

**The Levelling Up White Paper: A brief analysis for APSE member councils**

*To APSE main contacts across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland*

**1. Introduction**

The long-awaited White Paper on 'Levelling Up the UK' was presented to Parliament on the 2 February 2022. The White Paper runs to some 305 pages, with an additional 54 pages contained in a technical annex to the main report. It rather bizarrely opens with, much more than perhaps necessary, detail on 'a brief history of geographical disparities', in order to introduce the premise upon which the paper is constructed; the concept of the 'Medici effect'. This construct, argued by author Frans Johansson, suggests that intersectionality and cross-pollination of ideas will occur, and lead to greater innovation and subsequent impacts, when different talents and disciplines work together to increase diversity, leading to change for the better.

The paper sets out the context of the Government's manifesto commitment to the levelling up agenda, and provides an opening analysis of some key determinants, that influence the differing outcomes for parts of the UK. The opening section also then sets out some headline spending pledges which are provided in more detail below, with a brief APSE analysis of the funding sources.

**2. The context of UK disparities**

As most would agree the paper sets out the arguments that there is no one overriding reason for differences in outcomes whether that is in health, pay and income, educational attainment or productivity and access to work, alongside exposure to crime and anti-social behaviour. These messy public policy issues have been around for centuries, not just decades, and exacerbated by the industrial revolution of itself and the post-industrial revolution era. Quite rightly the paper identifies the inarguable facts that disparities are not just between areas, such as the north and the south; but within areas; with some affluent areas still harbouring pockets of chronic deprivation.

The paper identifies the specific areas of multiple deprivation within some urban areas and coastal towns, as well as some former mining communities. The paper also sets out the weaknesses of some UK cities when compared internationally, suggesting that areas like Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, Cardiff and Glasgow – though perceived as successful cities – lag behind European counterparts on productivity and income.

Again, the inarguably impact of globalisation, technological progress, advances in transport, logistics and power, and the shift from heavy industry to knowledge-intensive sectors, and the shift from technical education and training, once often seen through apprenticeships, to university education, are all identified as factors that have had a large, and lasting, impact on the economic geography of the UK.

**3. The Framework for Levelling Up**

The paper identifies, drawing upon the Medici principles of intersectionality, a framework, which it suggests will support a long-term plan of action; it identifies the actions that need to take place

through 12 different 'missions' and sets out six drivers which are referred to as 'capitals' which the paper suggests will support change, if these factors are brought together. These 'capitals' are: -

- **Physical capital** – infrastructure, machines and housing.
- **Human capital** – the skills, health and experience of the workforce.
- **Intangible capital** – innovation, ideas and patents.
- **Financial capital** – resources supporting the financing of companies.
- **Social capital** – the strength of communities, relationships and trust.
- **Institutional capital** – local leadership, capacity and capability.

The paper argues that the agglomeration effect of these 'capital' constituents working together, in a mutually reinforcing fashion, will create significant change. The paper then sets out a series of 12 'missions' which it provides against what it describes as the 'five pillars' to mutually reinforce the approach to addressing the multiplicity of causes of inequality of outcomes. As cited in the White Paper these five pillars are stated as follows: -

- 1. First, the UK Government is setting clear and ambitious medium-term missions to provide consistency and clarity over levelling up policy objectives.** These will serve as an anchor for policy across government, as well as catalysing innovation and action by the private and civil society sectors. These missions are ambitions that the UK Government has for all parts of the UK. Delivering on them, while being fully respectful of the devolution settlements, will require close and collaborative work with the devolved administrations. The missions are rolling decade-long endeavours and will be reviewed periodically by the UK Government.
- 2. Second, central government decision-making will be fundamentally reoriented to align policies with the levelling up agenda and hardwire spatial considerations across Whitehall.** This will require greater transparency around the geographic allocation of funding and simplification of local growth funding. It will mean running levelling up through central government decision-making as a golden thread for which departments are held accountable. And it will mean extra resources being deployed to local areas, including moving 22,000 civil servants out of London by 2030.
- 3. Third, the UK Government will empower decision-makers in local areas by providing leaders and businesses with the tools they need.** A new framework will extend, deepen and simplify local devolution in England. Ongoing support will be provided to existing City and Growth deal areas in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, pan-regional partnerships like the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine, and local private sector initiatives. The UK Government will support existing and embryonic private sector clusters of economic activity, which exist in all parts of the UK and are the wellspring of new innovation and job creation.
- 4. Fourth, the UK Government will transform its approach to data and evaluation to improve local decision-making.** In the past, it has been difficult to see what is being spent, where and how it is being spent, and its impact. The Office for National Statistics' Subnational Data Strategy aims to improve the UK's subnational data, mapping local economic geographies and helping improve transparency and accountability to the public. The UK Government is making available interactive tools and maps to facilitate this process. It will also encourage

innovative uses of real-time data at the local level, giving leaders across the UK the information they need to deliver, experiment and evaluate swiftly and effectively.

