

Theme 2: Levelling Up

Purpose of report

For information.

Summary

This paper provides a short update for members on the LGA's work around the levelling up agenda.

Is this report confidential? Yes No

Recommendation/s

Members are asked to note the LGA's levelling up work to date and the ministerial changes at the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities.

Members are invited to comment on the proposed levelling up programme for 2022/23 including inviting Dehenna Davison (Appendix 1), the new Minister for Levelling Up, to a future Board meeting, and on the activity set out under our core employment and skills activity.

Action/s

Officers will continue their levelling up work throughout the 2022/23 board cycle as outlined in the paper, including inviting Dehenna Davison to address the Board.

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Theme 2: Levelling Up

Purpose and outcome

1. The purpose of the LGA's levelling up work is to demonstrate local government's place leadership role in strengthening local communities, reducing inequality, and building opportunity which can feed into the LGA's lobbying to Government and political manifestos in advance of the next general election. This will be achieved through the LGA's levelling up locally inquiry and continued work on employment and skills reform.
2. Key civil servants for this work include: Jeremy Pocklington, DLUHC permanent secretary; Will Garton, Director General for Levelling Up; Catherine Frances, Director General, Local Government, Resilience and Communities; Susan Acland-Hood, DfE permanent secretary; Peter Schofield, DWP permanent secretary.

Context

3. The Government's long awaited White Paper was published on 2 February 2022. As detailed in the [LGA's briefing note](#) the White Paper set out the Government's ambition to pursue 12 national missions across four broad areas: boosting productivity and living standards by growing the private sector; spreading opportunities and improving public services; restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging; and, empowering local leaders and communities.
4. The political context has since changed since its publication, with questions remaining around the new Government's plans for the levelling up agenda.
5. On 6 September 2022 Simon Clarke was appointed Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). He previously held the role of Minister of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in 2020. Paul Scully was reappointed as a Minister of State and Dehenna Davison appointed as Minister for Levelling Up. Lee Rowley and Baroness Scott of Bybrook were appointed as Parliamentary Under Secretaries of State at DLUHC.
6. Cllr James Jamieson, Chair of the LGA, has written to Simon Clarke welcoming him to the role and is writing a similar letter to Dehenna Davison which will include an invitation for her to attend future City Regions and People and Places Board meetings.
7. Given the changing political landscape, there is an appetite in the sector to have a further debate about the long term. Over the autumn the LGA will be leading a discussion about the shape and powers of local government in the future. The LGA will be taking the debate to regional meetings, holding town hall meetings and Smith

Square Debates. This will include further exploration into the future of the levelling up agenda and what it means for local communities in a [session](#) which will be held on 18th October 2022.

Levelling Up Locally Inquiry

7. In the last Board cycle members agreed to support a joint inquiry with the People and Places Board into Levelling Up Locally. Member agreed the inquiry would look at four aspects:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. 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.
 - iii. 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.
 - iv. 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.
8. The inquiry launched in February 2022 when [steering group](#) members met for the first time to agree on the terms of reference and reflect on the recent publication of the Levelling Up White Paper. The inquiry seeks to be inclusive of a range of views through the topics addressed and the people and organisations invited to participate. DLUHC officials have also observed the sessions as part of the Board's direction to officers to ensure we are bringing Government into the conversation. Given the LGA's ambition to influence the wider national debate, consideration could also be given to inviting policy makers or researchers from other political parties. Members' views on this approach would be welcome.
9. Following this, the LGA hosted four roundtables between March and July 2022 exploring the themes outlined in Paragraph 6. A [summary](#) from each of the sessions can be viewed on the inquiry hub on the LGA website. A series of think pieces and videos have also been published on the hub sharing the views from a range of organisations discussing how the levelling up agenda might better strengthen local communities.
10. The inquiry will hold two workshops at the beginning of October to discuss the emerging themes. There will be one in-person session held on Monday 10th October 10am – 1pm and one virtual session on Wednesday 12th October 10am – 1pm respectively and City

Regions and People and Places Board members are invited to attend alongside everyone who has contributed to the four roundtables of the inquiry (see Appendix 1).

11. A final set of recommendations will be taken to the November City Regions and People and Places Boards for sign off. Following this, officers will bring a detailed plan to the Boards outlining next steps for the promotion of the inquiry and landing the recommendations.

Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill

12. The Queen's Speech on 10 May announced a Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which was then presented to Parliament on 11 May. The Bill aims to drive local growth, empower local leaders to regenerate their areas, and ensure everyone can share in the UK's success. It will place a duty on the Government to set Levelling Up missions and produce an annual report updating the country of the delivery of these missions. The Bill is currently at committee stage in the House of Commons.
13. The [LGA responded to the announcement of the Bill](#) by welcoming the steps it takes to extend devolution, and make good on the commitment in the Levelling Up White Paper to offer all of England the opportunity to benefit from a devolution deal by 2030.
14. Ensuring communities everywhere benefit from the Government's levelling up agenda and further devolution has been a long running ask for the LGA. On 21 June LGA Chair Cllr James Jamieson gave [oral evidence](#) to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill Public Bill Committee. This provided an opportunity to welcome the move towards every part of the country having the opportunity to benefit from a devolution deal.
15. Officers continue to meet with District Councils Network and County Councils Network to understand their views on the Bill and implications for members.
16. It is not yet certain whether there will be any changes to the Bill, including its timetable, under the new Government. The LGA's letter to Dehenna Davison will ask for an update on the Bill alongside its expected timescale. We will keep Board Members updated on its progress.

Levelling up through employment and skills reform

17. Skills, retraining and job creation are critical to the levelling up agenda. Investment and interventions to achieve this must connect up at a local level and for all places if they are to support people of all ages – learners, unemployed people, career changers – as well as businesses and other employers of all sizes – progress. A joined up and locally responsive employment and skills offer is critical to this. Earlier this summer, the LGA launched its *Work Local: Unlocking talent to level up* proposals. We make clear recommendations to Whitehall on ways it can improve its approach to employment and

skills for all places right now, and what is needed for a coherent framework for employment and skills devolution.

18. To successfully land our proposals we are engaging a range of stakeholders, including business and employer groups, to seek endorsements and identify opportunities for joint working. The Chairman, with the Chair of the City Regions Board wrote to the Minister for Employment, Julie Marson MP and the Skills Minister, Andrea Jenkyns MP in July. Following the appointment of new Ministers, we aim to secure a Work Local summit with relevant Ministers later this year. We are landing our proposals with the shadow Cabinet including Alison McGovern MP and Jonathan Ashworth MP and are seeking follow on discussions with the Liberal Democrat spokespeople on these issues.
19. Our project specific work is covered in detail elsewhere on the agenda, however officers also continue to drive forward our core employment and skills work. Some key issues for members to be aware of are set out below:
- Deliver a Work Local summit and related events to engage the Government and parliamentarians (end 2022)
 - Launch report by the Heseltine Institute on adult retraining (September 2022)
 - Ensure local government has a clear role in delivering the Government's FE reforms including Local Skills Improvement Plans (ongoing)
 - Support councils to deliver DfE's Multiply adult numeracy programme (by end March 2023 as part of the LGA's improvement offer)
 - Support local government's economic development cadre deliver the levelling up agenda (by end 2023 as part of the LGA's improvement offer).

Implications for Wales

20. 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 has regularly attended the Levelling Up Locally Inquiry to share relevant lessons and ideas. As work to detail the scope and scale of powers needed to deliver the 12 Missions at a UK level unfolds the LGA will continue to look for opportunities to work with Welsh local government.

Financial Implications

21. Any financial implications arising from this work will be met from the Boards' agreed programme budgets and the LGA's improvement grant.

Next steps

22. Officers will continue their levelling up work throughout the 2022/23 board cycle as outlined in the paper, including inviting Dehenna Davison, Minister for Levelling Up, to address the Board.

Appendix 1

Dehenna Davison MP – Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Levelling Up)



Dehenna Davison was elected as MP for Bishop Auckland in the 2019 general election. Prior to becoming an MP, Davison was a research and development analyst for LUMO, a company which advises businesses on tax credits. Davison was a member of the Home Affairs Select Committee from March 2020 to November 2021, is a member of the European Research Group and a member of the parliamentary council of The Northern Policy Foundation. On 7th September 2022 Davison was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at DLUHC. Davison's portfolio covers:

- Local growth funding design and simplification
- Local growth funding delivery – UKSPF, Levelling Up Fund, Community Ownership Fund etc
- Devolution deals and county deals
- Planning casework
- Legislation – Holocaust Memorial

Appendix 2

Organisations the LGA has engaged with as part of the Levelling Up Locally Inquiry:

<p>Acre Arts Council Association of Directors of Adult Social Services Bennett Institute for Public Policy Brap British Property Federation British Youth Council Carnegie Centre for Better Ageing Centre for Cultural Value Centre for Local Economic Strategies Citizens Economic Council Citizens UK Community Organisers COSLA Crafts Council E3G Eden Project Fabians Fair4All Funding Fields in Trust Friends Provident Institute of Fiscal Studies Institute of Directors IPPR North Justice Together</p>	<p>Kings Fund Learning and Work Institute London Councils MAIA Maslaha Mind National Council for Voluntary Organisations National Infrastructure Commission Neighbourly Lab New Philanthropy Capital One Public Estate Office for National Statistics Onward Policy@Manchester Policy Exchange ProBono Economics Reform Shared Intelligence Social Investment Business St Oswald's Hospice The Countryside Charity University of Sheffield Wates Group Welsh Local Government Association WPI Economics</p>
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