Core Cities: Our Cities Our Future
Seminar Report
Our Cities, Our Future:  
a Core Cities event

Seminar report

The Core Cities Group, hosted by Sheffield City Council, held a seminar for public and private sector leaders, attended by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP, at ‘Electric Works’ in Sheffield on Friday the 14th January 2011. This paper is a summary of the seminar’s key points.

Introduction

“We need to ensure that these economically critical cities can deliver the recovery and growth that the country needs...”

Councillor David Baker, Deputy Leader of Sheffield City Council and Chair of the seminar, opened the event by welcoming delegates to Sheffield, and to Electric Works, a successful example of a low energy building in operation. He underlined the importance of having senior leaders from both the public and private sector in the room to discuss how they can work together to ensure that these economically critical cities can deliver the recovery and growth that the country needs.

Councillor Baker also described how Core Cities Leaders are able to work together across the divides of party politics and historic rivalries, to create the best environment they can for their cities to become more competitive.

The work and role of Core Cities

“a new kind of ‘Urban Renaissance’ is needed, focused on people, local economies, skills and devolution to cities...”

The Director of Core Cities Group, Chris Murray, delivered a speech setting out why the Core Cities are so important to the country’s economy and the way in which they support business growth.

He described the collective impact that Core Cities and their urban areas have on the economy outside London and the South East, and that they deliver 27% of the national economic output. Chris described how things have changed to an extent, and that cities are now viewed as solutions rather than problems. However, this fact is not always recognised in policy or strategy at the national level, particularly when the relative levels of investment in cities are examined by comparison to the South East, either by head of population, or by economic contribution per-person, and there are dissenting voices.

But, he went on, Core Cities have a good working relationship with London, for example on the RE: FIT programme, energy retrofitting public buildings through a collaborative procurement framework. They recognise that we all need London to succeed, but don’t accept that economic growth in one place has to be at the expense of another. If we can shift our perspective to see the country as an interconnected urban-economic system that has under-utilised capacity in places, we all stand to gain.
Chris pointed out that the public sector has a critical role in supporting business growth and jobs, working with the private sector. The assets, infrastructure, skills in the labour market, anchor institutions like hospitals and universities, and the culture of a city are all contributing factors. In Core Cities this is amplified due to their economic role, and the financial settlement for local government stands to undermine cities ability to deliver.

He stated that it was an important moment to restate the vision for cities as engines of growth, particularly as the national economic development architecture is changing rapidly and radically, and to base this vision on solid evidence, for example the work newly commissioned from Oxford Economics (see below and appendix 1). Core Cities should therefore be treated as an essential consultative body by Government, and indeed this was increasingly the case.

The Group has developed a number of powerful devolutionary ideas, like those for Tax Increment Financing (borrowing against future business rates to create economic infrastructure), and developing cross-party and cross-sector support for them.

Chris described how the economic needs of cities has shifted, in part because of global influences, but also because of recession, and that in certain areas we still needed to catch up with that change. The ability to do so relies on devolution to cities of powers, freedoms and flexibilities, including new investment tools. This is critical in order to use the resource that will be available more effectively, and also to leverage investment from other sources into areas like infrastructure and skills development.

He suggested that a new kind of ‘Urban Renaissance’ was needed, focused perhaps less on the physical environment and more on people, local economies, skills and devolution to cities. But that this would in turn require a complete cultural shift in the public sector away from a centralised mindset, both in local government and in Whitehall.

**New economic forecasts for new economic geographies**

“Urban centres like the Core Cities will lead the way to economic recovery…. a best case growth scenario of 3.8% (£44billion over the next 10 years) and an additional 1million jobs in the (Core Cities) Local Enterprise Partnership areas is achievable…”

Neil Gibson, Oxford Economics, provided a presentation, summarised below by the Core Cities recorder, and in the slides at Appendix 1. The presentation was based on work commissioned for the Core Cities Group, providing economic forecasts over the next 10 years for both the Core Cities authority areas, and for the wider Local Enterprise Partnership areas surrounding them. This is the first time this geography has been used for economic forecasting.
Core Cities can lead the way to economic recovery

The headline results indicate that Core Cities LEP areas are capable of delivering an additional 1million jobs and £44billion of economic output over this period above the current baseline. This performance is dependant on a number of growth factors, some of which are linked to global economic trends, but others of which can be directly influenced by local investment.