5. **Fifth, the UK Government will create a new regime to oversee its levelling up missions, establishing a statutory duty to publish an annual report analysing progress and a new external Levelling Up Advisory Council.** The Council will support Ministers by advising on the design, delivery and impact of levelling up policy. The annual report will update the public on progress against the missions so that levelling up is subject to rigorous external scrutiny, including by Parliament.

In terms therefore of what the Government expects to be delivered, using these five pillars, the 12 'missions' are identified against core areas of activity and outcomes. These are highlighted below under their core headings or ambitions: -

***Boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging***

**Digital connectivity**

- i. By 2030, pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK, with each containing a globally competitive city, and the gap between the top performing and other areas closing.
- ii. By 2030, domestic public investment in research and development (R&D) outside the greater south east will increase by at least 40%, and over the Spending Review period by at least one third. This additional government funding will seek to leverage at least twice as much private sector investment over the long term to stimulate innovation and productivity growth.
- iii. By 2030, local public transport connectivity across the country will be significantly closer to the standards of London, with improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing.
- iv. By 2030, the UK will have nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage, with 5G coverage for the majority of the population.

***Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest***

v. **Education**

By 2030, the number of primary school children achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths will have significantly increased. In England, this will mean 90% of children will achieve the expected standard, and the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas will have increased by over a third.

vi. **Skills**

By 2030, the number of people successfully completing high-quality skills training will have significantly increased in every area of the UK. In England, this will lead to 200,000 more people successfully completing high-quality skills training annually, driven by 80,000 more people completing courses in the lowest skilled areas.

vii. **Health**

By 2030, the gap in Healthy Life Expectancy (HLE) between local areas where it is highest and lowest will have narrowed, and by 2035 HLE will rise by 5 years.

viii. **Well-being**

By 2030, well-being will have improved in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.

***Restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost***

ix. **Pride in place**

By 2030, pride in place, such as people's satisfaction with their town centre and engagement in local culture and community, will have risen in every area of the UK, with the gap between top performing and other areas closing.

x. **Housing**

By 2030, renters will have a secure path to ownership with the number of first-time buyers increasing in all areas; and the government's ambition is for the number of non-decent rented homes to have fallen by 50%, with the biggest improvements in the lowest performing areas. *(Government will consult on the impact on the private rented market and particularly those on the lowest incomes. Further detail will be set out once the review of the Decent Homes Standard has concluded.)*

xi. **Crime**

By 2030, homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime will have fallen, focused on the worst affected areas.

***Empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency***

xii. **Local leadership**

By 2030, every part of England that wants one will have a devolution deal with powers at or approaching the highest level of devolution and a simplified, long-term funding settlement.

#### **4. The finances**

Clearly for local councils there are many issues within the White Paper that are readily identifiable to councillors and officers alike, including the need for the strategy to be owned across all departments of government(s) as well as a recognition of the central role of councils in delivery. However, it is vital that the funds are available to enact change. The White Paper sets out a number of headline financial commitments, as well as policy changes on matters such as immigration, which it says supports the levelling up agenda. It is important to note that many of the announcements are not new, and in particular on the financial ones, they do not generally represent 'new money' but rather bringing together, in many cases, existing funding pots. Amongst these announcements are the following. Please note the ***italicized emboldened text*** is APSE's own notations as to where these figures or policies have been previously announced: -

- £5 billion for Project Gigabit to bring gigabit-capable broadband to 85% of the UK by 2025, and the £1 billion Shared Rural Network deal with mobile operators delivering 4G coverage to 95% of the UK by the end of 2025. ***This funding was originally announced in March 2021***
- five-year consolidated transport settlements amounting to £5.7 billion in eight city regions outside London, £5 billion of funding for buses and active travel over this Parliament; and £96 billion for the Integrated Rail Plan delivering faster, more frequent and more reliable journeys across the north of England and the Midlands; ***The bus***

