

## **Levelling Up Locally**

### **Purpose of report**

For information.

### **Summary**

This paper provides a short update for board members on the Levelling Up Locally inquiry.

Is this report confidential? Yes  No

### **Recommendation/s**

Board members are asked to note the work to date for the Levelling Up Locally inquiry.

### **Action/s**

Officers will continue with the inquiry programme and feedback any emerging recommendations to lead members as the inquiry develops.

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## Levelling Up Locally

### Background

1. At the first meeting of the City Regions Board, members agreed to support a joint and independent inquiry with the People and Places Board into Levelling Up Locally. A similar paper was also approved by the People and Places Board at their first meeting. It was agreed by City Regions board members the inquiry would look at four aspects:
  - 1.1. Funding and alignment – The practical questions about how levelling up in the broadest sense might be paid for and, at a more granular level, the opportunities to align policy and funding interventions at the local level to improve the quality of public service outcomes and address concentrations of deprivation.
  - 1.2. Leadership – The role of local leadership in binding communities and anchor institutions together to strengthen resilience, align national priorities, and articulate policy interventions necessary to support balanced economic growth.
  - 1.3. Productivity and prosperity – The role of the private and public sector in addressing inter and intra-regional inequalities and the shift towards sustainable and inclusive models of prosperity.
  - 1.4. Place and identity – The questions of place and identity within a post-pandemic context and the potential of local social and cultural infrastructure to strengthen inward investment, encourage entrepreneurialism and address economic inequalities.
2. It was decided the inquiry would be an opportunity to broaden the conversation around levelling up beyond local and central government and hear from a diverse range of speakers from different backgrounds to develop the Board's policy lines around place-based leadership.
3. Officers are continuing to pursue a wider programme of work which forms the Board's response to the Levelling Up agenda. This independent inquiry is one piece of work within this wider programme.

### Update

4. At the City Regions board meeting in January 2022 members agreed to the following independent [steering group](#) members overseeing the inquiry. The steering group met for the first time to agree on the terms of reference and reflect on the recent publication of the Levelling Up White Paper in early March.
5. Following this, the LGA hosted the first roundtable on 22 March 2022 exploring the theme of funding and alignment.

- 5.1. The session was well attended with representatives from organisations including King's Fund, Manchester University, Wates Group, New Philanthropy Capital, Institute for Fiscal Studies, Welsh Local Government Association, Shared Intelligence, Social Investment Business, Association of Directors of Children's Services and WPI Economics.
- 5.2. Professor Philip McCann (professor of urban and regional economics at the University of Sheffield Management School) opened the session discussing the scale of investment required for the levelling up agenda, drawing on international perspectives. This was followed by a talk from Matt Whittaker (chief executive officer at Pro Bono Economics) who shared views around where the money for the levelling up agenda would be best spent and how we can ensure resources play to the strength of local institutions. A more comprehensive [write-up](#) has been published on the LGA website.
6. A second roundtable session was held on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2022 exploring the theme of leadership.
  - 6.1. The roundtable was attended by representatives from a range of organisations including the Institute of Directors, Wates Group, Hertsmere Borough Council, St Oswald's Hospice, University of Manchester, Friends Provident Foundation, Torfaen County Borough Council, Reform, University of Cambridge, Centre for Local Economic Strategies, Nottingham City Council, Maslaha, Lewes District Council, British Youth Council, WLGA, IPPR North, Vale of White Horse District Council, COSLA and Essex County Council.
  - 6.2. The first speaker was Professor Joy Warmington, Chief Executive Officer at Brap who discussed the ways in which leadership approaches can deliver transformational change in tackling systemic inequality to deliver on the levelling up agenda. This was followed by Nick Gardham, Chief Executive Officer at Community Organisers who explored the transformational impact listening can have upon communities and the distribution of power within society. Patricia Wharton, community advocate, was the final speaker discussing how we can strengthen the talent pipeline so there is a continuation of people who have the skills and are representative of their communities to fill positions of leadership and Patricia also provided examples of what good local leadership looks like.
7. A third roundtable session exploring the theme of productivity and prosperity is scheduled for Tuesday 21 June and a final session on place and identity on 20 July. We would welcome members' support in raising awareness of the inquiry's work with Ministers and Parliamentarians in advance of the launch of the final report.

8. The final set of recommendations will be brought to both the People and Places and City Regions Boards in the autumn for members to sign-off.

#### **Implications for Wales**

9. The Government has committed to 'levelling up' the entire of the UK. While not all the policy and funding responsibilities covered by the inquiry are devolved matters, the Welsh Local Government Association have attended both roundtables to share relevant lessons and ideas. We will continue to engage colleagues in Wales throughout the Inquiry.

#### **Financial Implications**

10. Any financial implications arising from this work will be met from the Boards' agreed programme budgets.

#### **Next steps**

11. Officers will continue with the inquiry programme and feedback any emerging recommendations to lead members as the inquiry develops.