A trade-led recovery is underway for the country, however many risks still exist and there is a long way to go before the economy returns to 2008 employment peaks. In some areas the economic downturn was not quite as severe as predicted, but this should not be a reason for complacency and decisive policy is still required to strengthen local and national economies.

The global integration and links of British business has enabled successful firms to retain demand for goods and services from overseas markets. Consequently, some have remained profitable through the recession are in strong positions to take advantage of a full recovery. Exchange rate fluctuations have also allowed companies to access foreign currency at lower rates than in the previous decade.

Dealing with the deficit

The UK’s debt needs to be dealt with or it will constrain spending significantly, but there are different views on how this should happen. The economic and investment mood may be adversely affected by the actual and perceived impact of public spending reductions. It is significant that many debt problems in the world have had to be resolved eventually by the writing off of large proportions of the accrued debt, and though not expected for the UK, the possibility cannot be entirely discounted.

The economy is showing signs of recovery, but it remains very fragile. A number of sectors are looking strong and are expected to experience growth over the next decade, but it is unlikely that this will be at the level of the previous decade. There is however a high likelihood of a jobless recovery in some places, resulting in higher levels of unemployment over the forecast period. Oxford Economics do not expect unemployment to return to pre-recession levels at any point over the next 10 years. The subdued labour market will also have implications for migration and movement of population across the UK, and therefore housing and planning policy may need to become more adaptive and flexible as a result.
Growing skills for economic success

From a national policy perspective, the Core Cities will need to grow private sector jobs to absorb some of the losses from the public sector. Global professional and financial services have been, and will remain, the key exporting sectors for Core Cities. Highly skilled graduates located in cities are thus a key resource upon which future prosperity will heavily depend. The manufacturing sector will continue to decline in employment terms but the emphasis of the sector has shifted from making products to research and development, and therefore is forecast to contract less rapidly than before.

Core Cities’ LEP areas currently account for approximately one quarter of the UK’s population, and are expected to lead the way to economic recovery. Professional services are still the biggest source of jobs in Core Cities and their LEPS. Core Cities attract over 20% of Russell Group University graduates, a scale similar to that of London. Although critical, employment is not solely in these highly skilled areas, but business does gravitate toward Core Cities because of the rich pool of graduate skills in the labour market, as well as infrastructure, assets and other quality of life factors.

Employment and unemployment in Core Cities

Business register and Employment Survey (BRES) data was published for the first time by the Office of National Statistics in December 2010. It replaces two previous surveys, the Annual Business Inquiry and Business Register Survey and is a sample survey of approximately 80,000 businesses. It records more severe losses than the Oxford Economics data and therefore needs some interrogation. The BRES data suggests that over 158,000 jobs were lost between 2008 and 2009 in the Core Cities LEPs (compared to Oxford Economics estimates of 127,000 job losses over the same period).

On a positive note, unemployment has been falling since January 2010, although there is a concern that this may be the calm before the storm, following cuts to the public sector. Consequently, a ‘do nothing’ option will not lead to economic success. Cities must initiate new economic policies and continue to invest in policies areas which support growth - and by implication be empowered by Government to do so - otherwise employment levels will continue to rise very slowly, if at all. Even then, it is likely that it will take until 2017 for cities to reach the employment levels of 2008. This long road back is due to the fact that both Government and consumers have severe pressures on their spending power.
The shape of future growth and recovery

Future economic recovery and growth is needed to rebuild the UK tax base. There are a number of opportunities and pitfalls, and different scenarios for the future economies of the Core Cities. With policy interventions to maximise growth factors for Core Cities, a best case growth scenario of 3.8% (£44 billion over the period) and an additional 1 million jobs in the LEP areas is achievable. Whilst the continuing decline in manufacturing sector will lead to limited job loss, tradable service sectors are expected to more than absorb this loss and ensure sustained net job growth. This is possible but ambitious and coordinated policy intervention will be required. In addition global conditions would need to be more favourable, a factor Core Cities themselves can have little influence over.

But there is also a worst case scenario where, without investment in growth factors, long and persistent urban decay could develop, which will be extremely expensive to deal with and to rectify. Urban decline is difficult and expensive to correct, and creates investor nervousness. Avoiding this requires coordination from the public sector, which will be challenging given the job losses that will occur.

