

# CABINET



Report subject	<b>Levelling Up</b>
Meeting date	12 <sup>th</sup> January 2022
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>In May 2021 the Government announced it will publish a landmark Levelling Up White Paper, “articulating how bold new policy interventions will improve opportunity and boost livelihoods across the country as we recover from the pandemic. The White Paper - which will be led by the Prime Minister - will focus on challenges including improving living standards, growing the private sector and increasing and spreading opportunity”.</p> <p>In readiness for this White Paper, this Cabinet report showcases several excellent recent studies that help to explain why Levelling Up is important for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and how it can support our current and future work. These studies also help us to have some early sight on what our Levelling Up needs and aspirations may be.</p> <p>This Cabinet report also provides a brief update on the development of the Skills Commission (a key early action to support Levelling Up) and sets out a series of proposed next steps for approval to ensure there is an agreed, evidenced based council-wide approach that is complimentary to and supports the delivery of existing council policies and strategies.</p>
Recommendations	<b>It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet approves the proposed approach to Levelling Up.</b>

Reason for recommendations	Levelling Up the country is one of Government's key policy aims. The council's Big Plan and Corporate Strategy speak to the same agenda. The recommendation, if approved, will enable BCP Council to better understand our needs and aspirations around Levelling Up and consider how they relate to the Corporate Strategy and other council strategies, so that we are well positioned for the publication of the Government's White Paper, and any future funding opportunities that may arise
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Toby Johnson - Lead Member for Levelling Up and Skills Councillor Philip Broadhead - Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Development, Growth and Regeneration
Corporate Director	Adam Richens, Corporate Finance Director
Report Authors	Chris Shephard, Director of Economic Development Sophie Bradfield – Principal Policy Officer
Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

## Background

- In May 2021 the Government announced the landmark Levelling Up White Paper would be published later this year,  
“articulating how bold new policy interventions will improve opportunity and boost livelihoods across the country as we recover from the pandemic.  
Despite the challenges of Covid-19, levelling up and ensuring that the whole UK can benefit from the same access to opportunities remains core to the Government's vision.  
The White Paper - which will be led by the Prime Minister - will focus on challenges including improving living standards, growing the private sector and increasing and spreading opportunity”.  
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-to-publish-levelling-up-white-paper>).
- The White Paper is expected at the end of the year and early signs are that the major themes covered in it will be:
  - Economic Growth
  - Opportunity and spreading opportunity
  - Public Services and Public Service Outcomes
  - Pride in Place (which is about regeneration and local leadership/sense of community)

3. There has been plenty written about Levelling Up since this announcement, with many organisations speculating on what they think Levelling Up should be about including this from the Centre for Cities:

“Levelling up should improve standards of living across the country: The goal of levelling up should be to narrow the divergence seen across the country in areas such as health, education and public service provision.

Levelling up should help every place to reach its productivity potential: levelling up the economy can't mean making everywhere the same, because different places play different roles in the economy”.

However at the time of writing we still await the White Paper with full details from Government.

4. In advance of the White Paper and more specific details about the policy, there is an opportunity to think about what Levelling Up means to Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, using the list outlined in section 2 of this report, showing how Levelling Up compliments existing council strategies and policies, and to ensure the council is well placed to react to its publication. This Cabinet report showcases several excellent recent studies that help to do this and provide some early sight on what our Levelling Up needs and aspirations may be.
5. This Cabinet report also provides a brief update on the development of the Skills Commission, a key early action to support Levelling Up, and sets out a series of proposed next steps for approval to ensure there is an agreed, evidenced-based council-wide approach that is complimentary to and supports the delivery of existing council policies and strategies.

#### **Evidence, Data and Research**

6. The council has a plethora of data, statistics and analysis to support an evidence-based approach to determining the challenges and opportunities we face for Levelling Up in the BCP area. We publish some of these resources online: [Statistics, data and census \(bcpcouncil.gov.uk\)](https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/statistics) and [Research reports \(bcpcouncil.gov.uk\)](https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/research-reports). Looking at some of the key reports below we have drawn out some initial high-level areas which are useful to consider.

