

Note of last City Regions Board meeting

Title:	City Regions Board
Date:	Wednesday 15 June 2022
Venue:	Hybrid meeting (via Microsoft Teams & Victoria Room, 18 Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ)

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as [Appendix A](#) to this note.

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Welcome, Apologies and Substitutes, Declarations of Interest The Chair welcomed Members, officers, and guests to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Cllrs Bev Craig and Robert Alden. Cllrs Liam Billington and James Swindlehurst attended the meeting as substitutes. Cllr Gillian Ford declared an interest as she was a Facilitator at Shared Service Architecture. The Chair congratulated Cllr Samantha Dixon on her inclusion in the Queen's Birthday Honours list, in recognition of her services to local government both in her role as a Councillor in West Cheshire and Chester Council and on her work as a Member of the City Regions Board.	
2	Minutes of the last meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.	
3	Business in the Community Update The Chair welcomed Lord Steve Bassam, Chair of the Business in the Community (BITC) Place Taskforce, and invited Esther Barrott, Adviser, to introduce the report. Esther introduced the report which provided Board Members with a brief overview of the BITC Place Taskforce and the Board's involvement to date to support a discussion with Lord Steve Bassam. Lord Bassam set out the following points: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Background information which related to the report and the work of	

the taskforce to date.

- The need to emphasise the importance of business engagement to ensure that resources were allocated to achieve the targets set out in the 12 missions that government had established for levelling-up.
- The 14 recommendations set out within the report, which focused on:
 - Collaboration
 - Business leadership driving successful partnership and place-based
 - The unique resources of each partner and the need for leveraging
 - Government's approach to ensuring that businesses were involved in relation to levelling up.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- The Chair welcomed government's acknowledgement of local authorities being leaders of place and their role as convenors.
- The importance of appropriate access to resource was emphasised.
- A question was asked which related to BITC activity and projects.
- A question was asked which related to point 7.2 within the report.
- The Chair asked Lord Bassam for three key asks from BITC to local government.
- The Chair emphasised the importance of government recognising the present challenges within cities, specifically in relation to inequalities.

Lord Bassam responded to Board Members' comments, setting out the following points:

- Lord Bassam provided some background information in relation to the BITC Place Taskforce.
- BITC worked with local authorities and other partners to deliver specific projects, focusing place activity on a number of communities.
- In response to a question which related to point 7.2 within the report, BITC established a Strategic Board within each area and worked closely with local authorities to create Business Connectors, Champions and Ambassador Roles to establish and maintain place-based partnerships. A Business Connector would typically be appointed if adequate funding was available. It was expected that once established, the Strategic Board would create a group of Ambassadors to work with businesses to ensure that they were engaged in advocacy work within communities.
- The three key asks from BITC to local government were:
 - Ensuring that government recognised the value of strategic partnerships in place and within communities, working with levelling-up directors and recognising the value of funding connectors.
 - For Town Deal Boards to be further utilised to deliver levelling-up missions.
 - Levelling-up funding needed to be flexible, long-term, localised

and aligned with the levelling-up missions to maximise the engagement of business and deliver transformative change.

- The Prince's Seeing is Believing Programme, established in 1990 by HRH The Prince of Wales, had played a vital role in shaping the BITC's place-based approach. The Seeing is Believing programme would take place again in 2022, offering a powerful experience for senior business leaders, showing the unique challenges faced by local communities.

Lord Bassam thanked both the LGA for their continued help and support also Cllrs Abi Brown and Simon Henig, for their invaluable contributions to the report.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to continue to work in partnership with BITC to make the case to government, particularly in relation to local government being place-based leaders.

4 The role of councils in addressing the rising cost of living

The Chair welcomed Rose Doran, Senior Adviser in the Children, Welfare, Equality and Democracy (CWED) officer team, and invited Esther Barrott, Adviser, to introduce the report.

Esther introduced the report which provided an overview of the LGA's current work on support for low-income households, led by Rose and the Resources Board.

Rose set out the following points:

- Background information which related to the Resources Board and policy join-up.
- Council finances being impacted by the rising cost of living was being considered.
- Work in relation to addressing the rising cost of living had increased significantly as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and continued to increase post-pandemic.
- The need for a positive narrative was emphasised, as well as highlighting the challenges and the need for a properly resourced welfare system to ensure a sustainable approach to having greater resilience within communities.
- The need to better protect communities in the future was emphasised and would be a key theme at the LGA annual conference 2022.
- A workshop had been set up which focused on council's engagement with service users in relation to anti-poverty.
- At a recent Resources Board meeting, it was suggested that a steering group be set up to discuss the role of councils in addressing the rising cost of living. Input would be required from a

representative from each Board.

