

The Future of Cities

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper provides an update on progress towards an urban fringe event focused on the future of cities at LGA Conference and sets out plans for further work on the same topic.

Is this report confidential? Yes No

Recommendation/s

Members of the City Regions Board are asked to note and comment on plans for the urban fringe and related work on the future of cities.

Action/s

Officers will continue to draw together essay and video submissions and the data analysis of UK cities, and plan for the urban fringe event at LGA annual conference.

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Background

1. At the last meeting of the City Regions Board on 22 March, Members reflected on the LGA's first Urban Summit, and agreed that officers would build on the discussions held at the Urban Summit to prepare for an Urban Fringe event at LGA annual conference.
2. Following the meeting, officers have met with representatives from Key Cities, Core Cities, London Councils, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to discuss plans for further work on the future of cities.

Issues

3. At the Urban Summit, attendees and speakers were asked to consider three questions:
 - 3.1. What are cities?
 - 3.2. What do we need our cities to be?
 - 3.3. What is the difference and how do we get them there?
4. These three questions were designed as a launching point to prompt thought and discussion about the future of cities, their role in driving the UK's economy, and their part in delivering the Government's levelling up ambitions.
5. Following the Urban Summit, officers have reached out to a wide range of people to write either an essay or record a short video on the question: "what do we want our cities to be, and how do we get there?". This list aims to capture a diverse range of voices, and includes city leaders, academics, think tanks, writers, artists, architects and city planners (see **Annex A** for a full list).
6. Officers have also met with the Commonwealth Local Government Forum to discuss how to involve the Commonwealth Sustainable Cities Network, with the aim of including contributions from members of the network in the online collection.
7. These contributions will be brought together in an online collection, along with a piece of work looking at the data and demographics of UK cities. This collection will be launched at an [urban fringe event](#) at LGA Conference. The event will take place from 17:15 - 18:15 on Wednesday 29 June, in the King's Suite of the Harrogate Convention Centre.
8. At the event Mayor Marvin Rees as Chair of the Board will introduce and provide context to the collection of essays and videos. Attendees will also have the opportunity to hear from Mayor of Freetown Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr, and Professor Greg Clark, Chair of the Connected Places Catapult during the event, as well as network with other attendees.

Officers are discussing sponsorship options with the UK Cities Climate Investment Commission.

9. Following the urban fringe event, officers will explore commissioning further research on behalf of the board to develop the propositions in the essays and videos further, as well as to make the case for cities as vehicles for addressing long standing inequalities and delivering the Government's levelling up aims.
10. One option this research could look at would be quantifying annual net gain in GDP if city-specific challenges in the UK were addressed and setting out local/national interventions needed to attract private sector investment. This could then be situated in the context of the Levelling Up White Paper's first mission: *By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, and the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.*
11. As we take this work forward, we will look to raise awareness with civil servants, Ministers, and Parliamentarians ahead of more formal representations. Members' support in this activity would be welcome.

Implications for Wales

12. The Levelling Up White Paper presents a vision for the UK. While many of the investment and policy levers are likely different within the Welsh context there will be value in drawing on the experience of Welsh cities in pursuing this agenda.

Equalities Implications

13. The LGA's 'A Vision for Urban Growth and Recovery' paper explicitly highlighted that the Covid-19 pandemic had exacerbated existing inequalities in urban areas, and any future commissioned research on the future of cities would explore this and other issues relating to inequality further.

14. The essays and video collection will be drawn from a diverse group of people.

Financial Implications

15. Any policy activity arising from this paper will be met from the Board's policy and research budget.

Next steps

16. Members are asked to note and comment on the plans for the urban fringe event and the online product that will be launched at that event; and to help raise awareness of the launch and wider programme.

17. Officers will continue to draw together essay and video submissions and the data analysis of UK cities, and plan for the urban fringe event at LGA annual conference.