#### **Key Facts 2021 - State of BCP Report June 2021**

7. The State of BCP report (see appendix 2) is a key facts report updated annually by the research team, using data from various sources including the Office of National Statistics (ONS), data from Government departments and the councils' own data. The report looks at characteristics of the BCP area on the following topics: population, diversity, deprivation, community and place, children and young people, economy and employment (including education and skills), housing, health and wellbeing, culture, heritage and tourism and sustainability and environment.
8. The State of BCP report helps to shape and inform partnership work, outlining the changing nature of our communities, and providing a snapshot of the data behind the bigger picture.
9. Drawing out some headings from the report relevant to the Levelling Up work, we can see BCP is an area with significant contrasts with areas among the most and least deprived in the country. 16,000 people (4% of the BCP population) live in the 10% most deprived areas in England. This increases to 45,400 people (12% of the BCP population) when we look at the number of people living in the 20% most

deprived areas. Yet in contrast, 82,800 (21% of the BCP population) live in the 20% least deprived areas in England.

10. Wages are slightly below national average, yet house prices are higher than the national average creating an affordability issue. Average house prices in the BCP area have increased significantly in the last ten years. The average house price in the BCP area was £302,719 in the 12 months to March 2021; this is higher than the average price regionally and nationally. The relative affordability of property has decreased between 2010 and 2020. Median house prices increased at a higher rate than the median wage, which has led to less affordable housing. BCP also has a large private rental sector and the median prices of one, two- and three-bedroom properties are consistently higher than that of the South West or England. Around 22% of households rent privately.
11. The level of qualifications varies across the BCP area. Education, skills, and training is one of the domains included in the English Indices of Deprivation (2019). This domain measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population and is the most prevalent form of deprivation across all three towns in BCP. Yet we are also home to three universities, with over 21,500 students registered in BCP in 2019/20.

#### **Covid Impact Evidence April 2021**

12. This BCP Council research report (see appendix 3) looks at the evidence of the impacts across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) based on our corporate priorities: Sustainable Environment, Dynamic Places, Brighter Futures, Connected Communities, Fulfilled Lives, Modern Accessible, Accountable Council.
13. It's recognised that the huge impact of the pandemic has changed the structure of the economy and will have a lasting change on the way we live both locally, nationally, and internationally. However not all the impacts and changes brought about by Covid-19 were negative. Technological and medical advances have helped both in terms of protecting us from the virus and enabled us to carry on working. The pandemic also encouraged communities to work together to support those needing help.
14. The report recognises there is a risk that the pandemic will permanently increase health and other inequalities due to the disproportionate impact on certain groups.
15. Locally there is evidence of a likely increase in families experiencing financial pressure, due to an increase in households on universal credit who have dependent children. Between January 2020 and November 2020, the number has increased by nearly 60% to 10,700 households.
16. The pandemic has also had a significant impact on children and young people in many ways due to the impact it has had on teaching in schools, colleges, and universities. Young people have also been disproportionately impacted in their post-school lives as both the availability of apprenticeships and jobs were depleted at the start of the pandemic. Furthermore, many young people are more likely to be employed in the sectors more vulnerable to Covid-19. Nearly 46% of those aged 16 to 24 are employed in the distribution, hotel and restaurant sector compared with 24% of all in employment aged 16 and over.

#### **COVID-19 impact on children and young people May 2021**

17. This BCP Council research briefing (see appendix 4) highlights the key impacts of Covid-19 on children and their families, and suggests where our focus for recovery should lie, based on a review of national and local evidence available to date. The

following key areas of need for children and young people are highlighted based on current evidence and five broad areas of focus are suggested for recovery:

- a. Our response should directly address the growing inequalities through identifying and targeting support to the children, families and young people disproportionately affected.
- b. We must work with partners and our communities to support young people and families meet their basic needs, through effectively targeted family support and early help.
- c. We should prioritise on-going support for children's emotional health and wellbeing.
- d. We should provide an enabling environment within our schools, where children feel supported to re-engage and address learning gaps, especially for children with SEND and other vulnerabilities.
- e. There should be a focus on preventing harm and exploitation given the increase in the incidence of domestic abuse & other safeguarding issues, and the complexity of cases entering the care system.

