

The Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State
Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities
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Date: 22 December 2023
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Via Email: michael.gove.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Secretary of State,

Integration of Local Enterprise Partnerships within Upper Tier Local Authorities

We write to you at a critical time for our areas, with the impending dissolution of Local Enterprise Partnerships and the integration of their roles within our Upper Tier Local Authorities.

The guidance issued by Government has particular implications for a significant number of UTLAs as you have set seemingly arbitrary criteria for Growth Hubs around resident and business populations, which is at risk of putting our Unitary Authorities on an unequal footing with our County Council colleagues as set out below:

- b. Where not possible to continue over the existing geography, the delivery area must be broadly related to the business and economic area footprint, with a minimum business (22,000) and actual population (500,000) size. It should take into account any planned devolution arrangements and likely future geographies;

Cities and unitary authorities are the economic drivers of successful regions and we are critical for effective and sustainable economic development. Research by the Centre for Cities¹ shows that we bring significant benefits to our surrounding hinterlands. We are vital in ensuring access to prosperity; both for our residents, but also for those of our surrounding districts and boroughs. This guidance is being interpreted by civil servants in absolute terms and is deeply damaging for our economy. The country needs a sharp focus on the power of all cities – with their regions - as drivers of jobs and investment.

I urge you to recognise true functioning economic geographies and to revise your department's guidance. This should confirm that UTLAs will be treated on an equitable basis with regards to the future distribution of LEP powers. This should be regardless of population size, particularly when

¹ <https://www.centreforcities.org/publication/does-trickle-out-work/>

urban concentrations of our population provide the evident driving force for levelling up in our regions.

Yours sincerely



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Cllr Satvir Kaur
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Southampton City Council



Cllr Jim Robbins
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Cllr Steve Pitt
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