- funding of £5 billion was originally announced on the 10 February 2020 and the £96 billion for the Integrated Rail Plan was originally announced on the 18 November 2021*
- a new schools funding formula in England ending the previous postcode lottery, and an extra £4 billion for schools in England next year, rising to £4.7 billion in 2024 to 2025. ***The £4 billion was first announced as part of the budget on the 27 October 2021. Critics argue that the additional money may also be needed to support a £30,000 minimum level for new teacher salaries to be realised by 2022-2023 which the government committed to in 2019.***
  - Investment of £3.8 billion in skills planned by 2024 to 2025 and a Lifetime Skills Guarantee in England, enabling 11 million adults to gain an A Level or equivalent qualification for free, as well as a new UK-wide adult numeracy programme and skills bootcamps; ***The claim that total spending on skills will increase by £3.8 billion by 2024-25 is a restatement of the funding announced in the October budget however of this sum £2.5 billion had been previously announced for the National Skills Fund over the lifetime of the current Parliament***
  - £23.3 billion extra for the NHS in England over the 2021 Spending Review (SR21) period, a commitment to build 40 new hospitals by 2030 and an ambition to deliver 50,000 more nurses. ***Previously announced in SR21***
  - a lower Universal Credit taper rate – down from 63% to 55% – and a higher National Living Wage, making work pay. ***This was announced at the last budget.***
  - 20,000 more police officers on our streets by 2023 and a £70 million Safer Streets Fund to improve the environment and cut offending in high-crime areas. ***This appears to be a reference to the total overall sum for the safer streets fund, not additionality to that. In October 2021 Police forces and local authorities in England and Wales were able to receive a share of £23.5 million however as the fund is now passed its round three bid stage much of this money has already been allocated.***
  - control of our immigration system by ending free movement and introducing a new points-based immigration system, giving the UK the freedom to decide who comes to our country based on the skills people have to offer. ***The points-based system policy statement was originally issued in February 2020.***
  - £1.49 billion in City and Growth Deals in every part of Scotland, £791 million across Wales and £617 million for deals covering the whole of Northern Ireland. ***The initial approach to growth details can be found as far back as 2013/2014, initially through LEPs and the additional funds for the deals have been announced both as part of the 'build back better' policy frameworks as well as the October 2021 budget.***
  - eight innovative Freeports bringing jobs, investment and prosperity across England with a commitment to deliver more Freeports in each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. ***This may be complicated by differences between matters reserved for Westminster and those that are devolved. In any event the Scottish Government has its own developed policy on 'Greenports' as opposed to just Freeports.***
  - 101 towns across England receiving £2.4 billion from the Towns Fund to unleash their economic potential, and the £830 million Future High Streets Fund regenerating 72 towns and high streets and helping them recover from the pandemic. ***The Future High Streets Fund was originally launched in December 2018 alongside the Towns Fund launched in July 2019. Both funds are jointly monitored by the Cities and Local Growth Unit, in DLUHC and BEIS***
  - a £2 billion Culture Recovery Fund helping museums, theatres, cinemas and heritage organisations survive the pandemic. ***£1.57 billion was originally announced in July 2020***

***to enable these venues to cope with the impact of lockdown and the fund was subsequently increased.***

- £4.8 billion infrastructure investment in towns across the UK via the Levelling Up Fund. ***This fund was announced in March 2021***
- a £150 million Community Ownership Fund, giving people across the UK the chance to become owners of their local pubs or football grounds. ***This fund is a 4-year fund and round 1 bids have already been completed with the fund running to 2024/2025.***
- £26 billion of public capital investment for the green industrial revolution and transition to Net Zero. ***This sum was arrived at in the Build Back Greener report prior to COP26 however that report is also reliant upon leveraging £90 billion in private investment.***
- the movement of UK government functions and civil servants out of Whitehall, ensuring levelling up is not directed from London, creating local jobs and taking decision-making closer to the communities the government serves, including HM Treasury to Darlington, the Cabinet Office to Glasgow, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to East Kilbride and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to Wolverhampton. ***Many of these moves have already been announced and in fact are secondary headquarters outside of London with the primary headquarters remaining in London.***

A further financial reference in the paper is the **£2.6 billion** UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This fund (UKSPF) is designed to replace current EU funding. It was considered to be worth more than £2.6 billion over the next three years. However, it is worth noting that the fund was initially announced in 2017 as part of the Conservative Party manifesto (Conservative Party, 2017, p. 37) before pushing through into a financial announcement by Government in the Spending Reviews in 2020 and 2021.