### **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) JSNA Summary May 2021**

18. Dorset's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) is used to support BCP Council's and Dorset Council's Health & Wellbeing Boards to identify key issues and develop their Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategies in response to these. The data in this summary (see appendix 5) provides insight into the trends and patterns we are seeing in our local area.
19. In the BCP area, current life expectancy at birth is 83.7 years for females and 80.5 years for men. Healthy life expectancy is better than the England rate for both sexes and this has generally been improving. However, there are some areas where our populations health could be better. This report looks at key indicators where we are falling below England average, health inequalities and wider determinants of health.
20. Deprivation and Inequality Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, by decile BCP has a mix of high and low deprivation areas. Some areas, such as Sandbanks, Canford Cliffs, Christchurch and Broadstone fall within the least deprived areas nationally. In contrast, there are communities experiencing some of the highest levels of deprivation in Turlin Moor, Alderney, Turbary Common and West Howe, Boscombe and Somerford. Deprivation is strongly linked with many health outcomes, and we see inequalities in life expectancy across the BCP area – There is just under 10 years difference in life expectancy for females (West Highcliffe -87.5 years and Boscombe West - 77.9 years).

### **Health inequalities in BCP**

21. BCP Council research into health inequalities has provided some further insights.
22. The relationship between unemployment and health status is clear at ward level for BCP. Wards where levels of unemployment are significantly above the BCP average also have the lowest life expectancy. Areas with the highest unemployment rates are significantly more likely to include residents that have no or few qualifications, people with disabilities and mental ill-health, those with caring responsibilities, lone parents, some ethnic minorities, older workers and particularly young people.

23. There are risks associated with being unemployed at a young age. A report by Public Health England links spending time NEET (not in education, employment or training) to ongoing unemployment, low wages, and poor physical and mental health. The percentage of young people NEET and whose activities are unknown is higher in BCP than it is nationally. In BCP 3.8% of 16-17-year-olds are NEET, compared with 3% nationally, and the activities of 3.7% are unknown, compared with 2% nationally.
24. There is a social gradient to people's health, and the length of time people live is closely related to the extent of disadvantage and deprivation they experience. Levels of deprivation play a significant role in health inequalities. Deprivation is a measure that assesses areas based on how they fare on multiple fields, including income, employment, quality of environment, health, education, and housing.
25. BCP is an area of significant disparity with neighbouring areas among the most and least deprived within England. According to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2019) 45,400 people (12% of the population) in BCP live in areas that are among the most deprived 20% nationally, including 8,900 0-16 year olds and 6,200 over 65s. 9 of 233 areas (Lower Layer Super Output Areas - LSOAs) in BCP fall within the most deprived 10% nationally, 17 LSOAs are in the 11-20% most deprived areas. 56 LSOAs in BCP fall within the least deprived 20% nationally. 82,800 people (21% of the population) live in these areas, including 12,700 0-16 year olds and 26,000 over 65s.

#### **The Future of Urban Centres report – Key and Core Cities**

26. Supporting these findings at a local level, on the national stage the council has been involved in another piece of research, this time commissioned by the Key Cities and Core Cities networks earlier this year, to consider "the future of urban areas". The full report by Metro Dynamics can be seen here: <https://www.keycities.co.uk/future-urban-centres-online-evidence-base>. This report is an excellent read, however even more insightful is the dashboard showing key indices for each city or city-region in the network. This can be accessed via the same link and is shown in Figure 1. By choosing a city from the map shown, it brings up a dashboard of different measures that are useful for looking at a place on a page. These can also be compared against other cities in the network. For example, the demographics of the population in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole can be compared with that of Newcastle or Leeds or Plymouth. This is data drawn from national sources such as the Office for National Statistics and displayed in a way that is easy to digest (Figure 2).
27. This evidence supports the information provided in the earlier paragraphs in that it highlights areas of strength but also areas that we may wish to consider further if considered through a Levelling Up perspective.