There will be a role for near to market solutions in the future – for example when oil prices rise it will become more expensive to import goods, making sourcing products closer to home more of a priority. Business support services and the public sector will remain major employers in Core Cities.

Summary – an economic and policy crossroads

Crucially, the problem of debt has not yet been solved and it is likely to take a decade for Government debt to reach pre-recession levels. There are massive challenges still ahead for national and city economies. Despite the pain felt by many, some consumers who remained in employment and saw a lowering of their mortgage repayments were individually better off during recession. However, as rising food and fuel prices put pressure on the Bank of England to raise interest rates, consumers are already finding they have less disposable income.

This will be compounded by public sector employment losses in the short term, as private sector growth will take time. Professional services stand a very high chance of experiencing growth in the UK, particularly if supporting a global marketplace, given strong growth in economies such as Brazil, Russia, India, China and elsewhere.

Following the winding down of the Regional Development Agencies, it will be important to ensure a sustained and coordinated approach to attracting on-going investment across and between cities. It will also be critical to maintain investment in the skills base that will support industry with a global growth profile.
Panel discussion

“Core Cities need devolution to develop their attractiveness and their ‘total offer’ in order to generate confidence that they can rival other world cities...”

- Councillor David Baker, Deputy Leader of Sheffield City Council, chairing
- Councillor Barbara Janke, Leader, Bristol City Council
- Gary Williamson, Chief Executive, Leeds, York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce
- Neil Gibson, Director of Regional Services, Oxford Economics

Following a question on the economic rise of places like India, the panel highlighted the importance of cultural links and open routes for consumer trading. There is massive potential for collaboration between cities in areas like this, providing high-end services and goods from Core Cities to other countries. There is also the issue of outsourcing high-end elements of business operation and the UK could become a base for the operations of other countries in the future.

The economic growth of the past has not necessarily resulted in economic inclusion in cities, and if a large proportion of future growth is likely in business and professional services, how will this translate into work for those currently furthest from the labour market? There is a need to be realistic about the skills that exist in the local labour market and attempt to match growth to people, but it is unlikely that this is an issue that the private sector is going to solve. It’s a challenge for public policy, and implementing strategies is likely to be harder given the current funding reductions. Looking globally, there are few models of economic growth that have causally resulted in economic and social inclusion.

Cities want to continue to take a strong proactive role in regeneration, but the challenging financial settlement for local authorities in England means they are more likely to have to focus on spending cuts and efficiency gains. This will in turn make it more challenging to really help and protect the most vulnerable and to implement major policy interventions.

Given the expected public sector cuts, there is a need to create confidence that the increase in skills and training provision required in cities will actually happen. Despite job loss in the public sector there will be opportunities in the private sector in the future (albeit limited in the short term).

A big challenge for the Core Cities is to get investment flowing outside of London and the South East. The Regional Growth Fund, whilst welcome, is relatively small. Cities need to work together to create interest amongst private sector investors.

The scale of private sector investment in London is very large and increasing. It does pose a challenge for Core Cities, but perceptions are very important, and generating positive messages about buoyant city economies will help. There are labour and other benefits present in the Core Cities and London is a very expensive place to start a business. Cities need to make investors feel welcome, keep them close and make a strong and distinctive offer.
Sheffield also hosted a Core Cities conference on tourism the previous day, on 13th February. Tourism can do a lot for our cities; it brings people in and makes them more likely to invest. But Core Cities need devolution to develop their attractiveness and their ‘total offer’ in order to generate confidence that they can rival other world cities, for example in digital and transport infrastructure. People invest in cities because they have a good quality of place and life, as well as having a strong base of assets and skills, and they should play to their strengths.

New financial instruments can generate investment, for example Tax Increment Financing, and can underpin the rebalancing of economies and inequality, and action is now needed to implement them. Financial services, for example, might respond well to this. However, it is unlikely in the view of some that there will be a fairer spread of investment between the South East and the rest of the country based on the current track record, so having access to these instruments elsewhere is crucial.

A greater focus on local procurement and supporting growth in alternative sectors like social enterprise can help support local businesses. There is a cost implication in every business solution, but there are also other values that are important to local economic and social development.

It is a real challenge for Core Cities to play their full role in stimulating economic growth whilst their local authorities are experiencing such large funding reductions. However, there are still opportunities for councils to invest in local communities and economies whilst transformation and restructuring of services takes place. It’s going to be a difficult 18 months ahead, and the public-private sector relationships will be critical to success. As an example, Core Cities and the Chambers of Commerce are working much more closely, which has produced benefits and this should continue.

