

# Cabinet

12<sup>th</sup> May 2022

## Levelling Up and Devolution for Warwickshire

### Recommendation

That Cabinet:

Endorses the progress made and the overall direction on both Levelling Up, and the development of a Devolution Deal for Warwickshire as set out in this report.

### 1. Background

- 1.1 On 2 February 2022 the Government published the Levelling Up White Paper. The White Paper outlines the Government's strategy to "spread opportunity and prosperity to all parts of the country" by 2030, through twelve national missions. This will also include stronger oversight of local government on performance against these missions.
- 1.2 Anticipating the publication of the White Paper, the Council Plan approved by full Council in February 2022 includes an explicit commitment to the Levelling Up agenda and to understanding what that means for Warwickshire.
- 1.3 In March 2022 Cabinet considered a report outlining the Levelling Up White Paper and associated devolution framework. Devolution is one of the 12 missions to deliver on the wider Levelling Up missions.
- 1.4 At the March meeting Cabinet agreed to:
  - support and commission the development of a Devolution Deal for Warwickshire
  - authorise the Chief Executive to develop a Devolution Deal for consideration by Cabinet, engaging with key stakeholders and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and to take such other steps as she considers necessary in consultation with the Leader
  - establish a cross-party Member Group to support the development of a Devolution Deal; and
  - approve the Council's new Performance Management Framework which now includes a range of Levelling Up metrics.

- 1.5 This report provides Cabinet with an update on progress, highlighting the work to date, the direction of travel and key milestones for both Levelling Up and Devolution.

## 2. Key elements

- 2.1 Following the initial report to Cabinet in March 2022, three clear and related elements of work have emerged:
- developing a Levelling Up approach for Warwickshire;
  - developing a Devolution Deal for Warwickshire as a proposal for entering into negotiation with Government; and
  - engaging in discussions about the (WMCA) West Midlands Trailblazer Devolution Deal and how it might benefit Warwickshire.

Progress on each of the elements is set out in more detail below

### ***Levelling Up Approach***

- 2.2 In the Council Plan, we committed to develop a countywide approach to Levelling Up with the aim of publishing this by July 2022, recognising the urgency of this work to achieve progress against the Government's missions by 2030. The Council Plan set out key principles for Levelling Up and also our intention to build our approach around priority communities of both interest and place in need of most support.
- 2.3 Work has started on developing this countywide approach within a framework, with the intention that more specific priorities will feed into a targeted action plan to deliver specific progress on Levelling Up within Warwickshire. Our working definition of Levelling Up centres on;
- *Increasing opportunity and social mobility*
  - *Reducing disparities*
  - *Building community power.*
  - *Creating sustainable futures*
- 2.4 An expanded definition and the headline content of the approach is summarised in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.5 This action plan will aim to complement our recently approved Council Plan and associated Delivery Plan (presented separately on this Cabinet agenda) and connect the national missions to our seven Areas of Focus. An initial analysis of these elements indicates a strong correlation, and this is set out in **Appendix 2**.
- 2.6 Our Levelling Up Approach will:
- build on the initial principles set out in the Council Plan;
  - set out the evidence base, and definition of the key challenges relating to Levelling Up in Warwickshire;

- identify a series of priority places and communities which would most benefit from Levelling Up;
  - identify a series of priority themes for Levelling Up across the County and in specific places, e.g., educational attainment, health inequalities and standards of living, among others; and
  - create a pipeline of projects and activity which will support Levelling Up in multiple places.
- 2.7 Similar documents have been produced by other Councils that have moved quickly on Levelling Up, for example Essex County Council, West Midlands Combined Authority, Birmingham City Council and Coventry City Council.
- 2.8 Levelling Up also has a significant impact on our current and future strategies, in particular work to develop a long-term Infrastructure Strategy, Warwickshire Economic Strategy and our Sustainable Futures 2050 Strategy. It will also inform plans to deliver against existing strategies on the economy, education, health inequalities and social inequalities which, among others, will need a strong emphasis in Levelling Up delivery.
- 2.9 Similarly, work on the Integrated Care System and Community Powered Warwickshire will be critical to how we approach Levelling Up into the future.
- 2.10 Whilst a Devolution Deal can only be agreed at an upper-tier level it is important to recognise the value of both places and partnerships to Levelling Up. All Council Leaders and Chief Executives have committed to this joint, collective approach and District and Borough Councils are working with the County Council to shape a Deal and the approach to Levelling Up. It is important to ensure both a countywide and a local focus so as to identify specific needs and priorities in both communities of place and communities of interest. Engagement with other key stakeholders will follow and will continue throughout the development of the approach.

