



Open Report on behalf of Andy Gutherson, Executive Director - Place

Report to:	Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee
Date:	30 November 2021
Subject:	The Levelling Up Agenda for Lincolnshire

Summary:

The report invites Members of the Committee to debate and help to shape the ambitions for Levelling Up in Lincolnshire. The paper provides an overview of information currently available, of the funding received and the anticipated funding coming forward.

Actions Required:

Members of the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee are invited to shape priorities for officers to develop in the coming months and request progress updates to the Committee during 2022.

1. Background

“Levelling Up” is the phrase used by government to describe their plans to invest in outcomes that will make opportunities more equal across the Country. Thus far, we have seen investment across Lincolnshire, through several funding streams under the Levelling Up heading including the Towns Fund, the Levelling Up Fund and UK Community Renewal Fund.

The committee reviewed Greater Lincolnshire’s Plan for Growth in October and at today’s meeting will also hear about the work being done to understand and articulate infrastructure delivery. The government's Levelling Up Agenda is one potential funding vehicle to support this work.

2. Current LCC funding through “Levelling Up”

The Levelling Up Fund

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) successfully bid for a transport scheme to the Levelling Up Fund, focussing on improvements around the A16 corridor. The project is designed to be both deliverable by 31st March 2024 and appropriate to the finance that is available – i.e., that it is similar to the Department for Transport pinch-point funding that was used to create the Levelling Up Fund. The successful bid draws in £20 million of funding.

UKCRF

LCC, as the nominated lead body, submitted a bid to UK Community Renewal Fund (UKCRF) for grant support to deliver a Lincolnshire programme of activities focused on the national priorities of: skills, local business, place and communities and support for people entering employment.

The fund was significantly oversubscribed, and Lincolnshire was awarded £800,979 to deliver 2 revenue projects between November 2021 and 30th June 2022. Officers continue to work with civil servants to ensure that learning points are understood from the process and project delivery.

