

Title: Levelling Up Approach and Devolution Deal for Warwickshire
Lead Officer: Chris Elliott
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Andrew Day
Wards of the District directly affected: All

Summary

The report seeks support for the Levelling Up Approach adopted by Warwickshire County Council and to develop a Place Plan for the District and to integrate within it the priorities and actions of the South Warwickshire Place Partnership (health and well-being). It is proposed that this work should involve discussion with Parish and Town Councils, local business, and voluntary/community organisations. The report also seeks delegated authority to help with the development of a Devolution Deal for Warwickshire and input into a West Midlands Combined Authority Trailblazer Devolution Deal. Finally, it notes the submission of a Levelling Up Bid and the submission of the Investment Plan for the District's allocation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Recommendation(s)

- (1)** That Cabinet notes the background evidence at Appendix 3 to this report and agrees to support the County Council covering report (Appendix 1 to this report) and the Levelling Up Approach attached to this report as Appendix 2.
 - (2)** That Cabinet agrees within the context of the Levelling Up approach to the development of a Warwick District Place Plan which can reflect the current Council Plan and subsequently be incorporated into a new Council Plan following the elections in May 2023.
 - (3)** That Cabinet notes the existing work done by SWHFT on documenting its Levelling Up approach as set out in Appendix 4 and agrees within the context of the Levelling Up approach to the integration of the priorities and actions of the South Warwickshire Place Plan (this being part of the ICS place system) as set out at Appendix 5.
 - (4)** That Cabinet agrees that in implementing recommendations 2 and 3 above it involves the District's Parish and Town Councils, the local business community and other local voluntary and community organisations.
 - (5)** That Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Group Leaders and Cabinet on the preparation of a Devolution Deal for Warwickshire and where appropriate input into the West Midlands Combined Authority Trailblazer Devolution Deal with regular reports to Group Leaders, Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members on progress.
 - (6)** That Cabinet notes the submitted Levelling Up Bid to Government and the submitted Investment Plan for the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF).
-

1 Background/Information

1.1 Earlier this year the Government published its White Paper on Levelling Up. This also set out the opportunity for further Devolution Deals to be agreed albeit only with Combined Authorities and upper tier authorities (in our case County Councils). Since then, Warwickshire County Council has undertaken work in developing a Warwickshire approach to Levelling Up. This approach has involved discussions with the Chief Executives of all the Borough and District Councils and of other key agencies. There have also been discussions with the Leaders of all the Borough and District Councils and within WDC this information has been shared with all Group Leaders. This has culminated in a report being considered and agreed by the County Council Cabinet on 14th July. The covering report considered by the County Cabinet is attached at Appendix 1 to this report. Appendix 2 sets out the agreed framework and Appendix 3 contains data analysis in support of the proposed framework.

1.2 Linked with this agenda are the submissions that this Council has made in respect of Levelling Up and the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). Because of the tight deadlines for submission of bids, it was agreed in May 2022 to delegate authority for their preparation and submission of these bids. The bids were to be made by 6th July (later revised to 29th July) and 1st August respectively and are set out here for Members to note.

1.3 Recommendation 1

1.3.1 Acknowledging the importance of ongoing input from the Borough and District Councils, it is proposed that the Levelling Up approach set out in Appendix 2 to this report is supported. The Levelling Up agenda is, regardless of the change in Prime Minister still a government priority and so will continue to have its attention and a source of resource. This will also mean that the Government will one way and another require Councils to address that priority at a local level. The Framework will allow a basis for bringing Council and other public agencies agendas together to better serve local communities and to address long standing inequalities. That the Framework envisages local Place Plans i.e., a Plan for each Borough and District area which allows the freedom and flexibility to adapt the framework to the diverse needs and priorities at multiple spatial levels across the County but especially the most local.

1.4 Recommendation 2

1.4.1 The Levelling Up Approach recognises that Warwickshire is composed of numerous separate places. It seeks to address this fact and that Local Government in Warwickshire is organised on a three-tier basis where powers and duties are distributed by envisaging that each Borough and District has a Place Plan. It is proposed therefore that this Council take the lead in preparing a Place Plan for Warwick District with support from the County Council. WDC has already volunteered to work with the County Council to develop a template for the framework of such a Place Plan for use across the county to ensure it is aligned and joined up, when engaging Government and the West Midlands Combined Authority on devolution and funding for levelling up.

