Determining which sectors would see skills investment was seen to be important in order to support existing and emergent industries.
- Engaging with innovative funding models was emphasised, with the Social Impact Bond model and DfE Innovation Fund highlighted as examples.

The Chair summarised noting that there was broad agreement with the approach presented by officers in the report.

**Decision**

The members of the City Regions Board noted the report and agreed with the approach presented by officers in paragraphs 7-9.

**Action**

Officers to proceed in line with members comments.

**9 Note of the Previous Meeting on 30th September 2020**

The Chair asked members to approve the note of the previous meeting as an accurate record.

**Decision**

The members of the City Regions Board approved the note of the meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> September as an accurate record.

**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
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 John Merry CBE	Salford City Council
	Cllr Shaun Davies	Telford and Wrekin Council
	Cllr Martin Gannon	Gateshead Council
	Mayor Marvin Rees	Bristol City Council
	Cllr Timothy Swift MBE	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Danny Thorpe	Royal Borough of Greenwich
	Cllr David Mellen	Nottingham City Council
	Cllr Sean Fielding	Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Shama Tatler	Brent Council
	Cllr Anthony Hunt	Torfaen County Borough Council
	Cllr Elise Wilson	Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Gareth Roberts	Richmond upon Thames London Borough Council
Apologies	Cllr Anita Lower	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council