



East of England

All Party Parliamentary Group

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BACKGROUND BRIEFING

Review of Progress Towards Levelling Up in The East of England Including Report Back from the Two Working Groups of The East of England Levelling Up Delivery Partnership

&

Opportunity East - Driving National Productivity Through Innovation Presentation on the Emerging Findings from the East of England Economic and Infrastructure Analysis

15:00 TO 17:00 ON MONDAY MARCH 18TH, THATCHER ROOM, PORTCULLIS HOUSE

INTRODUCTION

The joint APPG and EELGA report [Levelling Up the East of England 2023 to 2030](#) published at the start of last year, identified five of the twelve “missions” in DLUHC’s White Paper where there was low confidence that the Government’s target would be reached. Since then, the APPG has had two meetings on both health and transport as well as one meeting each on skills, education and housing.

It was also agreed with the Minister for Levelling Up, Dehenna Davison MP, that the East of England APPG and East of England Local Government Association would form [a Levelling Up Delivery Partnership](#) (LUDP) with the Government. This has focussed on the development of a strategic framework for levelling up skills and the preparation of a report on urgent housing priorities.

The meeting therefore aims to take stock of progress towards levelling up. This background report provides details on the outcomes of the meetings on transport, healthy life expectancy and education. Two separate documents – on skills and housing - will be available on the day.

The meeting will also see a presentation of the emerging findings from an East of England Economic and Infrastructure Analysis commissioned by EELGA in conjunction with the APPG and other regional partners and prepared by Metro Dynamics and provisionally titled: *Opportunity East - driving national productivity through innovation*.

PROGRESS ON LEVELLING UP: TRANSPORT

The Government's transport mission and the East of England's responses were as follows:

- a) **By 2030, will local public transport connectivity across the country be significantly closer to the standards of London?**

This seems highly unlikely unless projects in the Rail Network Enhancement Programme are supported in the November 17 Budget and funding is allocated to support buses in those authorities which did not receive a Bus Service Improvement Plan funding. (Low confidence)

- b) **Will there be improved services, simpler fares and integrated ticketing?**

Again, this seems unlikely without further Government support and funding despite the best efforts of local Enhanced Bus Partnerships and the region's two sub-national transport bodies, Transport East and EEH. (Low confidence)

The key recommendation in the Levelling Up the East of England 2023 to 2030 report was:

Simpler, longer-term funding mechanisms to facilitate stable regional transport investment pipelines that support the priorities already set out in the strategies of the region's two STBs.

There have been two meetings on transport over the past year. The first in June was on **The Future of Freight and the pivotal role of Ely Junction**. Iain Stewart MP, Chair of the Transport Select Committee, and Tan Dhesi MP, Shadow Minister for Rail, spoke. A report of the meeting is [here](#); BBC coverage [here](#); and a copy of the letter subsequently sent to the Transport Secretary and Chancellor is [here](#).

The second meeting, held in September, focused on **Levelling Up Connectivity** with particular reference to roads infrastructure as well as digital issues. It was addressed by Department for Transport Minister for Roads, Richard Holden MP. The roads connectivity briefing is [here](#); minutes are [here](#) and the follow up letter to Minister for Roads [here](#).

There have been two notable successes:

- the resumption of four trains an hour to Stansted and
- the green light for the improvement works at Ely and Haughley Junctions.

The key question for the East of England APPG to consider is whether there is now more confidence that the Government's targets will be met.

PROGRESS ON LEVELLING UP: HEALTHY LIFE EXPECTANCY

The Government's health mission and the East of England's response were as follows:

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 have risen by five years.

It is currently not possible to make an accurate assessment of the likelihood of delivery by 2030, especially as the impact of the most recent factors affecting this ambition are yet to be evidenced in terms of their medium-term effects. However, there is currently low confidence that this ambition can be met within the target timescale. (Low confidence)

The key recommendation in the Levelling Up the East of England 2023 to 2030 report was:

Government funding policies should recognise the significant population growth in the East of England to ensure the region receives a fair share of funding overall for its demography, and that its most deprived areas are recognised within this. The delivery of inclusive economic recovery should ensure the gap in HLE is not widened further.

There have been two meetings of the APPG on healthy life expectancy in the last year. The first, a briefing for MPs on health inequalities in March 2023, was addressed by Clare Panniker, NHS England's Regional Director for the East of England. The note of that meeting is [here](#). The second meeting held in January 2024 focused specifically on **Levelling up Healthy Life Expectancy**. The background briefing paper is [here](#).