Figure 1: Key Cities and Core Cities: The Future of Urban Centres

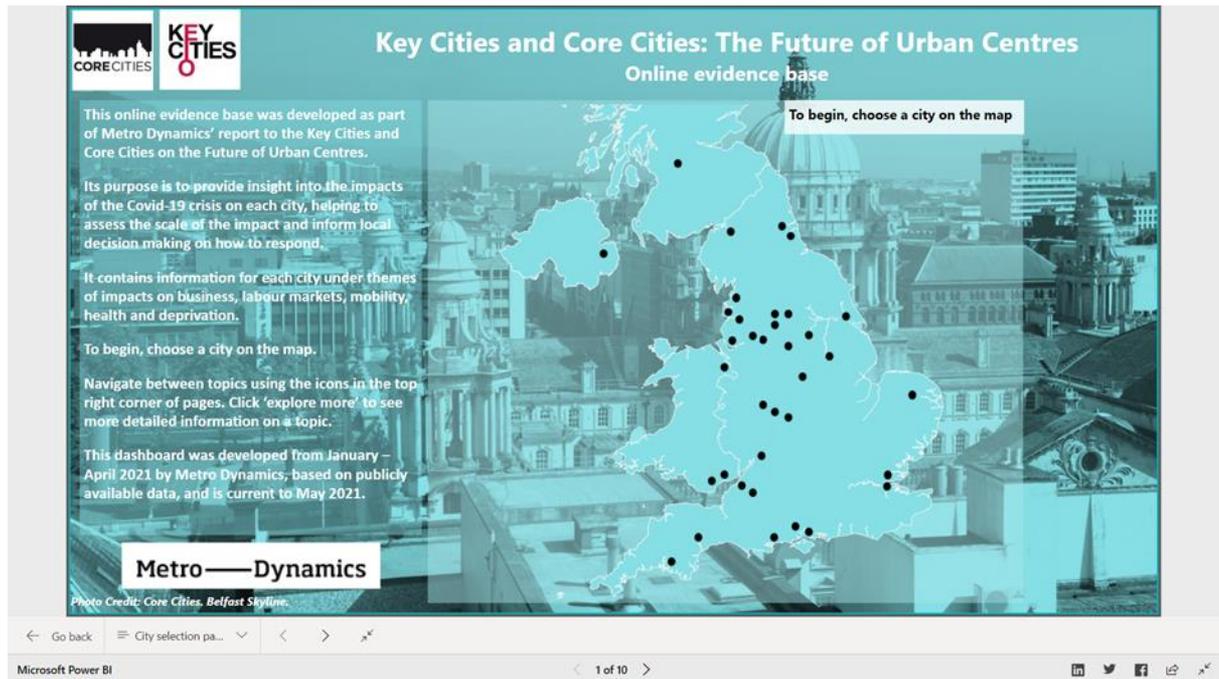
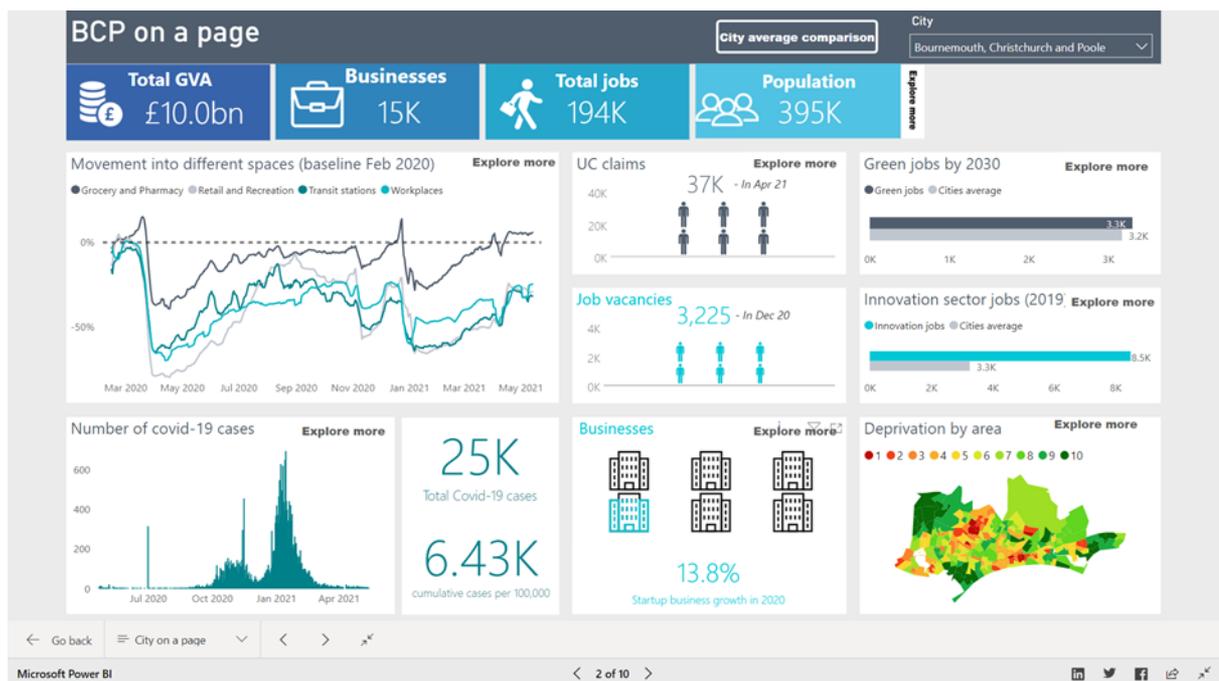


