



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Jeremy Pocklington CB
Permanent Secretary

**Department for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities**
4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Dame Meg Hillier MP
Public Accounts Committee, Chair
House of Commons
Westminster
SW1A 0AA
By email

Tel: 0303 444 2785

Email: PSPerm.Sec@ communities.gov.uk

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Dear Dame Meg,

Further information following the oral evidence session: Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities recall (Homelessness and housing), Public Accounts Committee

Thank you for inviting me to the Public Accounts Committee of 1 November. Your Committee members raised some important points and I committed to write with some additional information.

External Capacity Support for Towns Fund bids

The Towns Fund Delivery Partner (TFDP) is a multidisciplinary consortium (led by Arup with the Nichols Group, Copper Consultancy, FutureGov, Grant Thornton and Savills).

The TFDP has been commissioned to support towns during the first stages of the programme, in particular the development of Town Investment Plans and business cases. The contract is funded by DLUHC and is free to access for towns.

Now that all 101 towns have had deals announced and the fund is entering the delivery phase, the TFDP support contract is concluding at the end of December 2021. We are currently in the process of looking at options for future support in the next stage of the fund, including for Town Deal Boards. We will write back to the Committee once this process has concluded.

The TFDP's wide ranging support package has included 120 check and challenge sessions, 26 webinars and 1,600 meetings with towns. The support has been extremely well received by towns. This includes feedback from the Chief Executive of Stevenage Borough Council who praised the "constructive and deep" feedback provided on investment plans, and the "sound advice" received throughout.

The TFDP provides online tools and resources (townsfund.org.uk), specialist advice and learning programmes tailored to Towns' individual needs. TFDP support is enabling Towns to develop their local capabilities and skills and facilitating shared learning between Towns. This covers leadership and partnership development, visioning, governance and decision-making, leveraging private finance, project management, community engagement and specialist areas such as social value, planning, clean growth,

land and environmental expertise. TFDP has supported Towns to develop their Town Investment Plans, including working closely with King's Lynn on their submission to DLUHC.

TFDP are also providing insights from the bottom up into the opportunities, issues and barriers facing Towns, to assist DLUHC with delivering policy and in shaping future investment programmes.

Capacity Support metrics

When designing programmes, we consider our partners' capacity needs and what support might be needed to achieve programme aims.

For the Levelling Up Fund, capacity funding has been provided to local authorities in England most in need of levelling up investment (category 1 places), as identified in the index published alongside the prospectus, and all local authorities in Scotland and Wales. (Categories were based on an index that was published alongside the Levelling Up Fund Prospectus, placing areas into category 1,2 or 3 based on their need for economic recovery and growth, improved transport connectivity, and regeneration.) This capacity funding will help support relevant local authorities to develop high quality bids and therefore ensure that the Fund distributes funding to areas where it is needed most and achieves a suitable balance of spending across the UK. A flat £125,000 of capacity funding has been allocated to all eligible local authorities.

We provided similar capacity support under the Towns Fund for places selected for Town Deals, initially making payments of between £140,000 and £170,000 depending on town size to allow places to establish Town Deal Boards and develop Investment Plans. Later in the programme, we provided further capacity funding to 96 towns with grants of between £40,000 and £70,000 based on evidence of need they provided. Towns Fund places have also benefited from capacity support through a central contract with Arup and a consortium of partners. We plan a similar support model for places delivering Levelling Up Fund projects.

Electric Vehicle Charging in Residential and Non-Residential Buildings

We will be publishing the Government response to the Electric Vehicle Charging in Residential and Non-Residential Buildings consultation shortly and the new Building Regulations will then come into effect during 2022. Properties in scope of the regulations will start to be required to have EVCPs fitted from that point, subject to various exemptions that will be set out in the regulations.

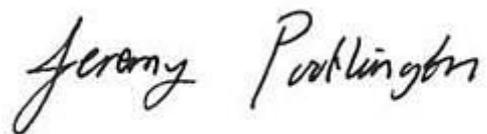
Recourse to Public Funds

In July 2021, Eddie Hughes, Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing, sent the attached letter to Local Authority Council Leaders asking that they ensure that they are exhausting all options within the law to support those who are unable to access statutory homelessness assistance as a result of their immigration status.

This letter made clear that exhausting all options should include considering what discretionary powers can be used to support individuals; exploring partnership work with the voluntary and community sector; and engaging with Home Office on complex cases, to support regularisation of status. Any funding we have provided can be used to help anyone, including those with restricted eligibility due to their immigration status, as long as LAs are acting within the law in doing so. This includes the recently announced Winter Pressures Fund, specifically focussed on enabling LAs to build on existing RSI 2021/22 interventions where it is needed.

We understand that this is a complex area, particularly in the context of the pandemic and the change in status of EEA nationals. In July we also made available to local authorities the attached information on some of the existing legal powers they have to support non-UK nationals with restricted eligibility. We are

clear that the law with regards to immigration status has not changed, and it remains for each local authority to decide what assistance can be provide to people who are homeless and rough sleeping, based upon an individual assessment of a person's status, circumstances and needs.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy Pocklington". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

JEREMY POCKLINGTON