

Chair: Sally-Ann Hart MP *Hastings & Rye*

Vice Chair: Stephen Morgan MP *Portsmouth South*

Vice Chair: Caroline Lucas MP *Brighton Pavilion*

Vice Chair: James Sunderland MP *Bracknell*

## APPG Inquiry: Financing the future - what does Levelling-up mean for South East England?

### *Expectations, requirements, and concerns*

While the Government has voiced its intention to undertake a programme of activity to 'level-up' across the regions of the UK, and Michael Gove now heads-up the new "Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities", there remains a lack of clarity on what exactly activity that 'levels-up' may entail.

- **Polling of residents and businesses commissioned by South East Councils found that 37% of residents and around a quarter of business (23%) indicated they did not know what it meant.**
- **At the same time, it has become commonplace, among commentators, to assume the Government's levelling up intentions have the regions outside and beyond the South East as their focus.**
- **South East Councils has consistently sought to highlight and/or remind policymakers and decision-takers, that the region has areas lacking investment, pockets of deprivation and communities in need of regeneration.**

Talking about "Levelling up" is interesting but attention must be focused on delivery of whatever arises from discussions and deliberations.

- **How will any levelling up be delivered at a local level? What bodies have the reach and scope to deliver? If it is councils will adequate additional resources be made available?**

Local authority leaderships, operating under significant financial pressures due to the Covid pandemic gave a cautious welcome to the recent Budget/Spending Review £4.8bn in additional grant funding for councils over the next three years and announcements on local areas across the region winning allocations from Community Renewal Funds. However, there have been warnings that the Chancellors 'gift' is not enough, and councils will require additional government support.

- **It was interesting to note post Budget comments by LGA Chair, Cllr James Jamieson who said that with "adequate freedoms", councils could deliver world-class local services for communities, tackle the climate emergency, and ensure all parts of the country prosper.**

### APPG Discussion

Two meetings will be held as part of the APPG South East inquiry:

**10am**                      **Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

**9.30am**                     **Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2022**

Agendas and confirmed guest speaker details will be circulated ahead of each meeting.

Meetings will last around 90 minutes in total, providing an opportunity for Parliamentarians to hear from invited guest speakers in local government, academia, and business about what, and how, levelling-up could play out across the South East region of England.

Parliamentarians may wish to discuss developments, issues and concerns related to levelling-up generally and/or relate to matters that may be more local to their South East constituencies.

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## Call for evidence

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The APPG South East is keen to hear from organisations and individuals on expectations, requirements and concerns related to the Government's intended 'Levelling up' agenda.

Written submissions of no more than four A4 pages (approximately 1,600 words) are invited by 12<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

Please provide your:

- Organisation name and sector (or name if replying as an individual).
- Contact details including email and phone number.
- Willingness to come to speak at a meeting of the APPG.
- Consent (or not) to your submission being placed on the webpage of the APPG.

Submissions should be sent by email to [appgsoutheast@secouncils.gov.uk](mailto:appgsoutheast@secouncils.gov.uk)

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## Questions, queries, and points the APPG might wish to probe

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1. Is "Levelling-up" anymore of a programme than the "Big Society" was?
2. What should success criteria for Levelling-up look like?
3. Must Levelling-up be an endeavour solely dependent on financial support?
4. Should councils be the vehicle to coordinate levelling up activity?
5. How many councils in the South East region are dealing with income and revenue pressures?
6. Are there common pressure points of concern among councils in the South East?
7. What is the funding situation for participating councils?
  - a. Short term?
  - b. Long term?
8. How many councils in the region might be close to issuing a S114 notice?
9. What "adequate freedoms" might help councils could deliver world-class local services?
10. What alternative or new options could be explored to secure funding for local authorities?
  - a. Are there commercial options that could be sustainable for the long term?
11. Should local businesses pay more for services? How much more and for what?
12. Does greater funding to a local authority area require a mayor?
13. Any other thoughts or observations

## APPG Administration

South East Councils, as the designated Secretariat to the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the South East, shall manage proceedings in liaison with the office of the APPG Chair.

A note of each meeting shall be made, and any actions agreed by Members will be processed in a timely manner by the Secretariat.

Further details please contact: [appgsoutheast@secouncils.gov.uk](mailto:appgsoutheast@secouncils.gov.uk)