

## **People and Places Board – from Cllr Kevin Bentley (Chairman)**

### **Levelling Up**

1. Ahead of the Levelling Up White Paper, expected to be published in early 2022, we have taken soundings from Core Cities, Key Cities, the County Councils' Network, the District Councils' Network, London Councils and the Special Interest Group of Metropolitan Authorities. We have also made fresh contact with national organisations like the Confederation of British Industry, the National Farmers Union, the Institute for Government and ADEPT to take soundings on their positions.
2. Many of our policy proposals such as those related to skills devolution, Local Enterprise Partnership reform and funding defragmentation are mentioned positively as part of the Government's emerging vision. Furthermore, from our conversations with local authorities, their representatives and national stakeholders we are confident that these proposals reflect the diversity and ambition of councils across the country and resonate with organisations beyond the sector.
3. We have recently launched a [Levelling Up Hub](#) on the LGA website, including information about the LGA's Levelling Up Local Inquiry. The inquiry will look into how the Government's levelling up agenda might better strengthen local communities, and we have appointed a number of independent experts to its steering group.
4. Alongside the Inquiry, officers at the LGA have also started work, drawing on the expertise of the International Public Policy Observatory, to develop an evidence base of demographic change. This will help develop our understanding of potential shifts in population distribution following the Coronavirus pandemic and provide a better sense of the typologies and priorities likely to feature in debates surrounding the levelling up agenda, including equalities, diversity and inclusion implications.

### **Employment and skills**

The Skills for Jobs [White paper](#) introduced in 2021 proposes a range of reforms which give new employer representation bodies (e.g. Chambers of Commerce) a lead role in setting out the technical skills provision needed for their local areas. Our latest briefing to influence the Skills and post-16 Education Bill currently in the Commons is [here](#). We are advocating for councils and combined authorities to have a core and strategic role working alongside ERBs. While the House of Lords agreed an amendment along these lines, it has been watered down in the Commons. We await a date for the next report stage in the Commons.

### **UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Community Renewal Fund**

5. Due to the delays in the announcement of the successful Community Renewal Fund programmes, the LGA lobbied the Government for an extension of the delivery deadline

through tabling parliamentary questions, press work and raising concerns through the officer level UKSPF taskforce. The Secretary of State had since extended the deadline for delivery of programmes from March 2022 to June 2022. We have commissioned Shared Intelligence to capture learning from the Community Renewal Fund to support local government with the introduction of the UKSPF. They have commenced conducting interviews with 12 local authorities as both Lead Authorities and delivery partners.

6. Further details of the UKSPF are expected to be announced as part of the Levelling Up White Paper. The Chairs of the City Regions and People & Places Board wrote to the Secretary of State calling for a member led taskforce where central government and local government collaborate and codesign the UKSPF. The LGA will continue to lobby the Government for the need for the UKSPF to be a codesigned, localised, place based fund that tackles inequalities and delivers locally determined outcomes.

#### **Digital connectivity**

7. We have been working with the LGA public affairs team to highlight the importance of good digital connection, collating a briefing for a [Westminster Hall Debate on Tackling the Digital Divide](#) and submitting evidence to the Public Accounts Committee inquiry into [DCMS recall \(broadband\)](#).
8. The LGA's publication '[Councils' role supporting the digital skills pipeline](#)', alongside [LG Inform forecasts for digital employment](#), outlines the key roles councils play in supporting local digital skills progression, which, in turn, plays a vital role in levelling up communities. We recently met with officials from DCMS to promote the report as a basis for further collaborative work with DCMS following the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper.

**Contact officer:** Rebecca Cox  
**Position:** Principal Policy Adviser  
**Phone no:** 0207 187 7384  
**Email:** [Rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk](mailto:Rebecca.cox@local.gov.uk)