

Executive

London Councils' Urgencies Report Item no: 7

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Date:	20 th June 2017		
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Summary	London Councils' urgency procedure was used to secure decisions on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Industrial Strategy Green Paper• Access Europe• New Member of the Leaders' Executive Committee• London Regionalising Adoption Project
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Recommendations	The Executive is asked to note the decisions taken under the urgency procedures.
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1.0 Industrial Strategy Green Paper response

1.1 Introduction

The [Industrial Strategy Green Paper](#) sets out the government's plans for the creation of a national Industrial Strategy focused on the following ten 'pillars'.

1. Investing in science, research and innovation
2. Developing skills
3. Upgrading infrastructure
4. Supporting businesses to start and grow
5. Improving procurement
6. Encouraging trade and inward investment policy
7. Delivering affordable energy and clean growth
8. Cultivating world-leading sectors
9. Driving growth across the whole country
10. Creating the right institutions to bring together sectors and places

1.2 Summary

London Councils welcomes the government's decision to produce an Industrial Strategy that is focused on making our country 'stronger, fairer and more outward looking'. The ten pillars set out in the Green Paper describe a useful foundation for driving growth across the whole country, raising productivity levels and improving living standards.

1.3 Recommendation

Elected Officers of Leaders' Committee were asked to agree the London Councils submission by close of business on Wednesday 12th April 2017. The Urgency was approved.

2.0 Access Europe

2.1 Introduction

For many years, London Councils supported boroughs access European funding through its European Service (which was run by GLE and funded by London Councils). The service helped boroughs cut through complex and administratively demanding issues which they faced in accessing European funding. It was provided through Greater London Enterprises (GLE) and funded by London Councils.

In 2013, GLE informed London Councils that it no longer intended to provide this service as part of its portfolio.

In 2014, a new community interest company, 'Access Europe', was set up to provide similar services to those provided by the European Service, to the boroughs and, in addition, to provide support to the voluntary sector in London seeking European funding.

In April 2014, Members agreed a grant to this new service, which was established in partnership with the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the City of London Corporation, to a maximum of £66,000 per year for three years. This grant comes to an end in June 2017.

On 29 March 2017, the UK Government formally signalled its intention to leave the European Union. All European Union funding streams presently available to the UK will continue until the UK leaves the European Union in March 2019.

A programme of EU funds (in excess of 750 million euros) is available to London from 2014 to 2020. The Government has stated it will guarantee EU funding for structural and investment fund projects signed after the Autumn Statement and which continue after we have left the EU.

2.2 Summary

To award a grant met from within approved budget resources as agreed by the Leaders Committee in December 2016, to Access Europe, a partnership with the Greater London Authority (GLA) and the City of London Corporation to a maximum of £66,000 per year for two years with a review and break clause after one year. The service would aim to maximise the amount of European funding available to boroughs in the two years remaining before the exit of the UK from the European Union in 2019.

2.3 Recommendation

Elected Officers of Leaders' Committee were asked to agree the London Councils submission by close of business on Wednesday 19th April 2017. The Urgency was approved.

3.0 New Member of the Leaders' Executive

3.1 Introduction

The City of London Corporation operates on a different electoral cycle to the boroughs and, on 4th May 2017, Catherine McGuinness took over from Mark Boleat as Chairman of the City's Policy and Resources Committee. London Councils members have, for many years, believed that they derive significant advantage from appointing the Chairman of the City of London's Policy and Resources Committee to the London Councils Executive. The Annual General Meeting of London Councils, now delayed until 11th July, will appoint the entire Executive for 2017/18. Because of that delay, however, there is an hiatus in City membership of the Executive until then and the next meeting of the London Councils Executive is on 20th June 2017. Appointing Ms McGuinness to the Executive through the urgency procedure would allow her to attend the 20th June meeting as a full member. Also, one of London Councils Leaders' Committee Vice-chairs is normally the City of London representative.

3.2 Recommendation

The Chief Executive, therefore, recommends that Ms Catherine McGuinness is appointed to London Councils Leaders' Committee as one of its Vice-chairs. Elected Officers were asked to agree the urgency by midday on Tuesday 16th May. The Urgency was approved.

4.0 London Regionalising Adoption Project

4.1 Introduction

In 2015, through the Association of London Directors of Children's Services, London boroughs and voluntary adoption agencies submitted an expression of interest to develop a regional adoption agency for London. A report to London Councils' Executive in October 2015 set out this expression of interest in a regionalisation project in high level terms and sought Executive's in principle support, which was agreed.

During 2016, regionalisation projects across the country, including in London, were grant funded by the Department for Education to deliver further work to better define the opportunity and build consensus for locally designed model of regionalisation. In

London, the DfE funded relatively modest project costs through multiple separate grant agreements. One major challenge which has held London back from making quicker progress was the absence of longer term funding surety, meaning work has been conducted in short bursts under short term agreements with the DfE.

The output of London's work was summarised in a report to Directors of Children's Services in September 2016. This report provided the basis for seeking political direction at the local level on whether to continue to support the London regionalising adoption project.

Between November 2016 and March 2017, twenty-six boroughs committed 'in principle' to exploring further a regional approach to adoption in London. Two have opted out and five boroughs are considering whether to proceed.

4.2 Summary

The one-year grant from the DfE in support of the London regional adoption project indicates that the 'in principle' agreements from local authorities and the stakeholder engagement at the start of the year have assured the Department for Education that London vision is viable.

The project in 17/18 will be a complex task. The proposal for London covers the largest population and most local authorities in any proposed region. This scale is needed in London to achieve the efficiency desired for the four key aims of regionalisation.

The proposed arrangements underline councils' duty of care, so while the regional agency may deliver specific functions which support the success of that journey, accountability remains with the local authority.

Every London borough is starting from a different financial and contractual position and we envisage there will be flexibility for teams to join when appropriate as local circumstances allow. However, it is important to keep in mind that under the Act the Secretary of State can require councils to move adoption to regional arrangements.

Combining resources and casting our net wider to find parents and families wanting to adopt will ultimately speed-up matching. Research shows the sooner a child in care moves into their permanent home the better their life chances will be.

Unlocking resources for adoption from other council arrangements will be difficult. The rewards, however, could be significant and include:

- matching children and adopters earlier
- developing best practice and consistency
- identifying potential efficiency savings for councils at a time of severe constraint.

Scaling up adoption services and increasing awareness of adoption as the best permanent option for many children could reduce the overall direct cost to London local government as well as longer term indirect costs.

The philosophy running through the development of the London proposal is one which seeks to build a coalition of the willing, whereby boroughs participate on the basis of what each considers to be in the best interests of their local children. This will continue to be the case as the project continues in 2017/18.

4.3 Recommendation

To agree that London Councils enter into a grant agreement with the Department for Education for costs up to £1.2 million to host the delivery of London regionalising adoption in 2017/18, at no cost to London Councils.

Elected Officers of London Council were asked to agree the Urgency by midday on Tuesday 30th May 2017. The Urgency was agreed.

Financial Implications:

There are no financial implications for London Councils.

Legal Implications:

There are no legal implications for London Councils.

Equalities Implications:

There are no equalities implications for London Councils.