**Key note speech from the Deputy Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP**

The Deputy Prime Minister started his address to the Core Cities by saying he wanted to talk about the longer term prospects for our cities amidst the once in a generation shift currently taking place at the heart of government. The DPM described this shift as a genuine rebalancing of the economy in way that is beyond simply solving the current deficit problem. The scale and ambition of change that the government wants to enact to ensure prosperity and happiness for future generations will be a huge undertaking.

He set this in context by speaking about the crisis in financial services that fed into the global recession; the problems in banking; the excess of household and government debt and the development of a model of living based on the over-leverage of the country. He summed it up simply by saying that such a lifestyle now means that if we want to succeed as a country we have no choice but to now significantly readdress the balance of economic dependence on a small number of industries in a small geographical cluster.
He made clear that longer term approaches to the economy need to be based on the understanding that the country must be rebalanced both economically and in its focus and reliance on financial services. It must unwind the problems and complexity that such centralisation has presented. He understood that it was a huge task but it must be done.

However, to be successful in this task he was adamant that the country must provide cities outside of London with greater autonomy and powers otherwise the challenge of rebalancing the economy simply will not be possible.

The Deputy Prime Minister acknowledged city authorities are at the sharp end in dealing with the Coalition Governments decisions to reduce the deficit. He said he understands that there is debate about the pace of deficit reduction, but he felt it was also important to remember that all three mainstream political parties agree that the deficit must be reduced eventually – a process that requires cuts sooner or later. So in his view, we simply can’t shoulder the liabilities or risk of a huge deficit any longer.

Recognising the difficult choices city leaders face to implement the reductions the government has tried to apply factors that help mitigate this pain; the banding of councils, the weighting of needs in the allocation formula so that reductions are distributed as evenly as possible, and providing some additional freedoms like the lifting of ring fencing.

He accepted that the methodology of this has been questioned for various reasons - some of which through conversation with government will be addressed; but he told the group to be left in no doubt that there is no magic alternative that would prevent the difficulties in economic rebalancing. The opposition would also have cut. The question is not if we need to tackle the deficit, but how we do so.

Despite the difficulties facing cities, the Deputy Prime Minister felt that there are as many opportunities as threats in the changes being brought forth by the government. He agreed that there are significant issues and challenges, but none of it should obscure the starting point of rebalancing the economy for a more healthy future.

He again stated the importance of Core Cities, arguing that there are numerous examples of sectoral success in our cities already. But he argued that those successes won’t be the engine of growth in the long term unless the government supplements efforts with genuine decentralisation. He felt that the level of political and economic centralisation in the UK is astonishing, and something that the government wanted and needed to address. He explained that decentralisation needs to happen on both political and economic levels and that this view was the consensus across the coalition.

Going further, he explained that the government has developed Local Enterprise Partnerships and the Regional Growth Fund to help start this process. He was clear that in his view, in terms of national and local government, money is to a large extent power, and unless cities have greater control over finances then any devolution will be somewhat meaningless. Local authorities do not currently have enough control in this area and so the Government is determined to do more on this front. TIF – as suggested by Core
Cities – is being developed as fast as it possibly can be given the need for legislation, but they are clear that they want to go further to devolve power to Core Cities and will do so through the Localism Bill.

One further vehicle for decentralisation will be the Local Government Resource Review. He was clear that, in order to ensure our economy is not over indebted to individual business sectors or a single geographic region, this review should and will lead to real and material increase in freedoms for local authorities, incentivising them to create economic growth, with the potential to increase their own resource base.

Question and answer session with the Deputy Prime Minister

“a centralisation of efforts to rebalance the economy and regional disparity doesn’t work – it’s greater autonomy that will work so we need to get rid of the currently centralised approach. ..”

The Deputy Prime Minister was questioned on the fairness of the spending settlement for local government. Evidence was presented demonstrating that it hits the most deprived areas hardest, and could stymie the economic role of the Core Cities. This becomes particularly apparent when a ‘cash per head’ analysis of reductions is carried out, as opposed to a ‘percentage of budget’ analysis. There is also a specific problem with the way damping is carried out within and not between bands, and also that area based grants, which were originally provided according to higher levels of deprivation, have now been returned to a national pot to be redistributed according to the settlement. This means effectively that money has been taken from deprived areas and given to more wealthy ones.

