

From the Chairman of the Local Government Association  
Cllr James Jamieson

The Rt. Hon. Baroness Taylor of Bolton  
Chair of the House of Lords Constitution Committee  
House of Lords  
London  
Westminster  
SW1A 0AA

6/01/2022

Dear Baroness Taylor,

I write in relation to the House of Lords Constitution Committee's inquiry into the 'future governance of the UK' and pursuant to the [oral evidence](#) I gave alongside Councillor Nick Forbes, LGA Labour Group leader, on the 1 December. Firstly, thank you very much for inviting the LGA to give evidence at this important inquiry, we welcomed the opportunity to be the national voice of local government in this arena.

During the evidence session we outlined one of the LGA's core asks of the Government around the Levelling Up agenda, to introduce an English devolution taskforce to enable discussion between national and local government on progress with devolution to councils. We stressed that as we approach the Levelling Up White Paper this is more important than ever if we are to put councils at the heart of delivering the Government's ambitious programme to improve opportunities in all parts of the country. During the session, we also set out how the LGA has set the precedent for collaborative working between central and local government through the EU Exit Local Government Ministerial Delivery Board. Following this exchange, Baroness Suttie requested more information on these bodies, and I wanted to follow up with more detail.

### **EU Exit Local Government Ministerial Delivery Board**

The Delivery Board was set up to give ministers and senior officials a safe and confidential space to hear from local government leaders on issues of shared concern and discuss how to move forward.

The Delivery Board was chaired by the then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government and consisted of cross-party representation from local government and the four home nations. The Chair invited Ministers and senior officials from other government departments to attend to discuss relevant issues.

The Delivery Board focused on the key resources, guidance and information needed by councils to prepare for the UK's exit from the EU. For example, the group assessed the issues immediately related to the end of the EU Exit transition period, including regulatory services; Port Health Authorities; procurement and state aid; and data adequacy.

In addition, the group considered a number of post EU exit challenges and opportunities, including the replacement of EU funding via the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF); the EU Settlement Scheme; the impact of migration issues on key sectors such as social care; and the broader impact of the departure for local economies.

The Delivery Board demonstrated the positive benefits of collaboration and equal partnership between central and local government. As place leaders, local government politicians were able to raise issues and help shape government policy and guidance to make them more effective in supporting local government to be as prepared as they can be, especially if there was a "no deal"

scenario. Some examples of the successes of the Delivery Board include securing voting rights for EU citizens residing in the UK, procurement guidance and training for council officers, improved guidance for supporting Looked After Children through the EU Settlement Scheme and securing designated funding for each council to spend on their local priorities.

The cross-departmental access facilitated by the Delivery Board was very important in addressing issues in a holistic way and avoiding different departmental initiatives working at cross-purposes or failing to be implemented to best effect. For example, partly joining up the communications of changes to regulatory services from three governmental departments and bodies made it easier for council officers to implement required changes effectively.

### **Logistical information relating to the Delivery Board**

The Constitution Committee clerks also requested additional detail on the logistical aspects of the Delivery Board. The meeting schedule was determined by the parliamentary agenda and the negotiations with the EU taking place at that time. The topics and themes covered were also flexible, with critical issues of the day forming the basis of the meeting's discussion. This flexible, ad-hoc meeting style allowed the Delivery Board to be reactive and effective, meeting primarily to discuss important and contemporary issues. The Delivery Board considered issues as and when they surfaced as well as longer-term priorities, such as post EU exit economies. This approach facilitated an honest and open conversation between councillors and ministers at the times when this was most important.

### **Parallels with the Levelling Up agenda**

We mentioned the work of the Delivery Board because there are transferable learnings which will help deliver the benefits of levelling up in our communities. Firstly, like EU exit, the levelling up agenda has implications for every local authority in England, and its effectiveness will be determined by changes seen in places. A jointly agreed forum for national and local leaders will ensure that potential issues can be identified early and that departmental ambitions can be joined up and planned interventions can be considered through the lens of place – something local government is uniquely placed to do.

Local leaders have shown throughout the pandemic that they are well placed to deliver the best outcomes for local communities, [research has shown](#) that they are the most trusted entities to do so, and the inherently place-based nature of councils means that they are also most able to align the work of government departments and agencies with the assets and opportunities of different places. The anticipated Levelling-Up White Paper presents an opportunity to reset the relationship between central and local government and put councils at the heart of delivering the Government's ambitious programme to improve opportunities in all parts of the country, we believe that the establishment of an English Devolution taskforce will greatly assist in achieving this objective.

Once again, thank you very much for engaging with the LGA on this important matter. As ever, if we can provide more information or if you would like to meet to discuss this further please do not hesitate to ask. Please direct enquiries to [Jonah.munn@local.gov.uk](mailto:Jonah.munn@local.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'James Jamieson', written in a cursive style.

James Jamieson