



Rt. Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

22 March 2021

Dear Secretary of State,

The last 12 months have seen local areas challenged like never before. The coronavirus pandemic has brought untold grief to local communities and changed our lives in unimaginable ways. But up and down the country, places have stepped up together.

Inspiring partnerships have formed between councils and communities, which have not just helped us through the crisis – they have shown us the way to long-term recovery. Indeed, with the right support, we believe they could form the foundations of government’s ambitions to level up the country.

We are writing to you as members of the Keep it Local Network – a group of councils committed to unlocking the power in our communities. We have recognised that the most effective way of achieving our ambitions for our places is to build strong local partnerships, share power and maximise our local strengths. The Keep it Local Network is convened by Locality, the national membership network for local community organisations, in partnership with Lloyds Bank Foundation for England and Wales.

We were committed to the Keep it Local approach before the pandemic hit. However, we now understand it to be more important than ever. Relationships,

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connection, local knowledge and trust: deep and nuanced networks which have built up over years have proved their worth a thousand times over during the crisis.

We have redoubled our efforts to harness this community power, shifting our role from being the commissioner and controller of activity, to being its convenor and supporter.

However, there is more we could do to go further and faster with the support of central government policy. Locality have produced a Keep it Local Manifesto, which is attached to this letter. It sets out how the policy frameworks and funding streams government has announced – from the Devolution and Recovery White Paper and the Procurement Green Paper to the Shared Prosperity Fund and the Levelling Up Fund – can most effectively unlock the power of community and inspire local innovation.

This government faces huge challenges, unseen before in our times. Helping us through the ongoing public health crisis. Setting us on the right path to local economic recovery. Securing a fairer, greener future for Britain after the pandemic.

To tackle them, we must build common cause and marshal all the resources we have at our disposal. We firmly believe that one of our greatest resources is the power which exists in our communities. The Keep it Local Manifesto's proposals show how government can help unlock this power and put it at the heart of our national recovery.

It identifies three big opportunities from within the government's current policy agenda to build on recent Budget announcements:

1. Turn community spirit into community power

- Put community power at the heart of the Devolution and Recovery White Paper

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- Establish a Community Wealth Fund to provide long-term investment in so called 'left behind' areas using dormant assets funding already identified by government
- Create a new £500m Neighbourhood Recovery Fund to provide the right resources for neighbourhoods to bounce forward from the crisis and enable local initiatives to take root and flourish

2. Create collaborative public services

- Support "power partnerships" to develop at a local level through long-term investment in councils and communities
- Make collaboration - not competition - the guiding principle of public services
- Localise social value

3. Support a community-powered economic recovery

- Put communities in charge of the Shared Prosperity Fund
- Devolve future rounds of the Levelling Up Fund, distributed to areas according to need
- Use the Community Ownership Fund to capitalise community organisations

This is a manifesto for local levelling up, achieved by ensuring our national strategies and resources plug into the innovation that's happening locally and enable it to flourish.

Nobody is under any illusions that, over the next few months, as the roadmap moves us through the different phases of recovery, times will continue to be tremendously difficult for our communities. But we believe the work we have done together shows us the way through - and these proposals show how government can support our collective endeavour.

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We hope you will consider the full proposals in the attached manifesto – and we'd be very happy to arrange a meeting to discuss them in further detail with you.

Yours sincerely,

CLLr Susan Hinchcliffe, Leader, Bradford Metropolitan District Council

Marvin Rees, Mayor, Bristol City Council

CLLr Tim Swift, Leader, Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council

Robin Tuddenham, Chief Executive, Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council

Philip Glanville, Mayor, Hackney London Borough Council

CLLr Shabir Pandor, Leader, Kirklees Metropolitan District Council

CLLr Debra Coupar, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Communities,
Leeds City Council

Damien Egan, Mayor, Lewisham London Borough Council

CLLr Nick Forbes, Leader, Newcastle City Council

CLLr Sean Fielding, Leader, and Chief Executive, Oldham Metropolitan Borough
Council

Dr Carolyn Wilkins, Chief Executive, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council

CLLr Chris Read, Leader, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

CLLr Ben Stokes, Deputy Leader, South Gloucestershire Council

CLLr Janette Williamson, Leader, Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

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