3. The Funding and Policy Landscape

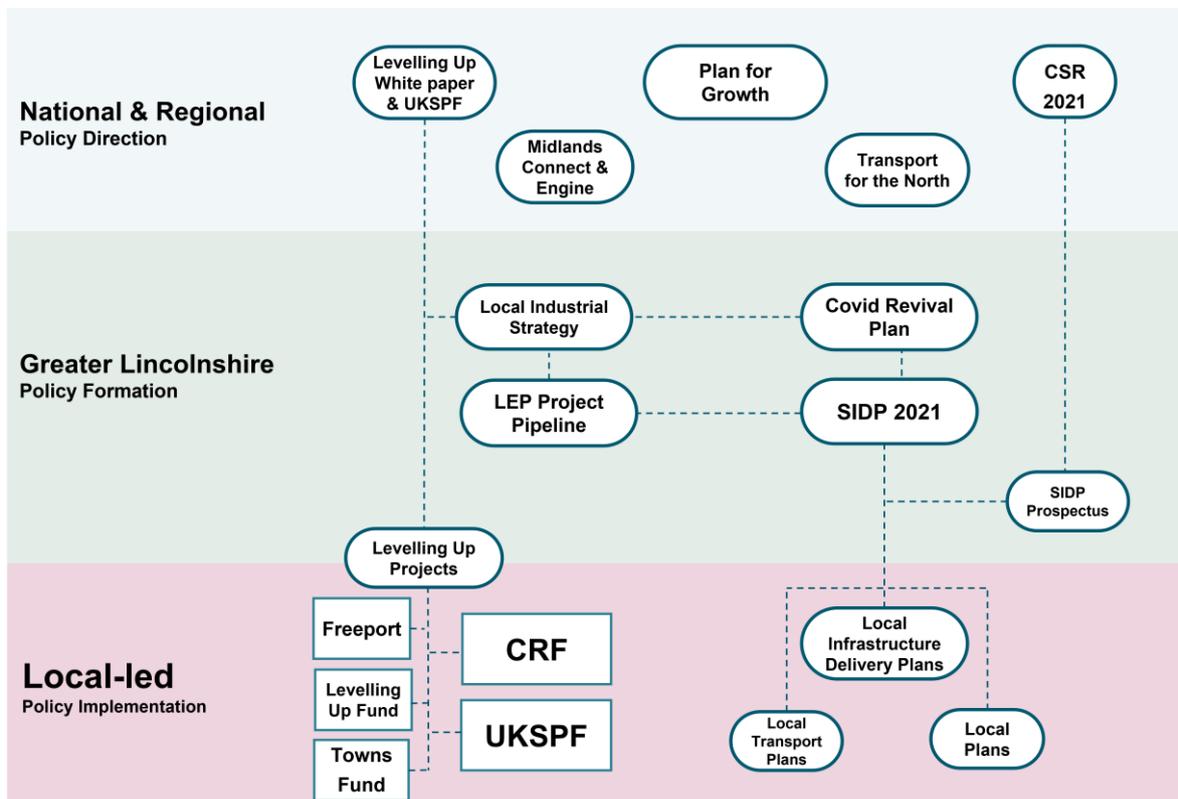


Figure 1 Funding and Policy Landscape

4. The Levelling Up White Paper

The Chancellor announced during the Comprehensive Spending Review 2021 that a Levelling Up White Paper will be published by the end of 2021. This paper will set out a framework and next steps towards levelling up, alongside details of new devolution deals (to include “County Deals”) and investment in research and development.

Levelling up will be underpinned by 4 principles:

- 1) **Spreading opportunity and improving public services – particularly where they are weaker**
- 2) **Boosting living standards, particularly where they are lower**
- 3) **Restoring local pride, and**
- 4) **Empowering local leaders and communities**

The Levelling Up spend profile:

- 21/2 £0.2bn
- 22/3 0.9bn
- 23/4 £1.4
- 24/5 £1.4

5. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)

Aimed at delivering sustainable, inclusive growth the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will enable areas to invest in local priorities to support people, community and local business. To date there is little advice on how it will be allocated or delivered at the local or regional level. The Comprehensive Spending Review ‘21 announced that UKSPF is funding the £560m Multiply programme (UK adult numeracy programme) which indicates that there is likely to be other national top slicing, and this may also link to future business support programmes combining an equity dimension and potentially this will be more nationally determined.

There remains a continued commitment that UKSPF will total £2.6bn over the next 3 years, and commitment to “at a minimum match the size of EU funds”. However, the “EU match” is only achieved at year 3:

- 22/3 £0.4bn
- 23/4 £0.7bn
- 24/5 £1.5bn

From the local perspective spending time preparing for these funding programmes is essential. Internal work is already underway to ensure that Lincolnshire is able to respond to the White Paper, including more on UKSPF, devolution, levelling up and Net Zero. The work is also focussed on local priorities including growing productivity gaps, coastal

deprivation, rurality, digital exclusion and labour shortages. Infrastructure planning work and the Lincolnshire Plan for Growth are essential elements of this work too.

The Place Directorate are using the process of Towns Fund, Levelling Up and UKCRF to anticipate what the funding opportunities might be and to start to shape priorities for Lincolnshire.

6. Questions for the committee

- What challenges, for communities, individuals and businesses, are affecting Lincolnshire that we must consider for future UKSPF including?
- Do we need to develop work specific to the rural nature of our county?

7. Conclusion

Members of the Committee are invited to debate the priorities currently being examined by officers and share recommendations for areas of focus or changes to existing considerations, particularly in terms of where the County Council can deliver activity.

8. Consultation

a) Risks and Impact Analysis

Not applicable.

9. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written by Vanessa Strange, Head of Infrastructure Investment who can be contacted on 07917781627 or by e-mail at vanessa.strange@lincolnshire.gov.uk.