



Committee and Date

Cabinet

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Item

Public

## LEVELLING UP FOR SHROPSHIRE

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### 1. Synopsis

1.1 This report updates Members on the Levelling Up Regeneration Bill and two key streams which have been launched: Levelling Up Fund Round 2 and UK Shared Prosperity Funding. This report outlines Shropshire's positions and approach to these opportunities.

### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Following the announcement of UK Levelling Up Fund round 2 (LUF) in March 2022, Officers have been liaising with MPs to understand priorities in their constituencies as well as understanding the guidance and criteria for applications to be put forward in the second round of levelling up funding.
- 2.2 Reviewing and refining the previous 3 bids submitted and a new transport bid, to ensure they will have the greatest likelihood of success is key and ensuring they meet the expectations and strict eligibility criteria for the second round of 'Levelling Up' Funding is critical to ensure that the four bids recommended to Members are those that are most likely to be successful.
- 2.3 Officers have been reviewing the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and the allocation for Shropshire and working with our partners and stakeholders to begin to understand priorities and opportunities to use the funding to support Shropshire most effectively.

### 3. Recommendations

That Cabinet support and approve;

- 3.1 The submission of four bids: Shrewsbury, Oswestry and Craven Arms and a county-wide transport bid in the second round of the Levelling Up programme.
- 3.2 Delegation to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Section 151 officer and the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration and Planning to submit the final bids for the 6 July 2022 deadline.
- 3.3 Delegation to the Executive Director of Place in consultation with the Section 151 officer and Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth, Regeneration and Planning to submit the UKSPF Multiply Investment Plan by 30 June 2022 and the main Investment Plan for UKSPF to Government by the 1 August 2022.

## **REPORT**

### **4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal**

#### **Do nothing option.**

- 4.1 No bids are submitted from Shropshire in round 2, and the opportunity to bring in additional capital resource is lost. Potential reputational damage for not submitting bids to help address the imbalance across the Country in economic prosperity. The LUF has had a high profile nationally.
- 4.2 There is no guarantee that a future round will be announced, nor when or what changes there will be to the investment themes. Also spend could still need to be defrayed by 2025 regardless of the timing of any further future rounds.

#### **Submit fewer bids.**

- 4.3 Submitting fewer bids is possible. However, given that there are four projects or package of projects which are ready and able to be submitted applications, having received positive feedback on three of these bids in the first round, it is considered this could be detrimental to the economy of our local communities and areas. There is no indication of further rounds of funding at this point.

#### **Submit bids for all areas.**

- 4.4 Shropshire submitted three strong bids in the first round of the fund to support identified projects in these areas with the potential to support infrastructure, redevelopment, sustainable growth and movement. All three bids progressed through the gateway criteria stages and have received

positive and encouraging feedback. The application guidance has indicated that those elements of the submitted application that could weaken the overall application will affect the appraisal and scoring for that submission. Refining of the existing projects to be submitted is therefore required to submit robust proposals.

- 4.5 Shropshire is also submitting a large transport bid of up to £50 million. The Department for Transport have directed those LA's that were not awarded funding through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) scheme to apply through the second round of the LUF. This will support the County's aspirations and requirements to improve rural sustainable public transport network to service our towns and rural communities across Shropshire. It should also be noted that the Council has been proactive in making a response to a call for evidence by the House of Commons Transport Select Committee for its inquiry into progress with the National Bus Strategy, and in contributing to a County Council Network collegiate response. The Council was one of only five local authorities to take the opportunity to do so, setting out our strategic activity as well as our asks of Government within our context as a large and sparsely populated rural authority.
- 4.5 As part of the application, a Risk Register is required for each of the projects. These risk registers are in place and will be reviewed as part of the refining of the projects to ensure that the risks are being robustly managed to support the proposals. Each application will be required to demonstrate that robust internal financial governance, reporting and evaluation processes are in place. If successful, we will scrutinise the terms of the contract agreement and conditions, as well as any project development impacts prior to acceptance by the S151 Officer.

### **Resources**

- 4.6 Due regard is required to consider the impact on resources if any of the bids were successful and the impact if all of the bids were to be funded. Appropriate staffing and client-side support would be required and needs to be built into the business cases and bids to ensure sufficient resource to deliver the projects.