He replied that people can portray the same thing in dramatically different ways; for example on local government settlements everyone thinks someone else is better off. The DPM said that part of the problem is that some areas of the country are more dependant on the public sector than others. He also citied the architecture of the local government finance system as problematic, explaining that this will be looked at as part of the Local Government Resource Review, to be launched at the end of January. However, he would welcome further information and discussion, inviting this from the audience and Core Cities Group responded that they would provide such information.

It was suggested that Tax Increment Finance legislation (previously announced by the Deputy Prime Minister) could take too long to enact if the Local Government Resource Review becomes protracted, particularly as there are a number of schemes ready to go now. He replied that there is a chronology problem with the financial settlement, in the sense that the deepest cuts take place in the first year, but mitigating measures will take some time to introduce. He further stated that he was prepared to look at any means by which implementing such measures can be speeded up.
The issue of the Localism Bill was raised by the audience, asserting that it will provide London with new powers and access to resources that other cities would also like to access in due course, but the view from the floor was that such access should not be tied to the existence of directly elected mayors. The Deputy Prime Minister saw no reason in principle why some of the powers held in London cannot be given to other cities and that for a political and economic rebalancing increased local control is absolutely vital. He remained open to approaches in this respect. However, he was also in favour of directly elected mayors, but stated that this should only happen through a referendum.

There were concerns that the Regional Growth Fund does not have enough capacity and that there are too many other ministerial expectations for it. How can cities ensure that stalled schemes are restarted and that the work already done on regeneration continues and does not backslide? The Deputy Prime Minister agreed that too many people are weighing down the RGF with expectations. It’s not enough for everything in the country or the economy, and it shouldn’t be spread too thinly, but rather focus on where results can best be achieved.

Businesses do not always understand the process for engaging with LEPs, or what difference they can make by being part of one, particularly because it is not clear what powers they will have. The Deputy Prime Minister acknowledged that there was no additional money ‘in the system’ for LEPs, but that if sufficient local leadership got behind the LEP, they would have every opportunity to take good ideas to government and get a hearing. The aim should be to challenge central government and be ambitious, this is an opportunity to tell government what LEPs and cities want and need.

It is important at this critical moment that the Government fully understands the importance of Core Cities and that this is formally recognised. The Deputy Prime Minister replied that yes, Core Cities are the most important incubators of growth outside the South East, and that without proper devolution to them we will not rebalance the economy in the way we need to. It’s a political and economic model that doesn’t work at the minute (centralised, over burdened, not spread regionally). Rebalancing will not be possible unless Core Cities are recognised as the engines of growth and recovery.

It was suggested that, following the winding down of the Regional Development Agencies, there is now no mechanism in Government to assess the competing regional needs of the economy. The Deputy Prime Minister responded that a centralisation of efforts to rebalance the economy and regional disparity doesn’t work – it’s greater autonomy that will work so we need to get rid of the currently centralised approach.
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*Note: A more extensive slide pack and set of data tables will be provided to the Core Cities and LEPs as a deliverable from this project*

*Note II: Recessionary data and forecasts are provisional, as quality assurance work on the BRES data is still ongoing*
Recovering into headwinds

The macro context

The labour market looks extremely challenging

Total employment, UK, 1990 - 2020

Public sector employment, UK, 1990 - 2020

Unemployment rate, UK, 1990 - 2020

And what of welfare reform?

Source: Oxford Economics
Urban centres lead the way?

A key resource – a reminder

What do Core Cities do?

Employment share by broad sector, Core Cities, 2010

Employment share by broad sector, CC: LEPs, 2010

UK employment concentration

Public sector = 26% (CC: 32%)
Professional services = 22% (CC: 25%)
Manufacturing: 9% (CC: 7%)

Source: Oxford Economics
Cities…a wider role

- In addition to acting as administrative and governance hubs cities are growing as centres of excellence for tradable services (though attractive semi urban locations are also popular)
- Their tradable services role is increasing cities importance to UK exports and hence trade performance
- They are key centres of public service delivery, notably universities and major hospitals
- Their role as cultural and entertainment centres is significant and increasing
- The tighter nature and lower travelling distances offer potential environmental savings
- They act as gateways for tourists and business visitors and often as infrastructure hubs
- The agglomeration and networking impacts help improve within firm and across sector productivity in certain sectors
- With shipping / travelling costs rising the return of small scale production to cities is increasing
- They are growing as settlement locations, though fringe locations remain more favourable to families

Urban centres lead the way?