## **6. Devolution and performance**

Devolution remains a vexed issue across the UK and within local government. The paper acknowledges that devolution must be *“accompanied by sharper and clearer accountability”*. It also states that local leaders will be *“at the heart of government decision-making with a new role for mayors and strong local leaders in the shaping of local growth strategy”*. This appears to more akin to high level statements than firm proposals on future reorganisation and structures, which have of themselves proven to be controversial issues.

The White Paper however struggles to address issues of existing devolution matters. Ministers within Wales have suggested that some of the measures bypass the Welsh Government by cutting across areas like Transport and the Environment which are devolved matters. This includes some spending decisions, which in any event it is argued do not fully compensate Wales for monies lost from the EU, which is a central argument to levelling up. Similarly, within Scotland the First Minister has expressed concerns that the proposals ‘muscle in’ on areas of devolved matters and spending decisions. The situation in Northern Ireland is complicated by the recent situation in the Assembly with the resignation of the First Minister but a Bill has now been passed to allow Assembly business to be conducted for six months. However, the levelling up agenda in Northern Ireland sits on a different platform given the functions of local councils, and spheres of decision-making, which are markedly different to elsewhere in the UK.

The differing spheres of influence between devolved governments, Westminster, and then a series of further structures such as Combined Authorities, Elected Mayors, differing tiers of councils, and quasi-public agencies, adds a further dynamic to addressing the existing complexities of levelling up. This complexity of structures, accountability and priorities, which could suggest a more chaotic approach to implementing a levelling up plan than the White Paper currently acknowledges, will be

difficult to navigate. This begs the question at what level should decision-making on local areas be made and how can this approach be balanced against delivery of what the government wishes to see as a UK wide priority?

The issue of devolution is also linked to performance issues with the White Paper suggesting that there should be a strengthening of transparency for local people and that this must be addressed by publishing “rigorous, comparable data on performance”. It then announces that *“A new independent body will be set up to drive this, empowering citizens, strengthening local leaders’ knowledge of their services, and increasing central government’s understanding of the sector.”* This appears to be a return to the localism arguments of David Cameron’s Government which focussed on greater transparency by accessible public data-sets. In reality this was something of a damp squib, it did not achieve any meaningful engagement with the public. In any event, this was at odds with earlier Government moves to eradicate national performance indicators sets, that were relatively easy to understand and were regularly published. Thankfully many sensible councils continue to collect performance data on frontline services through [APSE Performance Networks](#) which provides cost, quality and productivity information through regular reporting and ‘family group’ reports allowing meaningful comparisons, and is the UK’s largest voluntary data-benchmarking club for local council frontline services. Whilst this data is highly effective in measuring operational performance, it will also provide some very useful information should the new independent body take a ‘dashboard’ approach to public service data within an area.

The White Paper also commits to supporting local leaders to make a difference in their communities by *“simplifying the disparate funding landscape so that local leaders can better support economic growth, as well as bringing local leaders into the heart of government decision-making with a new role for mayors and strong local leaders in the shaping of local growth strategy”*. This could signal an end to the damaging processes of funding bids allowing a more holistic approach to economic growth and regeneration issues, which is a point that APSE has consistently argued, in terms of the ineffectiveness and inefficiency of bidding processes, which hamper local ambitions, and draw in scarce resources on a piecemeal basis. It seems to leave the overall questions of further devolution and mayors in the ‘too hard to reconcile’ pile, hinting at some broader principles but failing to provide any concrete proposals; which to be fair is, as you might expect from a White Paper exercise, and given recent responses to a leaked paper on reorganisation it is likely that Ministers will remain cautious of any perception of imposing structural solutions.

## **7. APSE Comment and Analysis**

The paper ambitiously states that it is setting out a new policy regime for levelling up. This has been a long-awaited policy announcement given the ambitious slogan adopted at the 2019 General Election, which in the views of many was meaningless until it was properly defined and actioned.

