

Note of last City Regions Board meeting

Title: City Regions Board
Date: Monday 19 January 2015
Venue: Smith Square 3&4, Ground Floor, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendance

An attendance list is attached as **Appendix A** to this note

Item	Decisions and actions	Action
1	Welcome and apologies Cllr Leese welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies were noted as in Appendix A Cllr Robert Light from Kirklees Council substituted for Marco Cereste. Mayor Sir Steve Bullock acted as substitute for Labour group members. Alderman Sir David Wootton from the City of London Corporation acted as substitute for Mayor George Ferguson.	
2	Update on the work programme Members noted the work programme and the progress to date which had been outlined. ACTION: Officers to progress in line with lead members' comments.	
3	Employment, Skills and Growth Heather Rolfe, Principal Research Fellow with the National Institute for Economic and Social Research (NIESR), presented findings from the Independent analysis of council-led schemes to support people towards work in advance of its publication in mid-January. This included identifying the common features of the programmes' design in terms of their aims, partnerships and funding, and programme delivery and support. Heather went on to outline the impact of the programmes as indicated by the data and the factors determining successful delivery. One member asked if the Get Bradford Working scheme statistics were skewed by the fact that it included graduates. Heather explained that this was not the case as graduate outcomes were to enter professions which matched their qualifications rather than jobs they were over qualified for.	

Dave Simmonds, Chief Executive of the Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, presented interim findings from work assessing the impact of a national employment, skills and welfare system on unemployed and people in low skilled jobs which had been jointly commissioned by the City Regions and People and Places Boards. He highlighted that 4 million people were receiving out of work benefits, of which 2.5 million were on employment and support allowance and half a million were lone parents on income support.

The Board noted that there were many obstacles for people seeking employment, and the system for claimants was often confusing. Jobcentre Plus had a dual role in the process but functioned less effectively as an employment support agency than it did as a benefits agency. It was also highlighted that only 7p of every pound saved by getting people into work was accrued locally; the incentives built into the system were wrong, as local areas should be incentivised to get people into jobs and bring down benefits.

In the question and answer session and discussion which followed members raised the following points:

- There is a skills mismatch in the UK, therefore there should be a focus on training provided by employers as well as public training programmes.
- Local authorities should focus on influencing skills to create growth, shape the local economy and support the most vulnerable, but councils and local areas should also expect a share of the dividend.
- Work on young people and skills should have a greater focus on the role of schools.
- Local government should have a greater influence on higher level skills through joint work with universities and colleges through LEPs as skills were a key driver for city plans.
- The evidence suggested that councils were better placed than Jobcentre Plus to support the needs of people with complex needs, but councils should be asked if they wanted to run these services. Further evidence may be required, but councils did not have the time or money to run pilot programmes.
- There should be clarity between central and local government on the meaning of co-commissioning of services.

The Board agreed that the draft interim findings of the report were right, but should also include 16-19 budgets, health and probation. Models should focus on principles and aims and should be designed around particular areas, not in a 'one size fits all' approach. More evidence should be gathered and reported back to the Board in due course.

ACTION: Officers to take forward members' recommendations, which would feed into the draft report prior to publication.

4 Trade and Investment policy

The Board considered a report which provided the basis for a discussion

on trade and investment policy, which was one of the Board's agreed priorities for the year. It included analysis of the findings of research by Oxford Economics on national projections and the potential to boost city region performance. Members noted that more detailed proposals would be developed, in particular regarding export hubs at city region level, and there would be clear demonstration of what work had already been successful in this area.

