

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

Future of Cities

1. The LGA's City Regions Board, in conjunction with the RSA, Core Cities, Key Cities and London Councils held the second urban summit on 22 March. Over 100 people attended the in-person event to hear from a wide range of speakers, including: Andy Haldane, Bruce Katz, Alice Charles, Joy Warmington and Alex Norris MP. The event saw the launch of a series of commissioned videos '[City Citizens](#)' and the publication of an [open letter](#) from the leaders of Core Cities, Key Cities and London Councils to government, setting out the case for further investment in cities. A follow-up reception will be held at the LGA's Annual Conference, providing an update on the RSA's Urban Future's Commission and an opportunity for city leaders and wider stakeholders to network.

Levelling Up

2. The LGA's [Levelling Up Locally Inquiry report](#) was published in March 2023, broadening the conversation around levelling up through five roundtable discussions, commissioned research and analysis of demographic trends. The inquiry explored how the Government's levelling up agenda might better strengthen local areas by looking beyond the Levelling Up White Paper to explore the role local leadership can play in shaping a recovery that reduced inequality for all. The report was launched at a hybrid event with over 100 attendees, and speakers included Sarah Longlands from CLES, Professor Francesca Gains from Policy at Manchester and Professor Michael Kenny from the Bennett Institute. The inquiry's findings will be used to inform the Board's future public affairs work and influence manifestos in the 2023/24 cycle, with a planned Devo APPG session exploring its recommendations.
3. The Board approved the creation and co-sponsorship of a health devolution working group with the NHS Confederation. This working group has held its first meeting in April and provides an opportunity to ensure that learning can be shared between local government, the NHS and Integrated Care Systems (ICSs). The three boards with an interest in health devolution (the City Regions Board, the People and Places Board, and the Community Wellbeing Board) all have a nominated representative on the working group. Sarah Pickup, Deputy Chief Executive of the LGA is also a member of the working group.

Employment and skills

4. We continue to promote the role of local government in employment and skills and our Work Local objectives through select committees. For instance, in May 2023, the Boards responded to the APPG for Youth Employment Committee inquiry into [Place-based approaches to youth employment](#) with Cllr Gillian Ford representing the LGA at an evidence session.
5. Work is ongoing to influence the outcomes of the [Commission on the Future of Employment Support](#) which is looking at ways in which employment support and services could be more effective. Cllr Toby Savage used the LGA [response](#) to give oral evidence to the commissioners in March.
6. In April, Cllr Hinchcliffe represented the City Regions Board alongside Cllr Bentley from the People and Places Board at a meeting with the Skills Minister, the Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP. Through it, we are seeking to create stronger ties at both political and officer level between local authorities and DfE.
7. Joint Board work across City Regions, People and Places and Community Wellbeing is being undertaken to explore and define the role of local government in addressing economic inactivity. LGA officers expect to finalise work during the summer.

Green jobs and skills

8. The Government's Green Jobs Delivery Group have agreed for the formation of a time limited Local Capacity and Capability sub-group that will run between March and May. The group will make recommendations to the Government on how best to address the local capacity and capability challenges local government face in delivering the jobs and skills needed to achieve net zero.
9. Local Government will be represented by Solace, ADEPT, Mayoral Combined Authorities as well as the LGA, which Cllr Emily O'Brien will be representing the People & Places Board. There will also be representation from business, energy companies, and education and training providers. The LGA are engaging with the partners to support the sub-committee as well as inform our wider policy development work.

Growth funding

10. Following the announcement of the allocation of the second round of the Levelling Up Fund, the People and Places and City Regions Boards sent a letter to the Secretary of State outlining experiences and asking for an open review of the process ahead of any future rounds of funding. Dehenna Davison MP has agreed to meet with the People and Places and City Regions Board Chairs ahead of the third round of the Levelling Up Fund to discuss how the fund could

be implemented in a way which would both be cost effective and empower local areas to level up their communities. The People and Places and City Regions Boards also issued a [press release](#) at the time of the announcement and led the sector response, receiving widespread media coverage.

11. The People and Places and City Regions Boards commissioned Shared Intelligence to provide support for councils and combined authorities undertaking Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) integration and to share good practice and learning, initially in response to the Ministerial letter in March 2022 setting out pathways of integration into combined authorities or institutions with devolved powers. The project saw a series of interviews and workshops carried out. The report was finalised earlier this month and draws on learning from research between November 2022 and March 2023 and DLUHC officials attended the sessions. It will now be used to inform the Board's response to the Government's information gathering exercise following the Chancellor's announcement in the 2023 budget that he was 'minded to' end funding to LEPs from April 2024.
12. The Board, working with City Regions Board, also commissioned Shared Intelligence to capture learning for policymakers in central and local government from eight place-based programmes that have been delivered over the last 20 years. The final report identifies eight key lessons for policymakers to consider. The report has recently been [published](#) on the LGA's website and is being used to inform further work related to the simplification of growth funding.
13. We commissioned Shared Intelligence to deliver action learning sets for officers in lead authorities across February and March. A number of tools and learning are being developed to support the sector introduce and deliver the fund. The LGA are working with lead authorities to encourage networking and share learning.

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