### **Human Rights Act Appraisal**

- 4.6 The recommendations contained in the report are compatible with the provisions of the Human Rights Act 1998.

### **Equalities and Opportunities Appraisal**

- 4.7 The UK government has committed to levelling up across the whole of the United Kingdom to ensure that no community is left behind, particularly as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. These funds are part of government's broader offer to level up opportunity across the UK.
- 4.8 As such, there is clear complementarity with the Council's own strategic approaches, within which equality, social inclusion and health impact assessments (ESHIA) are integral to efforts to ensure that the likely impacts of policy decisions upon and within our diverse communities are considered as fully as possible. This is in order that negative impacts may be minimised and positive impacts maximised, and that these may be monitored and reviewed, recognising the need for ongoing engagement with our communities and our service users.
- 4.9 ESHIAs for the four bids will be carried out as screening assessment at stocktake moments during the progress of the bids. Links will be made to ESHIAs already carried out or in train for related economic growth endeavours, for example for the Shrewsbury Redevelopment report to Cabinet in February 2022, and for the Enhanced Bus Partnership report to Cabinet in March 2022. There will be explicit cross-referencing, to emphasise that, in all four bids, delivery should have positive impacts across all areas of the community. There is potential for a Low Positive impact across all nine Protected Characteristic groupings set out in the Equality Act 2010, as well as the tenth grouping of people that we think about in Shropshire, who we may consider to be vulnerable.
- 4.10 For people we consider as vulnerable, due to circumstances including rurality and income, public transport via bus needs to present as a safe and economically viable proposition, as well as one on which they may reasonably depend in order to access education and training, employment, health care, and cultural, leisure, shopping and sporting facilities and services. This then links in with Active Travel efforts within our market towns. If equitable outcomes are to be achieved across the country through the Levelling Up agenda, Government funding needs to more explicitly recognise and factor in these social inclusion challenges and their nuances in rural areas and market towns.

## **5. Financial Implications**

### **Levelling Up Fund round 2**

- 5.1 The Levelling Up Fund is a competitive fund, with funding distributed on the basis of successful project selection. Each bid, or package of bids, can submit for up to £20m of capital funding to support priority projects. Transport bids can be submitted for up to £50m of capital fund. Projects will be prioritised if they are able to demonstrate deliverability on the ground in the 2022-23 financial year and it is expected that all funding will be spent by 31 March 2025 and by 2025-26 on an exceptional basis.
- 5.2 The guidance to support 'levelling up' bids require at least a 10% match which can be made up from public and private funding. At this stage in the process, the bids are giving a high level of indication of the likely match funding which will be available to support proposals. The proposals in all 3 areas are looking at a range of match funding to support the bids, including land acquisitions/land holdings, developer contributions including S106 and CIL, funding allocated as part of current Council commitments and in-kind support. Where possible we will also look to utilise existing match funding to support bids.
- 5.3 The County wide transport bid will be submitted using the financial analysis from the BSIP bid submitted in October 2021. The various elements that make up this bid of c£50 million is currently being revisited to ensure that it reflects the changing costs within the transport sector.
- 5.3 The full financial details and business cases for each bid would need to be prepared and considered in further detail and, where appropriate, decisions made to support these if any of the bids were successful to move to the next stage in the process. This would involve determining and securing all match funding elements of the bids before contractually committing to their delivery, as well as recognising the current risk of inflationary pressures and material stability within Construction projects which may result in the requirement to include considerable project contingencies within the individual project costings.
- 5.4 Once funding awards are decided, responsibility for their delivery will sit with Shropshire Council. Further contributions will not be provided, and any cost overruns will need to be managed by Shropshire Council.

### **UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

- 5.5 Through the UKSPF, Government has offered each qualifying local authority £20,000 to support the development of the

Investment Plan. This will be used to support the appointment of a consultant to assist with the development of the Investment Plan. This amount will be supplemented by the council's own resources by a further £5,000 to reflect the additional support required to align priorities and the governance arrangements with the proposed Economic Growth Strategy Board.

- 5.6 It will be the responsibility of the council to administer the UKSPF funds totalling £12,255,281 as per the requirements set by Government but this will only be agreed at the point that Government has assessed the Investment Plan which the council submits.