- The steering group would deliver action learning and bring together key focuses and specific issues.

Board Members commented on the issues that the rising cost of living had brought, including:

- The need for well-targeted government support schemes.
- The need to retrofit properties to reduce bills and create green employment opportunities.
- Ever-increasing council tax bills.
- Health inequalities.
- The need for local authorities to have access to the resources necessary to allow them to take ownership of local issues and support residents.
- Fuel poverty.

Rose noted all of the points raised by Board Members and confirmed that she'd continue to link in with Board Members and other Boards in relation to the rising cost of living issues.

The Chair encouraged all Board Members to send summaries to Rose related to the work which continued to take place within each local authority in addressing issues related to the cost-of-living crisis.

Cllr Ford to represent the City Regions Board on the LGA's cost of living steering group.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to contact Board Members once there were opportunities to lead on other workstreams.

5 The Future of Cities

The Chair invited Philip Clifford, Policy Adviser, to introduce the report.

Philip introduced the report which provided 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.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- Reference was made to a fringe event organised by Key Cities taking place at the LGA's Annual Conference which related to the future of urban government with Lord Kerslake.
- The Chair also added that Core Cities were looking to work with the RSA to consider these issues.
- The need to include the voice of the public was emphasised in

relation to the future of cities.

The Chair encouraged all Board Members to use their various contacts and connections to ensure that government better understood the role and work of cities and how better to leverage urban areas.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to liaise with Key Cities in relation to the Fringe Event which was taking place with Lord Kerslake.

6 Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill Update

The Chair invited Esther Barrott, Adviser, to introduce the report.

Esther introduced the report which provided an overview of provisions within the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill related to devolution and levelling up missions.

Board Members made a number of comments and asked questions which related to the following points:

- The potential levelling-up opportunities present for county-combined authorities where large towns were surrounded by rural areas, and the need for government to recognise that particularly unitary authorities were already fairly well-placed.
- Cities and towns of all sizes needed a fair share of the resources that were available.
- Greater flexibility was welcomed.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

Action:

- Officers to continue to feed Board Members' comments back to government colleagues.

7 Levelling Up Locally

The Chair invited Esther Barrott, Adviser, to introduce the report.

Esther introduced the report which provided a short update in relation to the Levelling Up Locally inquiry.

A question was asked which related to communications between the LGA and both The Association of Directors of Children's Services (ADCS) and The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS). Esther

confirmed that conversations had taken place.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

8 City Regions Board Annual Report

The Chair invited Rebecca Cox, Principal Policy Adviser, to introduce the report.

Rebecca introduced the report which summarised the Board’s activity over the past year. It set out key achievements in relation to the priorities for the City Regions Board in 2021/22 and looked forward to next year’s priorities.

Decision:

- Board Members noted the report.

9 Forward look on employment and skills

Please refer to the confidential minutes document for more information related to this item.

10 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Future of Growth Funding

Please refer to the confidential minutes document for more information related to this item.

11 Any other business

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, expressed his thanks to all LGA officers for their reports and the hard work that they had undertaken this year. He also thanked Board Members for their contributions and reminded them to contact their political groups to express interest in remaining on the City Regions Board for the 2022-23 cycle.

Appendix A - Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Mayor Marvin Rees	Bristol City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Abi Brown	Stoke-on-Trent City Council
	Cllr Susan Hinchcliffe	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Gareth Roberts	Richmond upon Thames London Borough Council
	Cllr Gillian Ford	Havering London Borough Council
Members	Cllr Barry Anderson	Leeds City Council

Cllr Joanne Laban
Cllr Toby Savage
Cllr Samantha Dixon
Cllr Graeme Miller
Cllr Elise Wilson
Cllr Jason Brock
Cllr John Merry CBE
Cllr Anthony Hunt
Cllr Shama Tatler
Cllr David Mellen
Cllr Carl Cashman
Cllr Martin Fodor

Enfield Council
West of England Combined Authority
Cheshire West and Chester Council
Sunderland City Council
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Reading Borough Council
Salford City Council
Torfaen County Borough Council
Brent Council
Nottingham City Council
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Bristol City Council

Apologies

Cllr Robert Alden
Cllr Bev Craig

Birmingham City Council
Manchester City Council

In Attendance

Cllr Liam Billington
Cllr Bob Cook
Cllr James Swindlehurst

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
Slough Borough Council