

Note of last City Regions Board meeting

Title: City Regions Board
Date: Monday 15 June 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	<p>Welcome and apologies</p> <p>Sir Richard Leese welcomed members of the board and recorded apologies for Cllr Anstee, Cllr Forbes, and Mayor Anderson.</p> <p>The board lost three members since its last meeting: Marco Cereste, James Alexander and Cllr Ravi Govindia. Sir Richard noted the Board's thanks for their contributions. Substitutes for these members were welcomed.</p>	
2	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>No declarations of interest were announced.</p>	
3	<p>English Devolution and the new Government</p> <p>Ian Hughes, Head of Policy, introduced the paper on English devolution and the new Government to support members' discussion on how to align the Board's work programme and lobbying with the new Government's commitments.</p> <p>Broadly, the Devolution Bill responds favourably to many of the LGA's key proposals and members agreed that we would want the Bill to remain enabling rather than more prescriptive.</p> <p>Members agreed the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To pick up on the City Growth Commission's recommendation for an Independent Body to offer an objective judgment on readiness for devolution.• To put a marker down for a constitutional settlement that enshrines local government in law.• To push for flexibility when it comes to governance models• Devolution needs to be backed up by the ability to raise resources so the LGA should push for amendments on fiscal devolution	

- The LGA should support an enabling provision for London boroughs and the GLA

Members also discussed:

- The importance of portraying a vision of what the country could look like as a result of devolution in 20 years' time.
- The risks of a piecemeal approach to devolution and the need for a clearer understanding of what Ministers and civil servants are prepared to see devolved
- The complicated geography that some councils are working through
- The onus is on local government to approach central government with their own individual proposals for their devolution deals.
- Devolution will necessitate Whitehall's own reform.

4 LGA Support Offer on Devolution

Ian Hughes, Head of Policy, introduced the paper which set out proposals for how the LGA can help councils to access support to make progress on devolution. Ian also informed the board that Andrew Campbell will be joining the LGA on secondment from DCLG from August to work on devolution.

Members discussed:

- That it would be useful for the LGA to gather and circulate information on how different combined authorities carry out decision-making in a manner perceived to be fair and transparent.
- The value of an honest broker between councils in these discussions
- The importance of gathering case studies and evidence of both what's working and what's not working
- There is also a need to support member and officer development to help them pick up the new skills and understand their roles in this context

Members **agreed** the proposed support offer.

5 Reviewing the City Regions Board

Members were asked to consider whether the Board meets the original purpose of providing a voice and a resource for city regions within the LGA, and how the Board should develop over the next year.

Members discussed:

- The importance of having process of engagement to speak to those already involved with the Board as well as those who might have an interest but have not been as involved
- New test of effectiveness is how we influence Government's policy and programmes over the medium term.
- Whilst devolution was understandably the Board's primary focus this past year, in future should also have focus on services, inc city centre management and economic development

- There may also be value in exploring alternative governance models and cities' roles and relationships within their sub-regions.

Action

Work with advisors from the four constituencies from which Board membership is drawn to scope out the review of the Board and its future work programme.

6 Report of the LGA Task and Finish Group on Ageing

Councillor Helen Holland reported on the work she completed as the City Regions representative on a Cross Board Task and Finish Group on Ageing.

Members welcomed the work of the Task and Finish Group and **noted** the report.

7 Minutes of the previous meeting

Members **agreed** the minutes of the previous meeting.

8 Exploring Fiscal Devolution

Stephen Hughes, Interim Executive Director of Finance, introduced a paper exploring fiscal devolution, which summarised the initial modelling of the recommendations of the Independent Commission on Local Government Finance. It illustrated how a self-financing system that provides for some measure of redistribution could operate.

Members discussed:

- Real devolution has to include the power to raise resources as well as to spend
- However, there are risks of pushing for tax-raising powers at this stage as
- Sorting out geographic and governance issues is critical to the viability of proposals,
- There was debate about whether there is a need to assess whether existing spend is right before accepting it as a future baseline
- The importance of reforming how existing public spending is used
- The potential to learn from the experiences of cities in Europe

Action

An invitation has been extended by the Resources Board to have a more detailed conversation about further work members want to see.

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
	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 Sir Albert Bore	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr Keith Wakefield	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Barry Anderson	Leeds City Council
	Cllr Robert Alden	Birmingham City Council
	Cllr Sian Reid	Cambridge City Council
	Cllr Robert Light	
	Cllr Martin Veal	
Apologies	Cllr Ranjit Banwait	Derby City Council
	Mayor Joe Anderson OBE	Liverpool City Council
	Cllr Nick Forbes	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
	Cllr Sean Anstee	Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council
	Mayor George Ferguson	Bristol City Council
	CBE	