City Deals – implications for enhanced devolution and local economic growth

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Summary

With the ‘City Deal’ announcements on July 5 2012, the government has now concluded agreements with the eight ‘Core Cities’ and/or their ‘Local Enterprise Partnerships’ (LEPs) on a range of measures to stimulate city growth and development. This briefing outlines the genesis and progress to date on city deals, their importance to the city regions and local authorities involved, and their relevance to the wider local government community – both in the short and medium terms.

The briefing will be of particular interest to members and officers involved in the deals, and more broadly to those (e.g. leaders, economic development portfolio holders, chief executives and policy teams) seeking to agree either enhanced devolution of powers and resources with government, or in stimulating and enabling local economic growth.

Overview

On 5 July 2012, the Deputy Prime Minister and Greg Clark, Minister of State for Cities, announced the conclusion of what they term ‘Wave 1’ of city deals that have been concluded with the eight English ‘Core Cities’ and their wider economic areas. This marks the conclusion of a process that was launched in December 2011 with the publication of ‘Unlocking Growth in Cities’, which invited those eight cities (in the first instance) to come forward with proposals of the powers and resources they might need from government in order to unlock private sector growth locally.

In the intervening period initial deals had been agreed in February 2012 with Liverpool City Council (based on their decision to adopt the elected mayor model), and in March with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA). These have now been augmented by deals with the LEP areas of Greater Birmingham and Solihull, Bristol and the West of England, Leeds City Region, Liverpool City Region
(as a phase two of the February deal), Sheffield City Region; and with Newcastle and Nottingham as core cities.

Although each deal is different, they broadly cover key growth drivers such as transport and infrastructure, jobs and skills, economic development and business support, and funding. They introduce considerable new innovations in approaches to local economic growth. These include Greater Manchester’s ‘Earn Back’ mechanism for forward-funding infrastructure investment, a number of ‘Tax Increment Financing’ (TIF)/’Accelerated Development Zone’ (ADZ) schemes, pooled Economic Investment Funds and potential for pooled business rates, devolved skills and rail franchise arrangements, localised apprenticeship hubs and youth contracts etc.

The Government has been clear that these enhanced powers and resources must be accompanied by strengthened governance and accountability. The cities have made a range of commitments to establish Combined Authorities, public/private boards, and, in the case of Liverpool and Bristol to the development of elected mayor leadership.

The Government has also made it clear that ‘Wave 1’ is only the start of this process. It will be deepened in the core cities and extended to other areas during 2012-13 and beyond. This makes understanding the ‘city deal’ proposition – both its strengths and areas for further development – extremely important. It is probably not an overstatement to suggest that making a success of city deals may hold the key to the local government sector achieving both enhanced devolution and to increasing local growth in our cities and communities over this parliament and in the longer term.

**Briefing in full**

**Introduction:** There has been a longstanding challenge for both government and city leadership teams to empower cities to deliver significant economic growth and success. In the English context, the concern has been that cities, especially those outside London in the North and Midlands, do not perform as well as their international comparators. After a period of perceived relative decline, the ‘New Labour’ era saw renewed interest in and optimism about the prospects for English Cities, captured, for instance, in the 2000 Urban White Paper and reinforced by the 2006 State of the English Cities report.

The Labour approach, arguably, struggled with the balance between cities and their ‘regional project’, but this did evolve over time, and appeared to have found some level of equilibrium in the aftermath of the 2007 Sub-National Review of Economic Development and Regeneration. During the final years of the Labour government not only did Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) have strong urban programmes in partnership with cities, but special purpose bodies like Urban Regeneration Companies, instruments such as Multi-Area Agreements and ‘Total...
Place’, were taking forward major economic interventions on a city region and/or city-basis. Two ‘pilot’ statutory city regions (Manchester and Leeds) were announced in the 2009 Budget.

The advent of the coalition in 2010 introduced new approaches and particularly new language to both devolution and local growth debates. Within an overall priority of ‘deficit reduction’ the new government posited ‘localism’, ‘rebalancing', ‘big society’ etc., as major sub-national themes.