During the discussion which followed the following points were raised by members:

- One member commented that aerospace did not appear in table 3.5.2 in the Oxford Economics report into past and future trends in trade and investment. He commented that the aerospace industry was a major exporter in the North West in particular. The Senior Advisor commented that she would look into this and respond to the member outside of the meeting.
- It was suggested that the LGA should have a stronger strategy to make representations to the next Government to keep businesses in the UK, especially as many were under pressure to reduce costs.
- The UK had a great deal of very skilled workers in a variety of industries, which was why it remained an attractive location to base businesses and industry. Young people should be encouraged into engineering at an early age so that the highly skilled workforce could be maintained.
- A lot of work was ongoing regarding national businesses, but more should be done on local business. The LGA would articulate proposals on imports and exports, and what local authorities had to offer in this area.
- The message to present to business was that they were investing in a particular area or region, and not just the country as a whole.
- Work on imports and exports was co-operative between UKTI and individual localities. The next step was to get other partners involved with the work.

Members noted the report and agreed that an event to engage external stakeholders and UKTI should be held in March 2015 to review the research from Oxford Economics and examine where existing models of city-based trade work could form the basis of a proposal for future UKTI work.

ACTION: Members' comments on trade and investment in city regions to be taken into account for future work. Progress to be reported back to a future meeting.

5 Update on Independent Commissions

Members noted the update on the interim findings of the Non-Metropolitan Commission and Independent Commission on Local Government Finance and the next steps to be taken.

ACTION: Invite Darra Singh, Chair of the Independent Commission on Local Government Finance, to the March 2015 meeting

of the Board.

6 Note of the last City Regions Board Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were noted as an accurate record.

7 The Future Governance of England

The Board considered a report that set out a clear, cross-party statement on a vision of English local governance by 2020 for agreement by members and for recommendation for agreement by the LGA Executive.

The Chair highlighted that there would be a strong focus on devolution in England over the forthcoming weeks as manifestos were finalised and election campaigning began ahead of the General Election. Members noted that the work on devolution and proposed changes to English local governance would be linked with the 800th anniversary of the signing of Magna Carta, which would help with the publicity of the campaign to stakeholders and the media. It was noted that, subject to agreement by the LGA Executive, the campaign would be launched on 9 February 2015 at the Core Cities Devolution Summit in Glasgow.

In the following discussion members raised the following points:

- Publication of the vision of English Governance in 2020 would be the next step in the devolution debate and local government should take the opportunity to shape the debate and influence the early decisions of the next Government following the General Election in May 2015.
- Councils and the wider local government sector should be involved in any decisions made over the future of English governance. There was a suggestion that an independent body should receive any proposals.
- The content of the report, including proposals for English devolution related to local governance, communities, national governance and how proposals would be delivered, should be endorsed.
- Any changes to English local governance should be constitutionally established and embedded in law.

Members noted the report and agreed the vision of English local governance by 2020 in principle (subject to minor amendment and agreement by the LGA Executive).

ACTION: Members' comments and suggested amendments to the vision to be taken forward.

Appendix A: Attendance

Position/Role	Councillor	Authority
Chairman	Sir Richard Leese CBE	Manchester City Council
Vice-Chairman	Cllr Paul Watson	Sunderland City Council
Deputy-chairman	Cllr Abigail Bell	Hull City Council
Members	Cllr Peter Rankin	Preston City Council
	Cllr James Alexander	City of York Council
	Cllr Ranjit Banwait	Derby City Council
	Mayor Jules Pipe	Hackney London Borough Council
	Cllr Helen Holland	Bristol City Council
	Cllr Tudor Evans	Plymouth City Council
	Cllr Jon Collins	Nottingham City Council
	Cllr Roger Lawrence	Wolverhampton City Council
	Cllr Keith Wakefield	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Sean Anstee	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
	Cllr Barry Anderson	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Ravi Govindia	Wandsworth London Borough Council
	Cllr Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr Sian Reid	Cambridge City Council
	Alderman Sir David Wootton	
	Cllr Robert Light	
	Mayor Sir Steve Bullock	
Apologies	Mayor Joe Anderson OBE	Liverpool City Council
	Cllr Sir Albert Bore	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr Nick Forbes	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
	Cllr Marco Cereste	Peterborough City Council
	Mayor George Ferguson CBE	Bristol City Council