The White Paper is not short on defining the problems. It contains some highly useful analysis on existing data which supports the exploration of the challenges. For example, outcome disparities in ill-health terms and life expectancy, income differences and issues of productivity, both between areas of the UK and in comparing data across the performance of Cities in the UK, and compared to some other European Cities. The technical annex also contains many different sources of data which explores transport and access to public transport and usage, outcomes in learning such as maths and English, and considers matters such as broadband coverage, and some less developed data sources such as ‘pride in place’ measurements.

The comprehensive reliance on different data-sets is to be welcomed as this could help to provide a robust overarching dashboard of indicators to inform the 12 missions set out in the strategy.

However, there are some issues of concern to APSE, not least those informed by APSE's Local Government Commission 2030. The APSE Commission set out a series of recommendations and whilst there are some tacit references to findings, which may align with the Commission's calls, there are many areas which remain weak within the paper. Not least the issue of local government finance. APSE's concerns are therefore as follows.

### **7.1. Levelling up will not be addressed unless councils are properly funded.**

In the decade of austerity which followed the 2010 election, council finances suffered much harder and deeper cuts than elsewhere in the public sector. Much of the ring-fenced funding grants, geared to areas of deprivation, were subsequently withdrawn, making the impact of those funding reductions much more severe in the most deprived areas. This analysis is not simply APSE's own analysis ([albeit such analysis has been carried out the New Policy Institute on behalf of APSE](#)) but across data-sets from numerous official data sources and respected bodies such as the National Audit Office, which in its [2014](#) report (page 6 ) found that authorities most reliant upon grants from central government had fared the worse from cuts to budgets.

The better-than-expected settlement for local government in the Autumn Budget of 2021 came before the current cost of living crisis gripping the UK. Councils are not immune from these pressures; the additionality of the funding settlement will be lost to inflationary pressures, and in any event the prioritisation of NHS funding over spend in social care, at least in the short-term, will further exacerbate the problems within council finances. The reflection of changing the financial landscape for councils is of course welcome; however, the immediacy of council finances has to be addressed. This is not in place of a longer-term plan but a realistic stabilisation of council finances now will be a singular and simple way to stem the further decline in unequal outcomes, allowing local authorities to address some of the most pressing principles of levelling up, such as access to social care and decent affordable homes and of course residents living in fuel poverty.

### **7.2 The accountability of different agencies and actors in local areas may have a negative impact on levelling up**

The powers available to local government to hold local, and indeed national, agencies and actors to account is weak. Although local democracy is best served by local councillors, they have little control or traction over other bodies and institutions, which may not work in sync with local interests; indeed, in many cases they find that some agencies and institutions actively work against local interests. The White Paper is heavily reliant upon the concept of intersectionality, and the value of collaboration and ideas between partners, however the reality of this for local councils has often been a usurping of their residents' interests; take for example the weaknesses in planning and housing developments, with private sector developers still able to exercise undue influence of what gets built, where, and of what quality. These issues of quality, spatial design and access to affordable homes are known factors to influence outcomes in health and education, to name but two areas, and yet councils have been stripped of meaningful intervention powers.

### **7.3 Local leaders are best placed to understand local areas and must be given a core role in coordinating change**

The APSE Local Government Commission found that there is no shortage of ambition at a local level to effect change but too often local councils, and local councillors and leaders, are hampered by the long-arm of Whitehall, directing policy or policies, which may not be the right approach for their local areas. There is a perceived lack of trust in local leaders and changes, or funding matters, most

often comes with 'strings attached', directing local issues in ways which are often unhelpful to local areas. For levelling up to succeed this approach must change.

APSE's commission called for government to agree and develop, in consultation with local government, and the devolved administrations, a clear devolution framework, based on the principles of subsidiarity, local autonomy and flexibility. With a clear indication of powers and funding so that local councils benefit from it, at a pace and scale that best fits local needs. This, the Commission argued would help to address inequalities. However, at the moment the role of councils is guided by a myriad of different and sometimes conflicting institutions, and policy frameworks, and a confusing array of structures for local people and businesses through which to engage.

#### **7.4 Addressing inequalities and engaging communities**

The decade of austerity led to seismic shifts in the local government workforce and significant job losses that were not replaced, as a result of recruitment freezes. In England, the twenty local authorities with the largest workforce reductions saw their headcount fall by 260,622 between 2010 and 2018. As the White Paper recognises the interface between different cultures and heritage can fundamentally impact on outcomes in education, job opportunities and health as just some of the areas of inequalities.