## **6. Climate Change Appraisal**

- 6.1 The Council's Climate Strategy has three main objectives as a **route map** to zero carbon:

- **Mitigate** the causes of climate change through carbon reduction of our services
- **Adapt** services and their delivery to respond to changes in the climate
- **Promote** sustainable practices via all services.

- 6.2 The LUF bids to be submitted work towards reducing carbon impacts and mitigating increased carbon outputs through sustainable and balanced growth in existing communities, reducing the need to travel for work, providing more sustainable options for travel as well as growth opportunities for new low carbon development. Capturing and quantifying the impact of carbon activity of the bids if successful, will be explored and undertaken through future monitoring. To support greater resilience to climate-induced extreme weather, design features will be considered in designing and developing projects.

### **6.3 Transport Bid**

In its recently published Decarbonising Transport Plan, the Government set out its vision for a net zero transport system. In that plan, public transport and active travel will be the natural first choice for residents' daily activities. The bus can be the most efficient user of road space and a vital part of an environmentally friendly local sustainable transport system.

## **7. Background**

### **Levelling Up Fund round 2**

- 7.1 Government first announced its plan for 'levelling up', decentralising power and working more directly with councils, local partners and communities across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is considered that they are best placed to understand the needs of their local areas and more closely aligned to the local economic geographies to deliver quickly on the ground.
- 7.2 The Levelling Up Fund was first announced in the 2020 Spending Review. The Fund focuses on capital investment in local infrastructure, building on and consolidating prior programmes such as the Local Growth Fund and Towns Fund. A further Levelling Up White Paper was published in February 2022 where Government announced how it intends to spread opportunity more equally across the UK. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill was published in May 2022.
- 7.3 The Levelling Up Fund has been designed to invest in local infrastructure that has a visible impact on people and their communities. This includes a range of high value local investment priorities, including local transport schemes, urban regeneration projects and cultural assets. The Fund is jointly managed by HM Treasury (HMT), the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Department for Transport (DfT). The Fund will focus investment in projects that require up to £20m of funding for each constituency area.
- 7.4 Details of the second round of the LUF and the prospectus were announced in March this year and will focus on three themes: local transport projects that make a genuine difference to local areas; town centre and high street regeneration; and support for maintaining and expanding the UK's world-leading portfolio of cultural and heritage assets, in particular:
- **Transport investments** including (but not limited to) public transport, active travel, bridge repairs, bus priority, local road improvements and major structural maintenance, and accessibility improvements. LUF is requesting proposals for high-impact small, medium and, by exception, large local transport schemes to reduce carbon emissions, improve air quality, cut congestion, support economic growth, and improve the safety, security and overall experience of transport users.
  - **Regeneration and town centre investment**, building on the Towns Fund framework to upgrade eyesore buildings and dated infrastructure, acquire and regenerate brownfield sites, invest in secure community infrastructure

and crime reduction, and bring public services and safe community spaces into town and city centres.

- **Cultural investment** maintaining, regenerating, or creatively repurposing existing cultural, creative, heritage and sporting assets, or creating new assets that service those purposes including theatres museums, galleries, production facilities, libraries, visitor attractions (and associated green spaces), sports and athletics facilities, heritage buildings and sites, and assets that support the visitor economy.

- 7.5 The Fund states that investment proposals should focus on supporting high priority projects that will make a visible impact in local areas, recognising what constitutes priority investment will vary across local authorities and geographies, including in rural areas of the UK.

### **For Shropshire**

- 7.6 Following the announcement of the LUF round 2, Officers have been reviewing the guidance and applications forms in more detail. Shropshire is, again, in a position to submit 3 bids, one for each MP constituency area fully within the authority boundary. There is potential to submit a cross boundary bid with Telford and Wrekin Council, where MPs span more than one Local Authority, we are currently exploring this with Telford and Wrekin Council to understand the potential to do this to support the east of the County. Shropshire can also submit a single transport bid. Each local authority has been prioritised in a category of tier 1, 2 or 3, with tier 1 being the highest priority. Shropshire remains in tier 2, although it should be noted that some authorities have moved up tiers since the last round of funding, again making it more competitive to attract funding.
- 7.7 Following the first round of bids being unsuccessful, Shropshire received feedback on these to understand the issues. The fund was hugely oversubscribed, and the majority of bids supported were tier 1 areas. The feedback in summary suggested that all 3 bids were strong and indicated some areas for additional work to strengthen them for round 2. Shropshire has been strongly encouraged to resubmit these bids in round 2. Officers have been reviewing, refining and building on the previous bids to strengthen and enhance the current bids to increase the likelihood of being successful in this next round.