1.5 Recommendation 3

1.5.1 The new Integrated Care System (ICS) (health and well-being) for Coventry and Warwickshire involves each of the four places that make up the ICS will develop a Plan setting out the local priorities and actions. South Warwickshire is one of those four places and is led by the South Warwickshire Place Partnership Board (SWPPB) of which this Council is a member (the WDC Chief Executive is

co-Chair). Helpfully South Warwickshire Foundation Hospital Trust (SWFHT) had commissioned earlier this year an Impact Report on its position re Levelling Up across a number of measures which is attached at Appendix 4. This will lead to action by it as an organisation, but it is also agreed that that the Place Partnership Board will seek in the future to provide a Levelling Up basis for South Warwickshire as a place rather than just SWFHT as an organisation by itself.

1.5.2 The SWPPB has developed a Place Plan (as is required anyway) which is attached at Appendix 5 to this report; and it is proposed, that the priorities and actions of that plan are also integrated into the Warwick District Place (Levelling Up) Plan. The agreed Place Plan for South Warwickshire is an important development and links clearly and beneficially to a Levelling Up Place Plan for Warwick District especially the elements which seek to address health inequalities. This represents an opportunity for partnership bids for funding and for the coordination of activity across multiple local organisations. The relevance and benefit of this approach is demonstrated by the recent SWPPB decision to apply for a Health Inequalities Fund opportunity which will focus on Lillington as the one area in South Warwickshire where is a Local Super Output Area (LSOA) that is within the worst 20% of deprivation nationally. This bid will link with the Health Hub that is proposed for Lillington (funded by WDC and by SWFHT) and provisions within the submitted SPF Investment Plan for Warwick District.

1.6 **Recommendation 4**

1.6.1 In following through on Recommendations 2 and 3 above it will be important to involve the parish and town councils, the local business community and other local voluntary and community organisations. This activity should also help the Council to understand and develop further its own ideas and proposals for local devolution and community involvement.

1.7 **Recommendation 5**

1.7.1 The County Council has registered an interest with the Government in developing a Devolution Deal. As it is inevitable that this would involve Borough and District Council responsibilities it is important to be part of that process to ensure that the interests of the WDC communities and of WDC itself are addressed. It is proposed therefore that this activity be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Group Leaders and Cabinet and that progress is regularly reported to members via Leadership Coordinating Group, Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1.7.2 Sat alongside this is work that is being conducted by the WMCA given it is one of the named trailblazer areas for a Devolution Deal. Warwickshire is part of that as non-constituent authorities so may also be able to benefit from whatever is negotiated. Although this Council is still only an Observer Council on the WMCA it may nevertheless still be able to benefit and so should make appropriate contributions to the development of that Devolution Deal.

1.7.3 The Governance arrangements covering any Warwickshire Devolution Deal have not yet been discussed since the formal process has not yet commenced but this will be an area for further reports and for member debate once the options and proposals start to emerge.

1.8 **Recommendation 6**

1.8.1 As part of the Levelling Up agenda nationally the Government opened an opportunity to channel funding for capital schemes to address local Levelling Up

issues. The Cabinet agreed in May 2022 to submit a bid for round two focussed on Leamington Old Town and in particular the Bath Street/High Street area. That bid for circa £10m has been submitted and will be circulated as an Appendix 6 to this report. This proposal not only aligns with the policy and proposals of the Local Plan for Warwick District for improving the town centre also but seeks to address air pollution in an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and so will assist in addressing the SWPPB priority relating to respiratory illness. The proposals also are key to realising the Council's ambitions for the Creative Quarter of Leamington.

- 1.8.2 The Government also released details recently of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and in effect allocated almost £3.5m over 3 years (including 2022/23) to WDC. The Investment Plan required to be submitted to draw down the funding had to be submitted by 1st August. The Investment Plan strongly reflects the Levelling Up agenda generally and the Warwickshire Framework specifically and integrates features from the South Warwickshire Place Plan so may be a basis for the local Place Plan as proposed at Recommendation 2. A report will come to Members at the September Cabinet on the Investment Plan in more detail.
- 1.8.3 Both funding streams are relevant to the implementation of the Levelling Up agenda nationally and locally.

2 Alternative Options available to Cabinet

- 2.1 The Cabinet could decide not to agree to the proposed Approach to Levelling Up or any of the recommendations that then ensue but that would in all probability isolate this Council from others in the county area. Such isolation would harmfully affect funding opportunities, relations with other local bodies and with the Government.
- 2.2 The Cabinet could otherwise vary the recommendations to reflect local concerns and priorities.

3 Consultation and Member's comments

- 3.1 The approach adopted by the County Council has reflected comments made by the Leader and the Chief Executive in its development and it is proposed that in drawing up the Local Place Plan there is a clear recommendation to involve the other organisations locally. This will also afford WDC members the opportunity for further input.

4 Implications of the proposal

4.1 Legal/Human Rights Implications

- 4.1.1 There are no implications arising at this stage.

