

City Regions Board – Report from Mayor Marvin Rees (Chair)

Employment and skills

1. The Skills for Jobs [White paper](#) introduced earlier this year proposed a range of reforms which give new employer representation bodies (e.g. Chambers of Commerce) a lead role in setting out the technical skills provision needed for their local areas. To deliver the reforms, the Government brought forward legislation and two consultations.
2. The Skills and post-16 Education Bill, introduced to Parliament in May, designates new employer representative bodies (ERBs), seeks to make it a legal requirement that ERBs and colleges collaborate to develop Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs), introduces new Secretary of State powers to intervene when colleges fail to deliver, and puts in place provisions for a new Lifelong Learning Entitlement. Our latest briefing to influence the Bill's passage through the Lords can be viewed [here](#).
3. Last week the LGA responded to a DfE further education funding and accountability systems [consultation](#). In it we said that the Government should not merge Community Learning into the National Skills Fund, or if it is, it must be ringfenced so that this provision is protected. Any amalgamation risks losing significant community capacity, especially at a time when local authorities and their partners are already experiencing a tailing off European Social Fund, coupled with delays in replacing ESF with an uncertain quantum of Shared Prosperity Fund.
4. We also call for adult skills funding (Level 2 and below) to be at least restored to 2010 levels and devolved to all local and combined authorities, that the complementary role of councils' adult education provision is understood, resourced and recognised in proposals to reform the FE system, and that councils should have a new 'Community Skills Lead' role with strategic responsibility for adult education planning and work with the proposed ERBs and the provider base to align provision and ensure progression routes. The LGA also responded to the DfE National Skills Fund. Both responses will be available on our [website](#).

UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Community Renewal Fund

5. As part of our lobbying for a localised, place-based replacement for EU funding – the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), the LGA has secured an officer level taskforce including the other home nation local government associations, including the Welsh LGA. The Chairs of the People & Places and City Regions Boards agreed that the different levels of English local government should be represented by council representatives for Core Cities, CCN, DCN, Key Cities and London Councils. Three meetings have been held before the spending review where representatives raised a number of key points, including the need for there to be a political level taskforce, the case for a fully devolved fund with the removal of departmental silos and the urgent need for the Government to

announce the successful programmes of the Community Renewal Fund – the pilot programme for the SPF. We are likely to hear further detail of the SPF at the Spending Review and will continue to press for the need for the SPF to be co-designed on a political and officer level.

6. We have urged the Government to announce the successful programmes for the Community Renewal Fund, the pilot programme for the SPF. We tabled parliamentary questions and raised councils' concerns through the Growth Programme Board and the SPF taskforce (above). The Boards have agreed to capture learning from the Community Renewal Fund to support local government with the introduction of the SPF. This work will start when the delivery of the CRF programmes have commenced.

Devolution

7. On 29 July the Board oversaw the publication of a new guide to help councils navigate devolution deals [Devolution deal to delivery | Local Government Association](#). This sits alongside the LGA's refreshed devolution hub, which provides a wide range of devolution related resources.
8. The Devolution APPG, which is supported by the Local Government Association has continued to take forward its agreed work programme. On 22 September the Group held its second meeting, focused on the role constitutional reform might play in securing further devolution.

Urban Issues

9. On 10 September the LGA published [A vision for urban growth and recovery | Local Government Association](#), which analyses the consequences of COVID-19 for urban economies makes the case for a step-change in policy and funding interventions.

Local Growth

10. The City Regions Board has agreed to jointly sponsor and attend the Business in the Community Place Task Force looking at the role of business in place-led regeneration. Cllr Abi Brown will represent this Board and the Task Force will report back in April 2022.
11. On 7 September the LGA published [Councils support local businesses to take advantage of international trade opportunities](#).

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