The regional architecture of Labour was dismantled and proposals were accepted from civic and business leaders to form Local Enterprise Partnerships across a range of geographies – only a small number of which are recognisable as functional city regions. Moreover, leadership and political accountability was promoted through requiring twelve major cities to hold referendums to adopt executive elected mayors (on administrative rather than economic geographies). Alongside Spending Review 2010, government published its ‘Local Growth White Paper: Realising Every Place’s Potential’, which did not particularly highlight cities and city regions as the priorities for delivering local growth (beyond the elected mayor issue and a short case study of Greater Manchester).

However, during 2011, criticism of the government’s overall approach to economic growth grew (especially contrasted to its focus on deficit reduction). The Government increasingly saw the need to both empower LEPs to deliver something, and, within this, recognised the importance of cities. In July 2011 Greg Clark was appointed Minister of State for Cities (in addition to his Decentralisation remit) – a role shared between DCLG and DBIS. In September the Government accepted a Core Cities Group Amendment to the Localism Bill for the eight core cities to be given greater freedoms to drive economic growth in their areas – interestingly (in the light of the subsequent ‘deals’) asserting that enhanced devolution could deliver an extra 1 million jobs and £44billion GVA to their LEP areas over the next decade.

The scene was therefore set for the government to actually put enhanced powers and flexibilities into effect.

Unlocking Growth in Cities: In December 2011 the Government announced ‘new city deals’ in its publication ‘Unlocking growth in cities’. This was covered in some detail in the earlier briefing – Urban Autonomy? ‘City Deals’ and elected mayors. ‘Unlocking growth...’ argued the case that cities – with 74% of population and 78% of jobs – were the places where national growth would be focused, and that this required dynamic city leadership teams taking decisive action (in strong partnerships with the private sectors) to address barriers and realise opportunities.
The Government offered the core cities a ‘deal’. They set out a menu of powers, flexibilities and resources on which they would be prepared to empower cities to lead:-

- Freedoms to invest in growth – including a single capital pot, the prospect of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) schemes, business rate discount and pooled business rate retention, and increased influence over future RGF and EU Structural Funds
- Powers to drive critical infrastructure – including transport devolution (both major transport funding, rail and bus services), integrated public asset exploitation, a £100million superfast broadband fund and devolved HCA functions, and increased planning influence
- Enabling cities to boost skills and jobs – including increased influence over employment and skills, apprenticeship hubs, a City Skills Fund, and enhanced UKTI support

This offer, however, was a two-way deal – requiring cities to demonstrate ‘strong, visible and accountable leadership and effective decision-making’, and taking on some of the risk (of the investment and returns). Adoption of executive elected mayors was cited as one way in which cities could demonstrate their strong, effective leadership.

The deal was offered in the first instance to Core Cities – Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, and Sheffield and their wider LEP areas, and ‘Unlocking growth....’ included summary outlines of each city’s key challenges and priorities. In January 2012, however, Greg Clark raised the prospect of deals being extended to other cities.

Although largely welcomed by the cities themselves, Core Cities Group and a range of commentators (e.g. Centre for Cities), the offer was also critiqued (including by this author) on a number of grounds. The economic analysis was confused and misleading (with more growth occurring in cities outside the core cities than in the initial eight); the menu of options were, at least in theory, available to most or all local authorities (LAs) and LEPs; and the focus on elected mayor leadership was based on eleven referendums planned for administrative geographies that did not match the eight city regions (and which excluded Leicester that had already moved to an elected Mayor). On balance, though, the potential for both enhanced decentralisation and leadership of local growth are major ‘asks’ of the sector, and this was seen as a step in the right direction.