4.2 Financial

- 4.2.1 The report does not generate at this stage any specific financial implication though as the Levelling Up Approach develops and especially at a Place Plan level this will increasingly be the case.
- 4.2.2 The Levelling Up and the Shared Prosperity Fund proposals do not have an implication on General Fund sources as the latter requires no match funding and the former uses Community Infrastructure Levy funds already agreed to that project as match funding.

4.3 Council Plan

The Council Plan has an external and internal focus as follows:

External

Internal

People – Health, Homes, Communities.	Effective Staff.
Services – Green, Clean, Safe.	Maintain or Improve Services
Money – Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment.	Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term

4.3.1 The Levelling Up Approach and Place plans will affect and be affected by the Council Plan. It is expected that the Council Plan will be updated following the Council elections in May 2023 and at that stage the then Administration will be able to decide on what elements it wishes to include.

4.4 **Environmental/Climate Change Implications**

4.4.1 The Council Plan has achieving net zero carbon as its cornerstone. The Levelling Up Approach reflects the high degree of concern by this Council about net carbon and so is compatible from that perspective. The submitted Levelling Up bid also supports this overall aim promoting as it does alternative forms of transportation use and fuelling methods.

4.5 **Analysis of the effects on Equality**

4.5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has not been conducted at this level but as it leads to more specific proposals then EIAs will become more important as they will be part of evidencing the delivery of the Levelling Up Approach.

4.6 **Data Protection**

4.6.1 There are no implications at this stage.

4.7 **Health and Wellbeing**

4.7.1 The Levelling Up Approach also highlights the need to address Health inequalities as one of the twelve national missions set out in the White Paper so it should therefore be consistent with the Council's ambition to improve health and well-being and with the priorities of the SWPPB of which this Council is a member.

4.7.2 The submitted Levelling Up bid relates to the Bath Street/High Street area of Leamington Spa which experiences significant air pollution from traffic sources. The proposal aims to address this issue and so accords with addressing one of the priorities of the SWPPB, in this case respiratory illness as air pollution is one of the known triggers for respiratory difficulties.

4.7.3 The submitted Investment Plan for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund also addresses health and well-being priorities of the SWPPB by seeking to address some local health inequalities.

5 **Risk Assessment**

5.1 It would be appropriate that as the Place Plans are developed for it to be accompanied by a specific risk register. At this stage of proceedings, the most significant risk is around the effectiveness of the overall partnership and the dynamics between the organisations involved and the potential for a new Prime Minister to interpret Levelling Up in a quite different way to upset the Approach set out for Warwickshire. The same is also true for any proposed Devolution Deal especially the timing and the Governance thereof. In mitigation in respect of the latter the ability to adapt quickly will be important and in respect of the former being aware, responsive, and fleet of foot will be critical.

6 Conclusion/Reasons for the Recommendation

- 6.1 The Council's vision has been since 2009 to help make Warwick District a great place to live work and visit. The Levelling Up Approach can help further that ambition and especially, to make it relevant to all its citizens as could a Devolution Deal. The specific bids being put forward for the Levelling Up and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund assist that ambition in specific ways.

Background papers:

Government White Paper on Levelling Up

Supporting documents:

Appendix 1 – Report to WCC Cabinet on 14th July 2022 on Levelling Up Approach in Warwickshire

Appendix 2 – Levelling Up Approach agreed by WCC Cabinet on 14th July 2022

Appendix 3 – Background Data June 2022

Appendix 4 – Impact Report 2022

Appendix 5 – South Warwickshire Place Partnership Board priorities

Appendix 6 - Submitted Levelling Up Bid (to follow)

Report Information Sheet

Please complete and submit to Democratic Services with report

Committee / Date	Cabinet 10 th August 2022	
Title of report	Levelling Up Approach and Devolution Deal for Warwickshire	
Officer / Councillor Approval *Required	Date	Name
Ward Members(s)		
Portfolio Holder	25/07/22	Andrew Day
Financial Services *	25/07/22	Andrew Rollins
Legal Services (*SDC)		
Other Services		None
Chief Executive(s)	25/07/22	Chris Elliott
Head of Services(s)*	25/07/22	All
Section 151 Officer	25/07/22	Andrew Rollins/Stephen Leathley
Monitoring Officer	25/07/22	Andrew Jones
SLT	25/07/22	All
Leadership Co-ordination Group	25/07/22	Andrew Day, Alan Boad, Ian Davison, Mini Mangat, Judith Falp
Other organisations	25/07/22	Other Local Authorities in Warwickshire
Final decision by this Committee or rec to another Cttee / Council?	Final Decision	
Contrary to Policy / Budget framework?	No	
Does this report contain exempt info/Confidential? If so, which paragraph(s)?	No	
Does this report relate to a key decision (referred to in the Cabinet Forward Plan)?	No	
Accessibility Checked?	Yes	