

City Regions Board – Report from Cllr Satvir Kaur (Chair)

Future of Cities

1. Building on the success of last year's Urban Summit, and the Future of Cities drinks reception at the LGA's conference, the Board has agreed to host a third Urban Summit in June 2024. Members have agreed that as we look to the next general election, the third urban summit will have a more focused agenda to give the Board and its partner Special Interest Groups a platform to engage key national decision makers and politicians, to amplify our offer: that, with the right policies, finances and space to deliver, cities can produce better outcomes, not just for urban areas, but for the whole country.

Levelling Up

2. The NHS Confederation, through its Health Economic Partnerships work programme and ICS network, established a time-limited health and devolution working group. The aim of the group was to understand the priorities, opportunities, and challenges for ICS leaders, how this intersects with English devolution to date and the emerging devolution deals. The Board co-sponsored the group alongside the People and Places and Community Wellbeing Boards. Four meetings took place in April, June, July and September and officers from the LGA and NHS Confederation are finalising the report encapsulating the findings from the working group.

Employment and skills

3. As we move towards a General Election in 2024, our aim is that a returning Government or new administration will adopt LGA's Work Local proposals for employment and skills devolution, which was jointly developed by the People and Places and City Regions Boards. The LGA has established a working group of officers from councils, devolved authorities and local government partner bodies to develop finer detail.
4. The LGA continues to support discussions between councils outside of devolution areas and the Department for Work and Pensions on the design of Universal Support, a new employment support programme to help people back into work, which is set to be rolled out in 2024. Discussions have been positive, with DWP set to grant fund councils to run this programme. It represents a step change in DWP's thinking on how employment support can be delivered with and through local government and we are working through a range of issues about how to operationalise this.
5. The LGA has continued to support the local government representative on the cross departmental Ministerial Green Jobs Delivery Group and have been taking a leading role in the Local Capacity and Capability sub-group, regularly seeking member input over the last year and engaging closely with partners. This has been an opportunity to put forward the case for a [Green Jobs framework](#), based

on the principles of the LGA's [Work Local model](#). The sub group will be putting forward suggested recommendations for the Government's Green Jobs Action Plan in the first quarter of 2024. Lead members of City Regions, People & Places and the Local Infrastructure and Net Zero Boards provided further feedback on the recommendations in December 2023.

6. Councillor Robert Alden along with Councillor Louise McKinlay from the People and Places Board continue to support the work of the Youth Employment UK Youth Commission. The Commission aims to understand the impact of the Department for Education's decision to remove funding and support for some Level 2 Apprenticeships and for some Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications and to propose solutions that will 'allow all young people to flourish'. The Commission is due to produce a final report in January/February 2024 with policy recommendations.
7. To build on the City Regions and People and Places Boards' joint work to ensure economic inclusion, we have commissioned Pragmatix Advisory to examine how the transport system impacts people and places by limiting or enabling access to skills, training, and the labour market. The project will explore six to eight (coastal/rural/urban) places with different typologies to illustrate the impact of transport challenges and make a set of short-term and long-term policy recommendations.

Growth funding

8. The Board, alongside the People and Places Board, has jointly commissioned Athey Consulting to carry out a piece of technical analysis of previous and existing growth funds, identify the benefits and challenges of current methodologies used and lessons learned, and explore an alternative future model of growth funding which provides certainty and flexibility for councils which can be used to influence the next or successor government in their preparation for successor growth funds.
9. The Board, alongside the People and Places Board, has also commissioned Henham Strategy to develop a series of action learning sets to provide an opportunity for local areas to work through the challenges and opportunities of integration, with the findings published for other areas to benefit too. The findings from this research will be used to support the LGA's lobbying of central government to provide further support to councils and combined authorities with LEP integration.
10. This builds on work carried out by Shared Intelligence between November 2022 and March 2023 to develop support for councils and combined authorities undertaking LEP integration and share good practice and learning through a series of workshops. Most of the research was conducted before the Chancellor said he was 'minded to' end funding to LEPs from April 2024 and for their functions to be delivered by local government.

11. The LGA also hosted a webinar attended by 196 people to share the learning from local government's leadership of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The webinar included presentations by East Riding of Yorkshire, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, Forest of Dean and Cotswold district councils. It covered some of the challenges and opportunities the fund has brought, as well as the sharing of good practice.

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