A letter – copy [here](#) - was subsequently sent to the Minister responsible for the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities asking the following five sets of questions:

1. Does the Department agree that a “health in all policies” approach is required across Whitehall Departments and not just DHSC? For example, is there liaison between DHSC and Departments for Work & Pensions, Business & Trade and HM Treasury to ensure relentless and joined up focus on those deprived areas with lowest healthy life expectancy?
2. Is the Department confident that its funding allocations reflect the revised population of the East of England? What more can the Department do to help our six ICSs prioritise action on prevention (which is a priority for only one of our ICSs according to ARU's analysis) for example will it commit to the share of total NHS budgets at ICS level going towards prevention being increased by at least 1% over the next 5 years, as recommended in the Hewitt Review of ICSs.
3. Does the DHSC recognise the central role of all tiers of local government in delivering Integrated Care System ambitions to improve the living conditions and life chances in our communities? For example, will it consider moving towards a cross-sector funding framework that ensures essential services are maintained and enables increased investment in early interventions and prevention.
4. What action has the Department taken to ensure it is working jointly with DLUHC and Homes England to join up housing and health policy at both national and regional levels. Is the Department aware that the East of England is, through its Levelling Up Delivery Partnership with DLUHC, providing a strategic framework for reducing the region's above average number of non-decent homes and will it support its conclusions?
5. Is increasing Healthy Life Expectancy a key priority for DHSC as well as a “mission” for DLUHC? If so what additional actions to those suggested in 1 to 4 above does the Department consider will be necessary – by themselves or by actors in the region - in order for the East of England to have at least medium confidence that the Government target will be delivered by 2030?

The key question for the East of England APPG to consider is whether there is now more confidence that the Government's targets will be met.

PROGRESS ON LEVELLING UP: EDUCATION

The Government's education mission and the East of England's responses were as follows:

- a) By 2030, will the number of primary school children in the East of England achieving the expected standard in reading, writing and maths have increased to 90%?**

The Institute for Government have said it would be “virtually impossible” to deliver the 90% primary education goal in “only eight years” NB at the time the report was compiled just 64% of primary school children in the East of England achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths. This is below the England average of 65%. In two areas of the region attainment was less than 60% (Fenland at 52% and Peterborough at 56%.) (Low confidence)

b) By 2030, will the percentage of children meeting the expected standard in the worst performing areas have increased by over a third?

Given the cost-of-living pressure and the likely increase in child poverty, the gap between disadvantaged children is in the short term more likely to widen than narrow and significant pressures remain on delivering a 10% increase in SEND packages. In the current circumstances, maintaining the current position would be considered a success. In the longer term, if stable and sufficient funding can be provided, in addition to ongoing concerted effort in the EIAs and Priority Areas, then some progress will hopefully be achieved towards this ambition. (Medium confidence)

The key recommendation in the Levelling Up the East of England 2023 to 2030 report was:

Particular attention should be given to the funding formula that applies to rural schools and a significant part of the increased school funding of £4.6bn over the next two years should be allocated to councils to support children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

There has been one meeting looking at educational attainment which was held in March 2024 and addressed by Jonathan Duff, the Director of Education for the East of England. He reported that the 64% and 65% figures cited in the report was in fact a statistic referring to 2019 before the Covid pandemic. Latest figures – for 2023 - show that the national average is now 60% and in the East of England it is 58%.

He also re-iterated that there are three areas (Fenland and East Cambridgeshire, Norwich and Ipswich) which have been identified by the Government as Priority Areas as well as seven Education Improvement Areas in the region: Bedford; Cambridgeshire; Central Bedfordshire; Luton; Norfolk; Peterborough; and Suffolk. The slides he presented are available [here](#).

The key question for the East of England APPG to consider is whether there is now more confidence that the Government’s targets will be met.

The East of England APPG is kindly supported by British Sugar, London Stansted Airport, the East of England LGA, AstraZeneca, Anglian Water, Transport East, the UK Innovation Corridor, Freeport East, England’s Economic Heartland, CityFibre and BuildEast.



The academic partners of the East of England APPG are the Centre for Public and Policy Engagement at the University of Essex, The University of Cambridge, Anglia Ruskin University and the University of East Anglia.