### ***Devolution Deal for Warwickshire***

- 2.11 Linked to the overall Levelling Up approach, work has begun on developing the content for a Devolution Deal for Warwickshire which would be the subject of negotiation with Government.
- 2.12 As such, a Devolution Deal is positioned as a key tool to enhance Warwickshire's Levelling Up ambitions as well as supporting other key themes such as our commitment to become a net zero county no later than 2050.
- 2.13 The Leader, following the Cabinet decision in March, has confirmed Warwickshire's interest in developing a Devolution Deal to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (LUHC).
- 2.14 Emerging themes for a Devolution Deal, as set out below, relate closely to both the Areas of Focus within our Council Plan and the 12 national Levelling Up

missions. They have also been cross referenced with the plans and priorities of the Districts and Borough Councils:

- inclusive, green, economic growth, good jobs and skills for the future;
- improving infrastructure, transport, and connectivity;
- delivering net zero;
- educational attainment including skills/talent retention;
- improving health and well-being; and
- resilient communities, planning & meeting future housing need.

2.15 These themes are now forming the basis of work with the District and Borough Councils in shaping the potential content of a Devolution Deal for Warwickshire in terms of:

- identifying the challenges in each theme;
- connecting to existing strategies and related programmes;
- understanding our key strengths and assets;
- considering the offer Warwickshire can make to Government; and
- Shaping our 'asks' for devolved powers and/or funding from Government.

2.16 The cross-party Member Group is being established to help shape the Devolution Deal and the aim is for consideration by Cabinet in the Autumn.

### ***West Midlands Trailblazer***

2.17 The West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) is leading on one of two national 'Trailblazer' Devolution Deals, with the other being Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

2.18 The Trailblazer will be submitted to Government later this year, with discussions ongoing on the final timescale. This means that the development of the Trailblazer is running ahead of any Devolution Deal in Warwickshire and will potentially inform elements of content in our own Deal.

2.19 Through the Council's non-constituent membership of the WMCA, senior officers are engaged in the development of the Trailblazer. Warwickshire also stands to benefit directly, where our involvement would benefit the overall area covered by the WMCA. In engaging, our focus is on understanding these opportunities and how they fit and align with our own thinking about a Devolution Deal for Warwickshire.

2.20 Whilst the formal governance for the Trailblazer will be through the WMCA, Cabinet will continue to be briefed and sighted on the content and development as this work progresses.

### 3. Engagement and co-production

3.1 Levelling Up and developing a Devolution Deal are countywide opportunities which must reflect the diversity of all our towns and rural and local communities. As such engagement and co-production with partners and stakeholders will be key to the success of our approach in Warwickshire. Key elements include:

- ***Voice of Warwickshire*** – During April and into May 2022 we have engaged with our newly established Voice of Warwickshire panel to seek their views on Levelling Up priorities. The feedback is currently being analysed and will help to inform proposals for our approach to Levelling Up.
- ***Stakeholder engagement*** - all District and Borough Councils have been engaged from the outset and continue to influence the shape and content of our emerging approach to Levelling Up and the development of a Devolution Deal for Warwickshire. This has involved engagement across Leaders and Chief Executives and individual discussions at District/Borough Council level are being complemented by a focused collective workshop approach.
- ***Cross-Party Member Group*** – political groups have nominated their representatives to the cross-party Member Group on Devolution. The first meeting is expected to take place during May with a sequencing of future meetings to be aligned with the overall timeframe for this work, which is expected to run into the Autumn. The work of the Member Group will play a critical role in supporting the development of a Devolution Deal for Warwickshire.
- ***Internal teams*** – Corporate Board will ensure that contributions and input are taken from across the Organisation as well as from partners and stakeholders and that links are made between themes wherever possible.

### 4. Financial Implications

4.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report. However, there are likely to be longer-term financial implications of our approach to Levelling Up. Any future Devolution Deal for Warwickshire would achieve the devolution of greater powers, functions, and/or funding from Government. Consideration of the financial implications, alongside developing a deeper understanding of the implications for both access to funding and our tax base will be a critical part of this work.

### 5. Environmental Implications

5.1 Climate Change and Sustainability are key themes in the WM Trailblazer Devolution Deal. They will also be a critical part element for Warwickshire, and

the contribution the County can make to the national Net Zero strategy, along with our own Council and County net zero ambitions as set out in the Council Plan.

