

A weekly round up of local government news in the East Midlands brought to you by  
East Midlands Councils

Top items this week

4 FEBRUARY 2022



EMC General Meeting, 11  
February 2022

Levelling Up White Paper

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Edition

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## Levelling Up White Paper

Michael Gove has this week published the government's Levelling Up White Paper. The White Paper includes 12 national missions to be achieved by 2030. These missions ([in full here](#)) are the policy objectives for levelling up, and thus form the heart of the government's agenda for the 2020s. Details in the White Paper include;

### New county deals

Invitations for the first 9 areas to agree new county deals and seek to agree further MCA deals, extending devolution across England. The first 9 areas invited to begin negotiations will be Cornwall, **Derbyshire & Derby**, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay, Durham, Hull & East Yorkshire, **Leicestershire**, Norfolk, **Nottinghamshire & Nottingham**, and Suffolk.

### Spreading opportunities and improving public services

- 55 Education Investment Areas (EIAs) will be designated in local authorities in England where school outcomes are currently weakest.
- Local Skills Improvement Plans will be rolled out with funding across England, giving local employer bodies and stakeholders a statutory role in planning skills training in their area, to better meet local labour market needs.
- The government will set out its strategy to tackle the core drivers of health inequalities through a new White Paper on Health Disparities published this year.

### Restoring local pride

- The government will support 20 towns and city centres. This work will be spearheaded by Homes England, which will be repurposed to, in addition to its existing functions, regenerate towns and cities.
- The government will announce a plan that for all homes in the Private Rented Sector will have to meet a minimum standard - the Decent Homes Standard.
- Home ownership will be boosted due to a new £1.5 billion Levelling Up Home Building Fund being launched.
- A new Social Housing Regulation Bill will deliver upon the commitments the government made following the Grenfell tragedy in 2017.
- The White Paper will announce 68 more local authorities to be supported by the High Streets Task Force to transform their town centres.
- The government will give local authorities the power to require landlords of empty shops to fill them if they have been left vacant for too long.
- £50 million from the Safer Streets Fund will be invested every year to give Police and Crime Commissioners, local authorities, and also certain civil society organisations in England and Wales the resources they need to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.
- Building on investment from the 10-year Drugs Strategy, the government will work intensively with the local authorities of 10-20 areas most affected by prolific neighbourhood crime.

### Empowering local leaders

- A new devolution framework which sets out a clear menu of options for places in England that wish to unlock the benefits of devolution.
- The £2.6 billion UK Shared Prosperity Fund will be decentralised to local leaders as far as possible, with investments set to regenerate communities, boost people's skills, and support local businesses.
- A commitment to vastly simplify the local growth funding landscape to allow local leaders to drive tangible, visible change in their communities.

**EMC General Meeting** - Invitation for all councillors to attend EMC's General Meeting, scheduled for 10.00am on Friday 11 February 2022, to be held virtually via MS Teams. For further information about the meeting please contact Lisa Hopkins via email on [lisa.hopkins@emcouncils.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.hopkins@emcouncils.gov.uk). The papers for the meeting will be available in due course.

### EMC Councillor Events

**The Role of the Civic Head, 31 May 2022** - The workshop will explore the role of the Civic Head and the expectations of the role from a range of perspectives, including the expectations of the incoming mayor, and those of the public and the council. It will include short introductory sessions on Chaining Full Council, Public Speaking and Social Media [details available from [here](#)]. Audience - the intended audience for this workshop is newly appointed Mayors and deputy Mayors.

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### Infrastructure, Planning & Housing



**20 town and city centres in England transformed through ambitious regeneration projects** - The 20 areas will be prioritised within the new £1.5 billion Brownfield Fund. In addition, to kickstart regeneration efforts in these regions, and as part of a wider package of brownfield funding worth £120 million [details [here](#)].

**£140,000 rural mobility competition on track to connect Midlands communities** - Businesses approached to put forward solutions to boost poor transport connectivity. Midlands Connect to make up to £140,000 available to develop innovative and deliverable solutions with £10K awarded to the top four entries, and up to £100k awarded to the best idea.

Transport body Midlands Connect has launched a rural mobility competition inviting businesses to put forward ideas that could help solve the social, environmental and economic issues caused by poor connectivity in rural areas.

- Rural communities are twice as far away from essential services by public transport
- Poor mobility also contributing to low productivity and limited social mobility
- Midlands Connect has run a competition asking businesses for commercially-viable solutions to solve challenges faced by rural communities

A list of specialist private companies and consultancies have been asked to submit commercially-viable mobility solutions that could be deployed in rural communities across the Midlands. These could include demand-responsive transport or online applications allowing residents to access electric scooters, bicycle hire, buses and taxis in the click of a button [details [here](#)].

**Local authority and housing organisations questioned on the Regulation of Social Housing** - The Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee will hold the latest oral evidence session for its inquiry into the regulation of social housing in England on Monday 7 February 2022. The evidence session on Monday is likely to focus on questions around the condition of social housing, tenant engagement, financial pressures on housing providers, and the roles of the Housing Ombudsman and Regulator of Social Housing [details [here](#)].