Figure 2: Data for Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole



## Levelling Up: making the case for investment in the Central South – Southern Policy Centre

28. Alongside these excellent pieces of work, The Southern Policy Centre, an independent think-tank (established in 2014 as the only independent think tank and policy forum for central southern England), undertook its own research on the subject. This took in a broader geographical scope, that of the Central South, which

includes Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole. In advance of the White Paper, and perhaps to inform it, The Southern Policy Centre then published their report in July this year “Levelling Up: making the case for investment in the Central South” (appendix 1). This report

“challenged that perception of uniform prosperity across the central South, highlighting inequalities along the urban coastal strip from Poole to Portsmouth, including the Isle of Wight. We showed that the specific and long-term disadvantages faced by some people in our area are similar to experiences of people in the Midlands and the North who are widely talked about as having been ‘left behind.’”

29. Key findings of the report showed

“that parts of Bournemouth, Gosport, the Isle of Wight, Portsmouth and Southampton faced the same challenges as urban areas in the Midlands and North, with life expectancy, levels of skills and income all below the national average”.

It goes on to say that:

“The following tables show a comparison of key economic, educational and other indicators in the central South and comparators from the Midlands and North of England. All face common challenges, notably:

- Poverty and deprivation, with more than 25% % of LSOAs (Lower Layer Super Output Areas have an average population of 1500 people or 650 households) in the top 3 deciles of deprivation with worse than GB average child poverty rates and lower than average life expectancy
- Education and skills (educational attainment at GCSE and A levels, no qualifications, NVQ 1- 4)
- Economy, employment and income (employment rate, average income, housing affordability ratio)
- Social Mobility (overall index)”

These tables can be viewed on pages 18, 19 and 20 of the report in Appendix 1.

30. Whilst there is an incredible amount of evidence here, further work is required to review how existing and future council strategies and policies can contribute to the Levelling Up agenda. It is recommended that Cabinet supports the development of further detailed work across the council, that will also review and work to the contents of the White Paper when it is published, and that can be presented back to Cabinet at the appropriate time in the future.

### **A National Framework**

31. To assist with the complexities of this subject, and to help provide some architecture to assessing progress and success, we can turn to the Levelling Up Goals (<https://www.levellingupgoals.org/>). The introduction on the website states

“Through the Social Mobility Pledge, a coalition of businesses, NHS Trusts, Councils and universities committed to driving levelling up on the ground, and with civil society and cross party MPs, we have produced the leading architecture for truly purpose-led organisations. We call them the Levelling Up Goals.

This Purpose architecture is setting the standard on the social aspect of ESG, being adopted by organisations including Amazon, UK Power Networks, bp, Sodexo, Pennon Group, Adecco, the BBC, Direct Line Group, Cisco, Shoosmiths, NHS Trusts and 15 UK Universities amongst others.

The Goals are chaired by Rt Hon Justine Greening, the UK's former Secretary of State for International Development. In Parliament the Goals are chaired by Robbie Moore MP, Member of Parliament for Keighley and Ilkley in West Yorkshire.

The Levelling Up Goals are the first major piece of work from the Purpose Coalition, which is made up of leading private and public sector leaders, with the aim of creating a framework for the S in ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance), to map best practice, report outcomes, track progress and ensure a maximum and measurable impact on their staff, customers and the communities they serve”.