The Liverpool and Greater Manchester deals: On February 7 2012, Government announced the first city deal – with Liverpool City Council. In return for Liverpool moving to elected mayor leadership, and the establishment of a Mayoral

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Development Corporation (with economic development and housing functions),
government agreed:-

- a reported £130million of funding (over the remainder of the spending review period),
- the designation of a new Enterprise Zone (for Central Business District and areas in the north of the city),
- a ‘Youth Contract’ (with DWP to support young people leaving the Work Programme),
- a Secondary School Investment Programme (of twelve schools of which six would be academies),
- Mayoral oversight of HCA assets.

As the first deal, the Liverpool agreement sent out a mix of signals about ‘new city deals’. Its size and scale was significant, but its focus on the city council administrative area ran the risk of disempowering the city region and its newly established LEP. Its contingency on adopting an elected mayor was clearly a government statement of support for this political model (and a rather crude incentive for the cities facing May 2012 referendums), but the deal itself was not done with the mayor, but in advance of the election. Finally, the powers and resources were heavily caveated – subject to detailed business cases to be agreed with Treasury, and, for instance, providing ‘oversight’ rather than control of HCA resources.

Some of these uncertainties were addressed when, on 20 March 2012, Government announced a much larger deal with Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), “with the full support of the LEP”. The deal comprises:-

- Establishment of a £1.2 billion Infrastructure Fund (funded mainly through prudential borrowing and a levy on the local authorities) with an ‘Earn Back’ mechanism of up to £30 million pa over 30 years to be paid back by Treasury (and reinvested in further infrastructure) against increases in GVA (as measured by changes in rateable values against a baseline). Initial investments include early implementation of the South East Manchester Multi-Modal Study (SEMMMS) and extension of Metrolink to Trafford Park
- A single Economic Investment Framework overseen by a Regional investment Board aligning a range of economic development funding including central government (e.g. RGF), ERDF (e.g. JESSICA), North West Evergreen, and private sector funding
- A Business Growth Hub – with £4.4 million transitional government funding (from RGF2) – to integrate business support functions for city region businesses
- A City Apprenticeship and Skills Hub delivering 6000 new apprentices to SMEs over two years and a range of other locally-led skills interventions
• A Low Carbon Demonstrator – a co-funded Joint Venture (JV) with UK Green Investments to deliver a pipeline of low carbon projects to significantly contribute to GM’s carbon reduction target of 48 per cent by 2020
• An inward investment beacon of additional assistance from and collaboration with UKTI

The GM deal was particularly welcomed both because it was at city region scale, its breadth, the interest in the innovative ‘Earn Back’ mechanism, and because government accepted the Combined Authority route as an alternative to the elected mayor as a demonstration of strong effective leadership and governance.

Based on these two examples, during spring, the other core cities and their wider economic areas intensified negotiations about the remaining city deals.

**Completion of the ‘Wave One’ deals:** Deals with the remaining six ‘Wave 1’ cities and an extension of the Liverpool deal to the city region were announced on July 5th 2012. With forecast benefits/results of 175,000 jobs over 20 years and 37,000 new apprentices, each deal was described in some detail in a further ‘Unlocking growth...’ publication.

Government intends that “Each deal aims:
• To give cities greater powers to drive local economic growth
• To facilitate specific projects that will boost local economies
• And to strengthen the governance arrangements of each city “