7.8 The fundamental gateway for bids is projects which are ready to mobilise quickly and meet the criteria set out in the technical guidance [Levelling Up Fund Round 2: technical note](#). This includes being able to spend within year this financial year 2022/23.

7.9 There will be a three staged approach to assessment and decision making that Government are using.

**Stage 1 Gateway:** The first stage is a pass/fail gateway criterion, where bids will be assessed against whether they can deliver some LUF expenditure in 2022/2023. Bids that do not meet this gateway criteria will not be assessed further and will not be eligible to be considered for funding in this round.

**Stage 2 Assessment and Shortlisting Bids:** Bids will be assessed against the criteria set out in the Prospectus to deliver a shortlist of the strongest bids. To create a shortlist, applications will be assessed at the bid level against place characteristics, strategic fit, economic case and deliverability.

**Stage 3 Decision Making:** Once bid assessment and moderation has concluded, and the shortlist is drawn up, Ministers will make funding decisions.

7.10 The timescale for the submission of bids is extremely tight and they must be made by 6<sup>th</sup> July at 12pm.

7.11 The four bids, which we are recommending to Cabinet should be put forward in the second round of levelling up funding, need to meet the key objectives of the funding and critically can show spend in 22/23.

7.12 **South – Craven Arms** - A major infrastructure project to include a new roundabout / new junction on the A49, a road bridge over the railway line, and spine roads and utility provision on key employment sites. This supports the planned growth of Craven Arms through accelerating the delivery of infrastructure to unlock the allocated Local Plan housing and much needed employment growth on the northern edge of the town. This will enable sites within the town centre to be redeveloped for more appropriate town centre uses, including housing.

7.13 This is a key growth project and the LUF round 2 bid submission will show progression from feasibility stage through to optioneering. The original scope will be developed

up to provide a viable preferred option design with planned phasing to bring forward the employment land to meet strong business demand for growth on space/expansion and business start-ups and attract further inward investment. The bid will be developed with the use of an up to date, reliable and robust evidence base collected through LUF round 1 i.e.

- Constraints mapping
- Site and land assessment
- Transport modelling
- Key stakeholder engagement and support
- Review / update of initial cost and programme feasibility outputs from LUF1

7.14 Developing up a preferred option will enable the bid to include a more accurate costing profile comprising: projected optimum bias, forecasted S106/CIL and private contributions, anticipated match funding and access to other funding streams, e.g. WMCA and third party/partner support, i.e. Network Rail and National Highways, with due consideration of inflation and increasing construction costs. A high-level project delivery plan and programme of activity will be developed. There is a minimum revenue cost associated with commissioning this work of circa £50k, which could be considered as a cost of the project if the bid is successful but is a necessary requirement to further develop the bid at this stage.

7.15 As part of the review process, due diligence has been given to the project risks and opportunities. The following high-level risks have been identified:

- Project/Scheme exposed to climate change risks and opportunities. Mitigation – adaptive planning.
- Insufficient match finding. Mitigation – explore required match from private contributions including National Highways and Network Rail and factor in Highways Maintenance Grant.
- Land acquisitions and inflation land values. Mitigation – Early negotiations to agree value.
- Material costs and availabilities leading to cost and programme overrun at the Council's expense. Mitigation – Assess market during preconstruction and include impact of inflation in revised costing profile.
- Limited project development. Mitigation – The impact of securing award funding will influence project prioritisation.

7.16 Generally, the risks identified as having a high-risk exposure, i.e. high likelihood and high impact, are predominately around programme overrun and cost uplift and these will essentially inform the review process and the preferred option costing. The Council will have to be cognisant of the current market conditions around inflationary pressures on similar major infrastructure projects at this time and be aware of the potential for increased exposure to overspend due to this, mid-term in project delivery. Adequate contingency allocations to the project through capital commitment at the point of grant acceptance will need to be assessed and put in place as a result. The Council will have to be acutely aware of the reputation impact from a bid versus no bid action. A No bid removes the opportunity to access circa. £20m to bring forward much needed employment land and economic growth in the South of the County. A successful bid may result in the project becoming untenable and the Council are unable to accept the funding award, or the Craven Arms project becomes a committed high priority project on the capital programme.