32. They have been inspired by the UN Sustainable Development Goals and include goals such as Strong Foundations in Early Years, Building Homes and Sustainable Communities and Good Health and Wellbeing.
33. There is an opportunity to commission an Impact Report via the consultancy, to look at how the Levelling Up Goals could be integrated into our work. This would work together with our own detailed work proposed at 29 and would be a time bound piece of work that will produce some recommendations, funded via existing budgets. We will then cross reference these with the White Paper or vice versa depending on when it is published, to inform our future direction.

#### **Current work that supports Levelling Up**

34. There is work across the council that supports the aims of Levelling Up. Several projects already in operation in Economic Development and Communities demonstrate where there are already steps being taken to invest in levelling up. Examples include:
  - the Bournemouth Town Deal which has secured £21m for investment into regenerating Boscombe
  - the creation of the urban regeneration company FuturePlaces to accelerate development schemes on council owned sites following a stewardship approach that puts people and communities at its heart
  - the associated Economic Development and Communities Strategies and their delivery, amongst others
  - and the creation of a Skills Commission in partnership with Dorset Council and others, which will undertake a review into the Dorset skills landscape – with a particular consideration of the National Skills White Paper, and the levelling up agenda, producing a report that lays out a potential skills journey and opportunities/needs based on 10, 20 and 30-years trajectories. The appointment of the lead for this piece of work is critical, and work is being finalised to secure the right person at the time of writing.

#### **Proposed Approach**

35. It is clear from the extensive evidence outlined here that there are some clear themes coming through around where we could focus our efforts in relation to Levelling Up. However, this is a large and complex subject which requires a

degree of governance and co-ordination if we are to grasp the opportunities both for our communities and in terms of potential resources from Government.

36. This Government policy could provide much needed funding and support to help us deliver on the Corporate Strategy and Big Plan which crosses many, if not all, service areas.
37. Cabinet is therefore asked to approve the following approach, that may change in order and scale depending on when the White Paper is published:
  - Form an appropriate officer working group from existing resources to develop a work plan and progress, working closely with the Lead Member
  - Consider how this work could be reported to existing governance arrangements/committees
  - Review White Paper when published
  - Further internal work to consider how existing and/or future strategies, plans and policies can contribute to Levelling Up
  - Commission Levelling Up Goals impact report
  - Continue to form and progress Skills Commission
  - Hold Member Seminar to discuss and agree areas of focus
  - Present a more detailed report to a future Cabinet meeting once the above work has been progressed
  - Develop evidence base and business cases for future Government funding

### **Options Appraisal**

38. To either:
  - a) support the recommendation and continue to develop work that will enable the council and its residents to benefit from this key Government policy and associated investment
  - b) Not support the recommendation, and potentially miss out on future Government investment to support our vision, and key policies and strategies

### **Summary of financial implications**

39. Funding required for this work are expected to come from existing budgets and therefore have no impact on the MTFP.

### **Summary of legal implications**

40. There are no legal implications associated with this report.

### **Summary of human resources implications**

41. There are no additional direct human resource implications because of this work. It is likely that, to help achieve the proposed approach, appropriately skilled Council officers who have this work as part of their usual business will be required to contribute some time and expertise. It will be in the interest of all services to collaborate as this could result in attracting Government funding for their projects.

The level of this requirement will become clearer upon publication of the White Paper.

### **Summary of sustainability impact**

42. This report has no direct carbon reduction impact, however, the aspirations around Levelling Up are to ensure positive sustainable development inspired by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

### **Summary of public health implications**

43. Improving health outcomes and quality of life is a key part of Levelling Up and will continue to be at the heart of the work on this agenda.

### **Summary of equality implications**

44. At this stage there are no equality implications of this report, however equality of opportunity is a clear statement of intent from the future Government policy and our response to it.

### **Summary of risk assessment**

45. This is deemed to be a low risk.

### **Background papers**

None

### **Appendices**

Appendix 1: [Levelling Up: Making the Case for Investment in the Central South](#)

Appendix 2: [Key Facts 2021 - State of BCP Report June 2021](#)

Appendix 3: [Covid Impact Evidence April 2021](#)

Appendix 4: [COVID-19 impact on children and young people May 2021](#)

Appendix 5: [Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole \(BCP\) JSNA Summary May 2021](#)