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### Employers' Information



**EMC HR Bulletin, January 2022 Edition** - The latest edition of the EMC HR Bulletin is now available from [here](#). In this month's edition, Employment Law Expert Darren Newman and his regular article advises on responding to employees who are reluctant to return to the workplace. The January Bulletin includes:-

- Covid's Impact on Capacity and Services in the Region
- Regional Pay Meeting
- Pay Negotiations
- Consultation On Disability Workforce Reporting
- Public Health Apprenticeships – National Webinar, 9th February 2022 10.00-12.00

**Pay Award 2021 Agreed for Local Authority Chief Executives** - Agreement has been reached on the national pay award for local authority Chief Executives, covering the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022 [details [here](#)].

**COVID Workforce Update** - The latest COVID workforce update from the Regional Employers' Organisations and the LGA [available [here](#)]. It includes:-

- Vaccination as a condition of deployment (see attached NHS Employers letter to their employers)
  - Precautionary testing for critical workers
  - COVID-19: Free PPE for frontline staff extended
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## Migration, Asylum Support and Refugee Resettlement

**Home Affairs Committee** - Home Affairs Committee held an evidence session with the Home Secretary on 2<sup>nd</sup> February. Of interest for local authorities was the specific recognition by the Home Secretary that there needed to be greater financial support – effectively confirming that there is likely to be at some point, an announcement of a funding package for Local Authorities on asylum dispersal, accommodation and support [details [here](#)].

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## Local Government News

**Package to transform education and opportunities for most disadvantaged** - In these new '[Education Investment Areas](#)', the Department for Education will offer retention payments to help schools keep the best teachers in the highest priority subjects. These areas will be prioritised as the location for new specialist sixth-form free schools where there is limited provision to ensure talented children from disadvantaged backgrounds have access to the highest standard of education this country offers.

The 55 areas selected as Education Investment Areas to raise school standards include in the East Midlands; Derby, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire, North Northamptonshire, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire [details [here](#)].

**The Energy Bills Rebate** - The Energy Bills Rebate will provide around 28 million households with an upfront discount on their bills worth £200. Energy suppliers will apply the discount to domestic electricity customers from October, with the Government meeting the costs. The discount will then be automatically recovered from people's bills in equal £40 instalments over the next five years. This will begin from 2023, when global wholesale gas prices are expected to come down.

Households in England, which are in council tax bands A-D, will also receive a £150 rebate. The rebate to bills will be made directly by local authorities from April. This will not need to be repaid. This one-off payment will benefit around 80 per cent of all homes in England and is £1 billion more generous and more targeted towards lower-income families than a VAT cut on energy bills.

On top of this discount, discretionary funding of £144 million will also be provided to support vulnerable people and individuals on low incomes that do not pay Council Tax, or that pay Council Tax for properties in Bands E-H [ [here](#) ].

**Chronic lack of accountability and transparency in local government finance will hamper pandemic recovery** - In a report published this week the Public Accounts Committee warns on the "real risk" that "much-heralded extra funding" in the 2021 Spending Review will only "allow local government to stand still" - not address the significant service pressures and risks which have built up as their funding fell in real terms by over 50% in the decade from 2010/11 [details [here](#)].

**Supporting local economic growth, National Audit Office Report** - This report considers the lessons the Department has learned from a long history of implementing local growth policies [details [here](#)]. It examines how it has applied these lessons to the one-year UK Community Renewal Fund and the following place-based interventions; Levelling Up Fund; UK Shared Prosperity Fund; Towns Fund; and Freeports

**Identity verification for absent vote applications and an online application service** - This policy statement sets out more detail on the government's proposals for absent voting identification and online applications [details [here](#)].

**Economic growth good practice case studies** - The LGA is looking for examples of economic growth good practice from councils so that we can share learning across the sector. The case studies can cover a wide range of areas including regeneration, employment and skills, and more. If you have examples of projects you would like to feature, please complete our [case study form](#) or email [productivity@local.gov.uk](mailto:productivity@local.gov.uk) for more information.

**Safer Internet Day 8 February, Parents Webinar** - The East Midlands Special Operations Unit is hosting a free Webinar on how you can keep yourself and children safe online. Cyber Security is the protection of your hardware, software and data from unauthorised access and cyber-attacks. Hear from East Midlands Special Operations Cyber Protect Officers on the latest threats to you and how to stop them from happening. To sign up visit [here](#).

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## EMC Leadership

Chair: Cllr Martin Hill OBE

Vice Chair: Cllr David Mellen

Vice Chair: Cllr Jonathan Morgan

Conservative Group: Cllr Roger Blaney

Labour Group: Cllr Rob Parker

Lib Dem Group: Cllr David Bill MBE

Independent Group: Cllr Jason Zadrozny

Executive Director: Stuart Young

## East Midlands Councils

First Floor Offices, South Annexe

Pera Business Park

Nottingham Road

Melton Mowbray

Leicestershire

LE13 0PB

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