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## Pocket Watch – Lord Heseltine leaves no stone unturned

### Introduction

In a month's time, George Osborne will present his latest Financial Statement on the state of the economy and no doubt what else needs to be done to get things going. Whether he'll have time to include any of Lord Heseltine's latest [Report](#), 'No Stone Unturned in Pursuit of Growth' remains unclear. Commissioned in the last Budget and published last week, it has over 200 pages and 89 recommendations. The thrust is to use the power of greater localism and private dynamism to help generate growth. As such, it puts bodies such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and local Chambers of Commerce in the front line working in a direct relationship with Government Depts and a new National Growth Council. "I've not left the Government with easy decisions," he said. Perhaps not but he's left it with plenty to think about particularly in the area of education and skills to which he devotes a whole chapter

### What are the headline proposals?

Essentially there are three themes. First decentralising responsibilities for economic growth to bodies such as LEPs who would receive up to £250,000 for each of the next two years out of "efficiency savings and underspends," to devise and drive plans for economic growth. LEPs would work with other local agencies and so-called Local Growth Teams, commission skills training from local providers and essentially complete the demand led model envisaged a few years ago in the Leitch Report. Second, source and streamline funding partly through private sector support but more crucially through the creation of a single funding pot into which LEPs would bid. The pot would bring together existing streams worth about £49bn and sit alongside £9bn of EU funding and £11bn pa of LA investment in a simplified funding system. Third, refocus much of central Government around a relentless drive for growth. This would include annual growth plans for Depts, the inclusion of Non-Execs on Dept Boards, the dismantling of much of the civil service into Local Growth Teams, simplified planning and regulations but all looking up to a new co-ordinating body, the National Growth Council. Diagrams are provided

### So what was said about education and skills?

Leaving few stones unturned here as well, the Report comes up with 14 separate recommendations covering schools, FE, HE and immigration policy. Broadly, education is seen as the critical ingredient for "growth and prosperity" but provision needs to be more aligned to need, both individual and economic. Some familiar mantras appear here particularly on the importance of literacy, numeracy and employability and include:

- For schools, a sharper intervention process, greater business involvement in both the curriculum and governance, and simplified regulations to enable access to work experience
- For FE, voc provision for 16-19 yr olds to be agreed by LEPs, other voc provision to meet industry standards
- For both, funding for NEET support and career guidance to be available from the single pot
- For HE, Industry Councils to work with HEIs to ensure provision matches industry needs and in skill shortage areas, a quid pro quo fee model agreed between employer and student
- For immigration, a review of regulations, a better understanding of industry needs and a stronger effort to sort out areas where there is a backlog of problem cases

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