

## **City Regions Board – Report from Cllr Sir Richard Leese CBE (Chair)**

### **Devolution**

1. The Devolution APPG, which is supported by the Local Government Association, has agreed its work programme for the next year and will look at aspects of health devolution, constitutional reform and councils' role in economic recovery. On 13 July Minister Stephen Greenhalgh attended a meeting to discuss the APPG's recently published report *Levelling Up Devo* and gave a positive response on several issues including skills devolution, the devolution baseline and local governance reform. He reassured the Group that devolution would feature in the forthcoming levelling up white paper.

### **Urban Issues**

2. In the Autumn 2020, the CR Board agreed to commission new work to set out a vision for urban growth and recovery. This work is now concluding, and the final report would be published this Summer. The report highlighted the differential impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had, with urban areas being acutely affected, including with higher rates of infections and a higher proportion of deaths. The report also demonstrated how the Covid-19 pandemic has amplified existing challenges and exacerbated existing inequalities and identifies five priorities for urban areas in the next five years: restructuring, functioning places, tackling inequalities, addressing environmental sustainability and climate change, and securing sufficient resources.

### **Employment and skills**

3. We continue to work with the sector to set out the implications of the Government's Adult Education Budget funding rule change on councils' adult and community learning provision.

### **EU Funding/UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

4. Following the launch of the UK Community Renewal Fund prospectus, officers are speaking to a number of lead authorities to seek feedback on the CRF process and any learning that might be made available for the design of the forthcoming UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

### **Freeports**

5. East Midlands Airport, Felixstowe & Harwich, Humber, Liverpool City Region, Plymouth and South Devon, Solent, Teesside and Thames have been successful in the Freeports bidding process for England. We have called on Government to remain alive to the risk of economic displacement of UK domestic businesses as it progresses with winning areas. There were over 30 bids for Freeport status from across the country evidencing a high-level interest from local areas. We have asked Government to continue to consider how it can best work with the unsuccessful areas as part of its wider ambition to 'level up' the country and ensure no area is left behind.

## **Programme of work and priorities**

6. Future areas of work and priorities include:

6.1 We will seek to ensure the Government's plans for economic recovery account for the interests and challenges of urban places and lobby for them to have the powers and resources to lead a successful and sustainable recovery and drive improved outcomes in their communities.

6.2 We will continue to work to ensure that the Government puts councils at the heart of its Levelling Up Agenda.

6.3 We will continue to take forward the LGA's lobbying work on skills, making the case for the Work Local model and continuing to engage with key stakeholders.

6.4 We will continue to seek feedback on the UK Community Renewal Fund process to help the development of the design of the forthcoming UK Shared Prosperity Fund, and ensure that councils play a key role in managing growth funding through the Levelling Up Fund and UKSPF.

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