

APPENDIX A

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 21 MARCH 2024 QUESTION TO LEADER OF THE COUNCIL ON THE EXECUTIVE REPORT

Question from Councillor Kate Foale

The latest report by the House of Commons public accounts committee confirmed that Local authorities have only been allocated a third of the government's total Levelling Up funding and that just over a tenth of this has been spent, resulting in the 'vast majority' of projects now being delivered late.

During the Prime Minister's visit, did the Leader ask why his government is failing to deliver the levelling up funding he promised?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ben Bradley MP

I raise, as you might expect, the level of funding all the time, not least because my own constituency has been in receipt of £72 million of funding which is really positive. Over £250 million across North Nottinghamshire has been invested in some of our most disadvantaged communities which is fantastic news.

I do raise this with Government all the time and I do make those challenges about the timeliness of delivery, it's something that I have particularly raised in recent budget meetings and as a result, we've seen changes to the way in which levelling up funding is delivered.

So initially we saw single capital pots of funding, now in later rounds of funding we are seeing long-term term funding for towns where areas are getting £2 million a year over a 10 year period, which means that they are building a capacity to deliver things better. I think a big part of the reason why there have been delays is that many of the Districts and Borough Councils in particular haven't got the capacity or the resources to be able to do the planning and the works required to get projects across the line.

My own experience in Mansfield for example is that Towns Funding for parking was approved 2 and a half years ago and yet the District Council haven't yet been able to do the work to deliver it and that is a source of great frustration. It's part of the reason that the Combined Authority is so important as it will allow us to have an expert team of people with the right capacity, both planning capacity and in capital projects, to be able to deliver these projects in a more timely way.

So I totally accept that we want to see things delivered more quickly. I think there have been changes to the programme to allow us to do that, and to build capacity to do that. I would also challenge our District and Borough partners to be able to pick up the pace on the delivery too, some are better than others but certainly my experience in Mansfield, 2 and a half years to deliver ANPR and contactless parking improvements is too long and that falls on those local shoulders, it is not because we are waiting for Government.

There is more work to do, and I think that some of that is changing, but I'm really grateful for the £250million worth of investment through those schemes into North Nottinghamshire.

Question from Councillor Jason Zadrozny

Your report contains information about a visit from current Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to a Youth Centre in Mansfield on January 4. Did Mr Sunak visit anywhere else in Nottinghamshire that day?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ben Bradley MP

I'm grateful for the question and it has prompted me to correct the report, as you came into the room just a few minutes ago to say that he did also visit a primary school in Huthwaite. I'm grateful for you pointing that out, the reason this wasn't in the report originally is simply that I wasn't personally involved in that visit, so it had slipped my mind but I'm grateful for you reminding me of it and it is now on the record. Hopefully that tackles your question.

Question from Councillor Kate Foale

Our region has the lowest level of transport spend per head of any UK region or nation.

Analysis of treasury spending undertaken by East Midlands Councils confirms that if we were funded to the UK average, we would have an extra £1.26 billion to spend on transport every year.

Did the Leader raise this during the visits of either the Department for Transport Minister or the Prime Minister?

Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Ben Bradley MP

I did and I regularly do.

I'm sure it won't have slipped the chambers notice that we have recently secured a £1.5billion increase in transport funding for our region to tackle this precise issue and that inequality in funding goes back several decades through Governments of both varieties.

It's great news actually, that we're finally able to start to tackle some of that inequality, we have secured almost a fourfold increase in our transport budget for the years ahead, that's really good news for our communities.

It means we can invest in improving our bus services, it means that we can invest in tackling our roads, it means we can integrate our services and all of the positive things that we have discussed around the Combined Authority in recent weeks and months as we have been delivering that work. So I hope you accept Councillor Foale the really good news that we have secured a significant increase in our transport funding, kicking off with the first meeting of the Combined Authority yesterday.