As identified by the APSE Commission evidence suggests that cuts to local services together with welfare changes have disproportionately impacted on women, particularly BAME, lone parents and disabled women. Moreover, they have impacted on the severity and scale of cuts to services for young people. At the same time the capacity of the voluntary and community sector has been challenged, and often reduced, and the sector of itself is increasingly dependent on contractual forms of income, often from local councils, who have in turn looked to reduce their own costs.

Whilst the White Paper sets out an ambitious approach to engaging with communities, and references systems of co-production, this is against a backdrop of deep impacts on many different communities, and hollowed out councils, which do not reflect the communities they seek to serve in workforce terms, or for that matter in councillor terms either. Moreover, there has been a specific gendered impact of austerity on women, with reductions in access to services like Sure Start, and the cost of nursery and child care provisions. The White Paper fails to address that the era of austerity has worsened the starting position on levelling up and, unless these matters are addressed, the onward ambitions, within the White Paper, are unlikely to be adequately addressed either.

#### **7.5 System change – but when and how?**

One of the areas identified in the APSE Commission was the need for 'system change' and it is pleasing to see that this is referenced within the White Paper as a strong ambition to tackle geographical disparity. Alongside this the White Paper references that such systems are informed by data and information. There is little to disagree with in this ambition. However, APSE would argue that this will take a very long time to achieve. Systems tend to be run by those with vested interests in certain outcomes and change will not occur overnight or easily.

APSE's commission called for support for an effective and collaborative approach to centre-local relations, with more protection, power and freedom for local government. The Commission strongly urged Government to acknowledge that certain problems can only be addressed locally. For change to be effective any future devolution settlements must be capable of ensuring the local level can maintain its role as steward of place. This is essential to councils who must not just be a 'partner' in levelling up but the leading agent, acting as steward of place. System change should not, as the paper points out, be about shiny new institutions or buildings, but APSE would argue, at its core

ensuring that the public service needs of areas are met; this will be essentially to levelling up. This will need an enhanced role for local government in coordinating the 'capitals' - of physical, human, intangible, financial, social and institutional - rather than the presumed geographies of economic development, which oversimplifies the complexities of place shaping and place making.

It is for the above reasons that a leading recommendation of the APSE Local Government Commission is to provide local councils with constitutional protection. As we stated in the APSE Local Government Commission Report as its first recommendation: -

***“The role and powers of local government should be enshrined in a constitutional settlement.”***

The opportunity for this ambitious approach is now. White Papers are intended to stir ideas and actions so now would be the time for Ministers, across UK administrations, to take forward a much bolder plan which secures the future of local councils at the heart of local democracy and of delivering on levelling up for local communities.

## **7.6 Conclusions**

Given the messy public policy issues which are not new, but have certainly been exacerbated by austerity and the health pandemic, the White Paper is welcomed as a start to a much-needed debate. However, whilst the detailed analysis is a bedrock for further discussion and engagement the White Paper in many parts regurgitates existing policy announcements; which suggests that rather than this being a priority of the Government's own manifesto it is more akin to splicing into one document those policies that could be loosely or closely associated as contributing to 'levelling up' the UK. It suggests a hurried call amongst Whitehall departments to share policies which could fall under the 'levelling up' policy umbrella.

The finances are also a concern. With this approach of 'policy splicing' so too are the finances similarly spliced, and thus negatively affected. In too many of the cited examples within the paper, the money has been, or is in the process of, being spent, against in many cases competitive bidding rounds, which the White Paper accepts is a clumsy and ineffective way of distributing funding. Given many of the funds have already been identified against specific bids, and funding allocation by the Treasury, it is hard to see how these funding streams can be undone or reallocated, simply because across the departments of governments there is, and will continue to be, a reliance upon these funds to deliver departmental and ministerial outcomes and priorities. This seems to be a wrongheaded approach and indeed naïve in public finance terms.

In short, the White Paper is welcome as a starter for ten, but essentially delivers more questions than solutions in its current form.

## **8. Further discussions and information**

As this is an emerging area of policy with more details to come APSE will be holding an online forum which is FREE for APSE member councils. To register your interest at this forum and share ideas and points for discussion [please register your interest using this link.](#)

The forum will compare the proposals within the White Paper to the findings of the APSE Local Government Commission, and allow an opportunity for APSE member councils to input their ideas, concerns and suggestions for improvement.

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