## 6. Timescales and next steps

6.1 The table below summarises the headline dates and next steps for all three elements of this work:

April	Levelling Up 'Voice of Warwickshire' engagement commenced
	Workshop with District and Borough Councils on Devolution Deal content
May	Member Group begins to meet
June	Leadership Team and Senior Leadership Forum engagement
	Engagement with key partners and stakeholders
	Opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny Committees to contribute to Levelling Up approach as relevant to their respective remits
July	Cabinet considers Levelling Up approach
Autumn	Draft Devolution Deal for Warwickshire WM Trailblazer to be submitted to Government

## Appendices

Appendix 1 – Levelling up approach – emerging elements

Appendix 2 – Mapping the emerging themes for devolution

## Background Papers

None

	Name	Contact Information
Report Authors	Gereint Stoneman Lead Commissioner, Corporate Policy & Strategy Sarah Duxbury, Assistant Director Governance and Policy	<a href="mailto:gereintstoneman@warwickshire.gov.uk">gereintstoneman@warwickshire.gov.uk</a>  <a href="mailto:sarahduxbury@warwickshire.gov.uk">sarahduxbury@warwickshire.gov.uk</a>
Strategic Director	Rob Powell, Strategic Director for Resources	<a href="mailto:robpowell@warwickshire.gov.uk">robpowell@warwickshire.gov.uk</a>
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Izzi Seccombe Leader of The Council	<a href="mailto:isobelseccombe@warwickshire.gov.uk">isobelseccombe@warwickshire.gov.uk</a>

The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): n/a - countywide



## Appendix 1 – Levelling up approach – emerging elements

### Working definition of Levelling Up:

**Increasing opportunity and social mobility:** ensuring the success you enjoy in life is less dependent on where you live, your background and who your parents are by:

- spreading opportunity and embedding aspiration;
- fulfilling people's potential in life; and
- building inclusive economic growth to ensure valued, well-paid and high-quality jobs.

**Reducing disparities:** addressing gaps and inequalities in:

- standards of living;
- health, happiness and well-being;
- educational attainment;
- access to good, affordable housing; and
- connectivity (transport and broadband/5G).

**Building community power:** Increasing pride in the place you live in, and unleashing the potential of communities by increasing your voice and influence over your places.

**Creating Sustainable futures:** ensuring climate change and adaptation a central part of levelling up so future generations can live in a sustainable county with good opportunities and quality of life, including standards of living.

### Our principles for responding to Levelling Up:

1. A joint mission
2. A long-term approach
3. Addressing root causes
4. Building on strengths as well as tackling need
5. Data-driven
6. Targeted and tailored to communities of place and interest

### Where we will focus Levelling Up effort:

- Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) and known, hyper-local pockets of need including Community Powered investments
- Town centres linked to existing and future schemes/projects
- Rural areas and communities with a particular focus on digital connectivity & transport
- Emerging and new areas/communities of need post-pandemic
- Transient communities and ethnic minorities, including the focus on supporting Ukrainian refugees into good lives in Warwickshire

**Note** – Communities of interest addressed in Appendix 2.



## Appendix 2 – Mapping the emerging themes for devolution

National Levelling Up missions (2022- 2030)	WCC Council Plan Areas of Focus (2022-27)	Emerging Devolution priorities for Warwickshire
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Living standards (pay, employment and productivity)</li> <li>2. Research &amp; Development</li> <li>3. Transport Infrastructure</li> <li>4. Digital Connectivity</li> <li>5. Education</li> <li>6. Skills</li> <li>7. Health</li> <li>8. Well-being</li> <li>9. Pride in Place</li> <li>10. Housing</li> <li>11. Crime</li> <li>12. Local Leadership</li> </ol>	<p>Promote inclusive, sustainable economic growth, successful business, good quality jobs and future skills</p> <p>Deliver major infrastructure, digital connectivity and improved transports options</p> <p>Through education, improve life opportunities for children, young people and those with special educational needs and disabilities</p> <p>Deliver the Child Friendly Warwickshire Strategy – Happy, healthy, safe children</p> <p>Support people to live healthy, happy and independent lives and work with partners to reduce health inequalities</p> <p>Create vibrant places with safe and inclusive communities</p> <p>Tackle climate change, promote biodiversity and deliver on our commitment to net zero</p>	<p>Inclusive, green economic growth, good jobs and skills for the future</p> <p>Improving infrastructure, transport and connectivity</p> <p>Educational attainment</p> <p>Improving health and well-being</p> <p>Regenerating priority communities, planning &amp; meeting future housing need</p> <p>Tackling climate change and delivering net zero</p>

Note - Related strategies mapped to the Areas of Focus in the Council Plan