Although each deal is different, they are each significant in scale, and in aggregate produce a breadth of innovative city development instruments and approaches. The major elements of this menu are summarised in the table below, and will be of potential relevance and interest to all LAs and LEPs:-
## Instrument | City Deal | Detail
--- | --- | ---
‘Earn Back’ | GM | Payment by results – infrastructure investment raising GVA growth which earns back a return of national tax cake
TIF | New’, SCR, Nott’m | Critical infrastructure against future business rates
Econ Investment Fund | All metro/LEP-deals | Pooled funding & bus rate to be self-sustaining
Local Skills Fund | SCR | Local public/private matched by national to provide business-led skills fund
Skills Bank | L’pool CR | Employer-owned mutual to match public with private funds and enable business to buy skills/apprentices
Skills Outcome incentives | GM, L’pool CR | Incentive payments, Payment-by-Results
Apprentice Hubs | B&WE, GM, LCR, New’, Nott’m | Support SMEs to take on apprentices thru’ training agencies, brokerage and incentive payments
Localised Youth Contracts | LCR, Liverpool (not L’pool CR), New’ | Locally run alternative to national scheme to reduce NEETs
Local Venture Capital Fund | Nott’m | Match national funds to invest in high tech start up and high growth businesses across an economic area
Bus Growth Hubs | GM, B&WE | Business support hubs
Rail devolution | GM, B&WE, LCR, SCR | Commissioning and managing local and regional franchises
Local Transport Major funding | GB&S, B&WE, LCR, SCR | Devolved transport funding matched locally for strategic transport investments
Localised asset management | GB&S, B&WE, GM, L’pool (not CR), New’ | Joint inv programme for housing and regeneration from local and national assets
Low Carbon pioneers | GB&S, LCR, GM, New’, Nott’m | Local programmes to reduce emissions, invest in green infra., and generate low carbon jobs
Superfast broadband | B&WE, GB&S, GM, LCR, New’ | £100m investment fund
Funding | Skills | Bus Support | Infrastructure
The deals also outline new governance arrangements, subject to council, statutory and other approvals:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance model</th>
<th>City deal area</th>
<th>Outline Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elected Mayor</td>
<td>Liverpool, Bristol</td>
<td>Mayor plus ‘strong decision-making across wider economic area’ Skills Board (B&amp;WE); Transport Board (L’pool CR)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Combined Authorities (CA)</td>
<td>GM, LCR, SCR</td>
<td>West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire based – not for the whole city region/deal area but for metropolitan unitaries</td>
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<td>Possible CA</td>
<td>Newcastle &amp; North East</td>
<td>Taking steps to form one across NE, but private sector led governance of Newcastle-Gateshead Accelerated Development Zone (ADZ)</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEP-led</td>
<td>GB&amp;S</td>
<td>‘Particularly strong private sector leadership’, plus Capital Board, Housing and Growth Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>None specified/ City Council</td>
<td>Nottingham</td>
<td>Only focused on ‘Creative Quarter’ but new private sector led Economic Growth Board</td>
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Finally, it is worth acknowledging the scale and significance of the deals. The deals potentially cover a footprint of 14m population, 6.2 million jobs, around £250 billion GVA p.a. and over 350,000 VAT-registered businesses (source: NOMIS). This amounts to approaching 23% of England’s 2010 GVA, and is comparable to (but slightly lower than) London. These factors, and illustrative ‘highlights’, are summarised below:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Deal Area</th>
<th>Existing Economic Footprint (NOMIS)</th>
<th>Jobs/Other Growth</th>
<th>Major funding</th>
<th>Illustrative flagships</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GB&amp;S LEP (8LAs but NOT Counties)</td>
<td>2m population</td>
<td>10k jobs by 2020 thru Life Sciences (2k) &amp; Green Deal (8k)</td>
<td>£1.5bn inv fund leveraging £15bn private over 25yrs</td>
<td>New Institute for Translational Medicine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>£34bn GVA</td>
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<td></td>
<td>900,000 jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52k VAT businesses</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B&amp;WE LEP (4xLAs)</td>
<td>1m population</td>
<td>40k jobs; over 25 years</td>
<td>Retain 100% of bus rate growth in 5 enterprise areas - £1bn</td>
<td>Gtr Bristol Metro</td>
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<td></td>
<td>£24bn GVA</td>
<td>3.4% annual GVA growth by 2020</td>
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<td>450,000 jobs</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deal Area</td>
<td>Existing Economic Footprint (NOMIS)</td>
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<td><strong>LCR (10 LAs)</strong></td>
<td>3m population £52bn GVA 1.3m jobs 82k VAT businesses</td>
<td>20k jobs and 20k opportunities for YPs 2.6% annual GVA growth by 2030</td>
<td>WY Transport Plus £1bn Economic Inv Find £400m</td>
<td>NEET-free City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L’pool CR (6LAs)</strong></td>
<td>1.5m population £20bn GVA 0.6m jobs 29k VAT businesses</td>
<td>35k jobs and 6k apprentices</td>
<td>£130m mayoral deal £30m Employer Ownership Mutual</td>
<td>A major global International Business Festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>GM (10LAs)</strong></td>
<td>2.6m population £48bn GVA £1.2m jobs 71k VAT businesses</td>
<td>40k jobs &amp; 6k apprentices in 20 years</td>
<td>£1.2bn and £30mpa earn back</td>
<td>Early SEMMMS investment/metro to Trafford Park</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Newcastle</strong></td>
<td>For whole NE LEP:- 2m population £32bn GVA 0.8m jobs 40k VAT businesses</td>
<td>13k jobs over 25 yrs; +8k in marine/offshore; 500 apprentices</td>
<td>£90m infra from ring-fenced business rate retention</td>
<td>£92m investment in N’stle/Gateshead ADZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nottingham</strong></td>
<td>300k population £12bn GVA £145k jobs 6.5k VAT business</td>
<td>10k jobs and 1k apprentices</td>
<td>Creative Quarter based</td>
<td>£45m Venture Capital Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SCR (8LAs but no counties)</strong></td>
<td>1.7m population £26bn GVA 750k jobs 40k VAT businesses</td>
<td>7k jobs, 4k apprentices, 2k up-skilled</td>
<td>£28m devolved funding to leverage £35m local for skills over 3 yrs</td>
<td>£33m TIF city centre development Adv Manufacturing Procurement initiative</td>
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Where next? Again the announcement of the deals has been broadly welcomed. In making the announcement government has committed to both deepening the deals with each of the wave one city regions, and also extending them to other areas up for growth. This gives an incentive for LEPs, LAs and partners to focus their thinking and bring forward proposals that can build on this experience. Indeed a number of LEPs and LAs have already embarked on these steps.