7.17 **North – Oswestry**

A package of projects is proposed focussing in two key locations.

- Town centre investment to support the regeneration and recovery of the centre, through increased footfall supported by public realm improvements and through measures to support businesses to stimulate economic growth. Current projects under consideration include public realm improvements on Church Street and Cross Street and extending capital grants available to re-purpose underused buildings in the town. These proposals were included within the recent Masterplan Vision consultation and complement existing activities and schemes such as the High Street Heritage Action Zone scheme.
- Improvements to support the planned housing and employment developments around Mile End, through site preparation for the employment land. These proposals will be complemented by existing works to improve the road network and proposed improvements to walking and cycling connectivity through the emerging Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

- 7.18 The combined interventions will stimulate growth, support businesses through the provision of new business space, and increase town centre footfall to support the turnover of existing businesses and the visitor economy. These improvements are not standalone projects but build on current plans, as part of a wider strategy to improve the town supported by existing activities and public/private investment already secured.
- 7.19 **Central area – Shrewsbury Big Town plan** package of two projects which consists of:

### **Transforming Movement and Public Spaces in Shrewsbury: Key Routes & Corridors Improvements.**

The project includes measures to enhance the public realm and bring forward the transformation of public spaces along key routes and connections, to create an attractive urban environment stimulating greater numbers of visitors/users, higher spend and activity.

Several key linked routes are identified for improvement with proposals for traffic management measures including new pedestrian crossings and public spaces, enhancements to pedestrian and cycle links within and around the 'river loop' to create a connected town centre for people.

### **Shrewsbury Redevelopment Programme**

Smithfield Riverside is a transformative plan for the regeneration of an important site of circa 4 hectares in freehold ownership of Shropshire Council. Many of the buildings on the site are beyond economic repair/investment resulting in high levels of vacancy, are dated and in generally poor condition. The area is subsequently unattractive, unwelcoming and underutilised.

The project will accelerate the transformation of a major opportunity site in the town centre and act as a catalyst for regeneration and growth of Shrewsbury as a whole. Smithfield Riverside will capitalise on its strategic advantages, including its waterfront setting and proximity to the railway station.

The project proposes to address significant and 'abnormal' levels of demolition and ground remediation works associated with the site's adjacency to the River Severn; thereby de-risking the site and improving its viability and suitability for vibrant mixed-use development in line with the Big Town Plan

aspirations and the emerging Economic Growth Strategy and Shropshire Plan.

A temporary new public open space and meanwhile uses will be implemented to activate and energise the area, to not only provide immediate economic, cultural and leisure benefits, but also to create excitement, investor, occupier and commercial interest. The works will facilitate longer-term redevelopment of the wider Riverside site for permanent leisure, commercial, retail and residential uses. The area will become a distinctive and vibrant mixed-use neighbourhood that will become a centrepiece of Shrewsbury's economic and residential growth.

## **7.20 Cross border bid potential with Telford and Wrekin**

There is potential for Shropshire to jointly submit a bid with Telford and Wrekin Council in the East of the County where the MP's area covers the two authorities. Early conversations have been held on the potential opportunity this may bring for the area in terms of supporting the market towns with infrastructure. This will be explored further and any bid will be subject to Shropshire Council's agreement.

## **7.21 Transport Bid for Shropshire**

The Department for Transport recommended that for those Local Transport Authorities who did not receive funding through the BSIP process, they should consider submitting a revised bid through the Levelling Up Fund.

The transport bid will be centred around Shropshire Connect, the transformation of Shrewsbury Park & Ride (Shrewsbury Connect) and Rural Connect which will see increased connectivity and travel options for the county's rural residents.

Smaller more demand responsive services will be developed to reflect new and developing travel patterns, providing services where residents currently have limited or no travel options available to them other than the car.

A more integrated transport system will benefit both Shropshire residents and those visiting our County, whilst positively impacting key national strategies such as the Decarbonisation of Transport and the wider Climate Change Agenda. Both these ambitions would be extremely difficult to achieve without a viable public transport network.

