

## **M9: DELIVERING RECOVERY IN OUR REGIONS**

### **PURPOSE**

1. This paper sets out key steps that will help frame and enable recovery to the communities we represent and in our regional economies.
2. The M9 group of Mayors represent over 40% of the population of England and has a combined GVA of almost £750 billion (45% of England's GVA). Empowering Mayors to lead recovery planning for their regions will help put robust plans in place to support a significant proportion of our country.

### **MAYORS IMMEDIATE ROLE IN THE RESPONSE**

3. **The M9 group of Mayors is ready to lead regional recovery planning for the places we represent.** A clear statement from the Prime Minister requesting Mayors lead this work will help coordinate and increase the pace of the significant planning required across each of our regions.
4. **The Devolution White Paper should be focused on helping deliver recovery and maintaining the direction Government had set to level-up across the country.** To delivery regional recovery plans, additional flexibilities, powers and resources will be needed. We will be clear with Government what we need to deliver our plans.
5. **Recovery will be a national effort and we must work together to ensure alignment in planning and to give confidence to the country and our regions.** To coordinate our efforts, we would welcome regular discussions with Government. A monthly call between Mayors, Prime Minister, and Chancellor will help align our efforts.

### **RE-OPENING PUBLIC SPACES AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY**

6. We will work with our partners on use of public spaces, transport hubs and our city and town centres, reopening the places we represent in ways that maintain public safety.
7. To support the reopening of public spaces and immediate economic recovery, issues we are focused on are:
  - a. **How we support people to safely return to work:** The ability to meet safe working standards should be the guiding principle behind release from lockdown. We are in dialogue with businesses across our regions and can work through the challenges of balancing economic recovery and public health with all sectors of our economies. Government guidelines on reopening workplaces will be helpful. We can provide input to this, ensuring the guidelines will work on the ground in our places.
  - b. **Reopening public spaces and the role of Local Government:** The constituent Local Authorities in each of the places we represent will have a critical role to play in recovery, reopening public spaces. Work to ensure a safe flow of people around towns and cities is underway and will evolve over time, responding to the way people start moving around. Local Government will need additional resources to deliver, and to carry out their vital role.

- c. **Public Transport:** Continued financial support will be required to bridge gap between the commercial pressures and realities of social distancing to protect public health. Each service will have to run at reduced capacity to enable social distancing and we are keen to see continued financial support to enable this during the transition out of lockdown. Passporting funding through our authorities will enable us to manage decisions on the shape of provision in each of our regions.
- d. **Regional airports:** The airports serving the places we represent have a vital role to play in our regional economies. They are not just transport hubs, they are major employment sites and they act as a major draw for investment and development in our regions. Airports will clearly face significant pressures over the coming months. We must support them to survive to act as important lynchpins in our regional economic recovery in the years to come. Our recovery plans can set out how, with the right flexibility and resources, we will support our airports through recovery.
- e. **Flexibility in funding:** Each of our regions will require a different recovery plan. There will be areas of commonality, but we must be able to flex our approaches to reflect the specific challenges of the places we represent. Greater flexibility in funding will enable us to do this, allowing us to swiftly respond to challenges as they emerge without needing to constantly come back to Government with individual funding requests.

#### PLANNING FOR MEDIUM-TERM RECOVERY

- 8. As we move into **rebuilding our economy**, issues we are focused on are:
  - a. **Building on Local Industrial Strategies or equivalent local plans to revive our economies.** Local Industrial Strategies set out clear action that will be taken in our regions to support regional growth. We need to review our Local Industrial Strategies to see if there is anything else we should be considering. We will need funded action plans, agreed with Government that align with national recovery work.
  - b. **Building new skills across our regions.** Part of our recovery process will be a significant reskilling of the workforce. The way work is done in many businesses may change, and the opportunities available for young people entering the workforce will look very different. Skills required in each region will vary, reflecting our differing economies. With devolved skills funding and the flexibility to shape regional skills provision, reskilling our regions can be a significant element of our recovery planning. We will invest in online skills, FE, and pathways to employment, supporting people in our regions back to work.
  - c. **Ensuring we have the infrastructure to rebuild our economy.** More so than ever, investment in digital infrastructure will be fundamental to our economic growth. We must also maintain focus on the broader regional infrastructure developments that will be needed to revive our economies. Our recovery plans will set out the infrastructure requirements of our regions, giving us an agreed basis for investment over the coming years.

#### NEXT STEPS

- 9. Following the M9 meeting with the Prime Minister, we would welcome:
  - A statement from Government empowering Mayors to lead regional recovery plans.

- Discussion with Chancellor on flexibilities and resources required to deliver regional recovery.
- Regular meetings to align planning and agree action.

10. We have the structures in place to deliver regional recovery. Working with Government, we are ready to lead recovery for our places.