Comment

There is no doubt the city deals are a major step forward for both the local government sector and for city growth. Among the positives identified are:-

- Firstly that they exist at all. They have been concluded in a reasonable amount of time with some level of specificity. The seven months from December 2011’s ‘Unlocking Growth…’ to the July completion of wave 1 seems appropriate for such a serious undertaking.
- Second, looking across the eight deals, there are fascinating and important innovations being developed for national/local relations – Greater Manchester’s ‘Earn Back’, (at long last) a number of TIF or TIF-related deals, pooled business rate proposals, Single Economic Investment Funds, local Apprentice Hubs and Youth Contracts, a local Venture Capital Fund, asset-backed vehicles, some level of rail and skills devolution etc.
- Third, the deals also have considerable aspiration and ambition. For instance, the ‘NEET-free’ city region for Leeds and its ambitions for a transpennine integrated economic area with Greater Manchester would be genuinely transformational and of national significance. A world class creative quarter will create a new economic reality for Nottingham and the East Midlands. The international business focus in Liverpool and that on life and biosciences in Birmingham can radically change the entrepreneurial culture and international profile of those cities.
- The deals appear to be long term, at scale, and to cover a breadth of major drivers of growth – infrastructure, enterprise, skills, and finance – with commitments and results up to 25 years and investments of over £1billion in at least four of the deals (Bristol, Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds).
- For local authorities, they also entail major policy and financial commitments to their role in leading economic growth. This can give real confidence to other economic role players in those areas in this era of local government cutbacks, the ever-tightening squeeze from social care costs, and general public austerity.
At the same time the deals are undoubtedly ‘messy’, and more work-in-progress than a finished product. For local authorities in particular, the relationship of Newcastle and Nottingham deals to their wider LEP geographies is vaguely defined, whilst similar issues arise with Liverpool and Bristol elected mayors in overall leadership of the deals and relationships to government. Key issues to be developed further include:

- **On governance** there are commitments to work towards Combined Authorities for Leeds, Sheffield, and the North East. For Bristol and Liverpool strengthened governance is based on newly elected mayors and much vaguer strengthened arrangements city-region wide – but each of these proposals neither covers the entire city deal area, nor has yet been secured through council processes. It remains to be seen (unlike Greater Manchester) how they function in practice.

