

City Regions Board – report from Sir Richard Leese CBE (chair)

Cities Devolution Bill

1. On 14 May, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that a Cities Devolution Bill would be part of the first Queen's Speech. The Bill is expected to offer cities that are prepared to adopt directly-elected mayors greater control over local transport, housing, skills and healthcare. The Chancellor also promised to extend a form of the City Deals programme to cover counties and towns.

English Devolution: Local Solutions for a successful Nation

1. The City Regions Board played a lead role in the development of the Local Government Association's [white paper on devolution](#), which calls for an "English Devolution Bill" as an alternative to the Cities Devolution Bill. The paper sets out an overarching view from across local government on what could be achieved through devolution and how progress can be made across the country over the course of this parliament.
2. The paper identifies key decisions that need to be taken by Government in the first Queen's Speech and next Spending Review to accelerate progress on devolution. It also recognises that local areas need to strengthen their governance arrangements in order to be able to take on substantial new responsibilities. To that end, the paper pushes for places to be able to bring forward proposals that reflect the arrangements that would be most appropriate for their area, rather than having a single model imposed on them.
3. Members of the Board will be discussing the Bill, the Government's other commitments and our future work on devolution at our final meeting of the year on June 15th. Our aim is to ensure that we are pushing the Government to be as ambitious as possible, while helping city regions to capitalise on the tremendous opportunity the Bill presents.

Skills, Employment and Welfare Reform

1. At the end of March, the LGA put forward the case for groups of councils to have the power, funding and responsibility to integrate and commission employment and skills provision to plan employment and skills investment across places to get more people into work, help low paid people progress in work, and address the skills demand for achieving local growth.
2. Alongside the chairs of the City Regions, People and Places and Children and Young People Boards, I championed the recommendations in [Realising Talent: a new framework for devolved employment and skills](#). This includes a call for the introduction of Local Labour Market Agreements across England by 2016/17 as the basis of a deal between groups of councils and central government on what is needed and how it can be achieved. This should, as a minimum, include devolution or co-commissioning of at least £13.6 billion employment and skills funding over the next five years
3. A National Employment and Skills Partnership should bring together central and local government, business, voluntary and community sector and other stakeholders to drive efforts to enable integrated funding and services to put people and places first, rather than institutions.



Councillors' Forum

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