With a strong, but fragile, outlook
Full recovery many years away…

Total employment, Core Cities, 1991-2020

Source: Oxford Economics (Spring 2011)

Potential and pitfalls
Potential and pitfalls: scenarios

- As the economic outlook is uncertain, we have looked at two potential scenarios:
  - **Upper ‘best case’ scenario:** This scenario assumes that faster growth can be achieved through:
    - Improved export performance as a result of improved global growth
    - A rebound in consumer spending
    - An increased investment in UK universities
    - More modest Public Expenditure cuts
    - Improved business investment
  - **Lower ‘worst case’ scenario:** this scenario assumes growth will be lower through a combination of:
    - More aggressive Public expenditure cuts
    - A protracted contraction in consumer spending
    - A rapidly rising oil price
    - An unfavourable exchange rate for exporters
    - A fall in FDI flows

Potential for additional £15bn GVA and 341,000 jobs by 2020

**Total employment, baseline and upper scenario, Core Cities**

- **Core Cities = 341,000 additional jobs by 2020**
- **CC: LEPs = 1,000,000 additional jobs by 2020**
- **Core Cities: £15bn additional GVA**
- **CC: LEPs = £44bn additional GVA**

Source: Oxford Economics
With additional jobs possible in all core cities

Additional jobs by 2020, Cities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Cities jobs</th>
<th>LEP jobs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
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<td>Sheffield</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>341</strong></td>
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Source: Oxford Economics

But urban decay could return, 326,000 jobs could be lost

Total employment, baseline and lower scenario, Core Cities

GVA, avg. annual growth rate, baseline and lower scenario

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<thead>
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<th></th>
<th>2010-20</th>
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Core Cities = 326,000 less jobs by 2020
Core Cities = £14bn less GVA by 2020

CC: LEPs = 988,000 less jobs by 2020
CC: LEPs = £42bn less GVA by 2020

Source: Oxford Economics
What might be the trigger points?

**Upside**
- Factors outside of local / national control (the world market!)
- Co-ordinated local response to local issues (e.g. funding shortages, skills, housing, land, planning etc.). Taking the good from partnership working
- Additional private sector funding for investment (or borrowing on local assets)
- Infrastructure / environmental investment
- More innovative use of targeting local funding (such as Total Place)
- Possible import substitution for supply chain (including substituting London services)
- Proactive approach to labour market and community challenges (a greater sense of responsibility)

**Downside**
- Factors outside of local / national control (the world market!)
- What if business services are not the jobs saviour?
- Inactivity and missed opportunities (competition has increased globally)
- Spiral of costs to pay for ‘new cities’
- Badly co-ordinated and un-strategic public sector cuts
- De-motivated staff in public service (making work, inefficient etc.)
- Return of blight – vacant lots and ‘no-go’ areas
- Too much competition not co-operation. Who builds the recycling centres, the social housing, the low value added activity
- Insufficient infrastructure to meet demand (public service buildings, roads transportation etc)
- Spiralling local costs if funding limits investment

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**Summary – an economic and policy crossroads**
Summary – an economic and policy crossroads

- The economy may be recovering, but it is fragile
- The urban threats from reduced public sector employment and reduced consumer spending are both serious and prolonged
- Pressure on welfare budgets also a major concern
- However professional services continues to have high potential for job creation
- Skills base and improvement in city infrastructures have increased the competitive offer (but also the running costs)
- Co-ordination in a new policy environment will be crucial, coming at a time of cuts and low confidence will require strong leadership and enlightened staff in public service
- A new era of policy action not policy statement, time for us all (including economists!) to raise their game
- What role do cities and LEP areas have in growth areas – can niche industry return to cities, care for the elderly, environmental science and services, energy production?
- Sustainable growth and the environment – can cities unique strengths be harboursed (or could policy hinder?)
- The scale of the problem has presented a unique opportunity to make changes in governance and action, no longer ‘because we did it before’
- Cities are expected to lead the way economically given the unique skills and expertise, but the global threats are real and any reduction in competitiveness from local policy actions (or inaction) will have more impact than ever before

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