- **On investment and financial viability/resilience**, the ‘big four’ deals are Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester and Leeds. There is some match funding and permission to proceed with Earn Back, TIF schemes and business rate retention mechanisms, but these ultimately rely on delivery of business rate growth and other value-capture mechanisms (and in some cases private sector leverage) to be viable and resilient over the longer term.

- A third issue concerns scaling up the deals. Although they are significant and transformational, they remain a modest starting point. In aggregate, 175,000 jobs as results of the deals are impressive, even if delivered over 20 years. But in the bigger scheme of things, this needs to be kept in perspective. Based on Centre for Cities City Outlook 2012, the cities involved in city deals LOST 94,000 private sector jobs in 2009-10 alone (i.e. over half the number of jobs to be created over the next twenty years). The 7,000 jobs to be created in Nottingham over the next five years compares to 19,100 private sector jobs they lost last year. And by further comparison, 60,000 net new private sector jobs were created in London last year. In short, whilst the deals may be necessary to turnaround growth, they are far from sufficient to secure enduring success of the core cities (with the possible exception of Bristol) over the 25 year period.

- Finally, the deals do not yet amount to a coherent overall ‘growth model’ for the city regions concerned. As an example, wave one seems to me to be innovation, enterprise (and arguably skills) light compared to sums identified for transport and infrastructure. For instance Greater Manchester’s RGF supported +/-£30m business support programme compares to £1.2bn in major infrastructure investment. Similarly, skills devolution is only very lightly (and modestly) sketched (except for the extension of apprentices to SMEs). Perhaps the major physical investment programmes will eventually allocate and leverage sums to skills, enterprise and innovation development, but more integral government policy prioritisation and funding involvement (though DBIS, TSB, HEFCE, SFA etc) is surely required.
For the local government sector and LEPs as a whole, though, the deals mark a major milestone and present all LEPs and LAs with new opportunities and challenges. There is a new menu of economic development powers, flexibilities and resources potentially ‘on the table’ for ambitious areas who can agree them both locally and with government. LAs need to determine and agree their own agenda; whether it should be pursued for a comprehensive deal or on a case-by-case basis; and also whether on a LEP, other sub-regional geography, or perhaps as part of an economic ‘chapter’ of Whole Place Community-based Budgets (currently being piloted in Cheshire West and Chester, Essex, London ‘tri-borough’ [Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, Hammersmith and Fulham], and Greater Manchester).

Indeed, how synergies are realized between Greater Manchester’s city deal and community-based budget pilot will be particularly interesting.

There are also sector-wide issues arising from deals that need to be assessed, understood and managed. For instance, Bristol and West of England retains 100% of business rate growth from its Enterprise Zone and five Enterprise Areas over twenty five years. This is clearly good for Bristol as the fastest growing and strongest core city. But removing a high growth area from the local government business rate retention system of tariffs, top-ups and resets will impact on the rest of the country. Similarly, albeit of smaller scale, City Deals have made assumptions about RGF approvals that may have implications for amounts available elsewhere.

In summary, City Deals are ‘not just for the cities involved’. All LAs and LEPs need to consider the direct impact (of wave one) on their areas, and also the wider implications for their approaches to leadership and governance, local economic growth, and their ‘asks’ of government for enhanced devolution and local decision-making. Collectively, the deal process is arguably (alongside community-based budgets) perhaps our greatest opportunity to progress these three crucial issues (i.e. governance, growth and devolution). And how far they are advanced in subsequent ‘waves’ will have a very major influence on how ‘localism’, ‘rebalancing’, ‘big society’, ‘open for business’, and government’s other major themes are delivered in practice.

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