## **UKSPF for Shropshire**

- 7.22 The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) is a Government fund which is intended to reduce inequalities between communities, as part of the Government's wider "levelling up" agenda.
- 7.23 Since the 2020 Spending Review, Government has promoted the largely billed UKSPF as being the programme which replaces the EU funds of the European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund, for which Shropshire received an approximate £50m through since 2016.
- 7.24 Government released details of the UKSPF prospectus and funding allocations on 13 April 2022 ([UKSPF prospectus](#)). The Shropshire allocation is £12,255,281 for spend between Oct 2022 and Mar 2025, but this comprises £10,845,217 through the main fund and £1,410,064 through DfE 'Multiply' funding. 4% of the total allocation can be top sliced for the management and administration of the fund.
- 7.25 This allocation has been based on the following formula:
- 70% is allocated on a per capita basis, within each region based on Local Authority population size
  - 30% of the allocation uses the same needs-based index previously used to identify UK Community Renewal Fund
- 7.26 The overarching objective of the fund is, "*Building pride in place and increasing life chances*".

The programme covers 3 investment priorities:

- Community and Place
- Supporting Local Business; and
- People and Skills (including the ring-fenced Multiply allocation for improve the core skills and employability of adults)

The indicative interventions that are covered by these investment areas are provided in full detail through the guidance provided by Government.

- 7.27 Shropshire Council has the responsibility for administering the fund subject to submitting Investment Plans for both the main and Multiply allocations. The deadlines for which are 1 Aug 22 and 30 Jun 22 respectively.

- 7.28 Shropshire Council has been awarded £20k by Government to support the development of the Investment Plans and this will be used to contract a consultant to support the Council officers which are taking forward the development of UKSPF in Shropshire. We will also use this opportunity to explore linkages with Shropshire's emerging Economic Growth Strategy, both in terms of prioritisation and future governance arrangements.
- 7.29 Comprehensive and balanced local partnerships will be a core component of how the Fund is administered locally, this could be an existing partnership, already in place, that could fulfil the role. The local partnership will be convened by the lead local authority. Discussion is ongoing, regarding how the emerging Shropshire Economic Strategy Board could fulfil this function within UKSPF.
- 7.30 MPs should be engaged in the design and delivery of the Fund. In most cases, all MPs in the area should be invited to join the local partnership group. They should provide an advisory role to lead local authorities, reviewing the investment plan prior to submission. The plan will need to detail the MPs involved in the local partnership group and whether each are supportive of the final plan submission.
- 7.31 The Fund can be used flexibly to support interventions via:
- grant to public or private organisations
  - commissioning third party organisations
  - procurement of service provision
  - in-house provision
- 7.32 The mechanism on how the funding will be awarded to the projects will need to be set out in the Investment Plan.
- 7.33 As custodians of UKSPF, Shropshire Council will need to apply the usual scrutiny and safeguards to the awarding, and use of, the public funds and this will need to equally apply to projects delivered internally or externally of the Council.
- 7.34 The process for allocating the funds will have to be robust and transparent, such as through a commissioning model and/or funding applications. All activities will need to be assessed and approved through standard appraisal and contracting procedures, which provide fair access to the funds for all appropriate delivery bodies.

## 8. Conclusions

8.1 Government publishing the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and this included details of a new devolution framework, the establishment of a new independent data body and a new Levelling Up Advisory Council.

8.2 The Bill provided details of **12 new missions** across four broad areas:

- boosting productivity and living standards by growing the private sector spreading opportunities and improving public services;
- restoring a sense of community;
- local pride and belonging; and,
- empowering local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

The Bill set out a series of next steps: a comprehensive programme of engagement across the UK; consultation on missions and metrics and the devolution framework; the establishment of a new body focusing on local government data; rolling out Levelling Up Directors across the UK; simplifying growth funding; creating three sub-groups to support the levelling up advisory council; and introducing future legislation to create an obligation on the UK Government to publish an annual report on progress and to strengthen devolution legislation in England.

8.3 Shropshire is continuing to work with Government, along with our partners, to ensure that our economic agenda is recognised, opportunities are maximised and the governance and funding to support Shropshire's priorities can be realised. Progressing LUF round 2 bids and the investment plan for UKSPF are the first steps in ensuring Shropshire's levelling up agenda is being robustly put forward to Government.

### List of Background Papers

**Cabinet 8<sup>th</sup> June 2021 - UK Levelling Up Fund – Shropshire's opportunity.**

**Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder) Cllr Edward Potter**

**Local Member All**

**Appendices**