PREPAREDNESS AND PLACE

FRAMEWORK PROPOSAL FOR A STREAM OF WORK UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS COMMISSION AND THE CITY OF LONDON

Introduction

Covid-19 has accelerated many pre-existing trends that necessitate a re-evaluation of the role and place of major city centres in economic, environmental, societal and structural terms. The pandemic has also highlighted the need for greater preparedness in meeting other systemic challenges which include climate change, cyber vulnerability and potentially another pandemic.

This proposal envisages a collaboration between the National Preparedness Commission, the City of London and other interested parties, to cause to be produced a series of linked reports to demonstrate the centrality of preparedness and resilience in a successful and sustainable city or locality.

Aim

The stream of work proposed will aim to identify:
   a. the key components that make a city/locality a successful and resilient place for people to live, work and do business in and that is prepared against and resilient in the face of threats and hazards of threats;
   b. a methodology for producing a "preparedness index"; and
   c. the steps that should be taken to enhance the preparedness of a city/locality to make it a "prepared' place which is agile, adaptable and sustainable for the future.

Proposed reports

1. A report that reviews existing guidance on preparedness & resilience.
   A review of existing C40 & Resilience City documentation and guidance, and are assumptions within the guidance, still appropriate.

2. *A report that identifies what (i) businesses and (ii) the public expect from their cities/localities in terms of preparedness and resilience.*
   A limited survey of both private-sector organisations and the public to establish a baseline of expectations. The survey could include responses from other similar city-business districts (UK and/or foreign) by way of comparison.

3. *A report that identifies the characteristics of a prepared and resilient city/locality.*
   A literature review and synthesis, supported by interviews with a range of leading experts on cities and localities, on resilience and on sustainability including lessons learned from existing world cities with published Resilience Plans.

4. *A report that proposes ways of measuring and quantifying the characteristics of a prepared and resilient city/locality.*
This report would propose a means of calculating a "preparedness index" and demonstrate what such an index might show.

5. *A report that examines the agility and adaptiveness of a city/locality to flex with major shocks and stresses, irrespective of the nature of the disruption: it would be about making places strong and flexible rather than brittle and fragile.*
A study on how agility and adaptiveness can be improved over the short, medium and long term. Considerations would include the impact of the new hybrid way of working, the innovation brought by new technologies, infrastructure to allow SME's to develop and flourish and the future role of a city/locality in providing the balance between work and leisure. It would also include an examination of sustainability and a look at whether cities/localities need to become more self-reliant or self-sufficient in order to become more sustainable and resilient e.g. food production.

6. *A series of reports that would examine different aspects of preparedness and how they might be enhanced. These might include:*
   a. *Robustness of city/locality infrastructure to various hazards (e.g. floods, power failures etc and the interdependence of the various components.*
   The pandemic and associated lockdowns have given a golden opportunity to review how key services function and can be made more efficient – even with fewer customers in the short term. This would look at future growth capacity could be possible without increasing vulnerability. This would include a look at buildings (standards, retrofitting, construction), digital and communications services, urban islands, micro-power generation, drainage, habitat enhancements, etc. This might be a single report or several linked papers.
   b. *Social resilience and stability.*
   Evidence shows that communities with strong social capital are better able to recover from disasters. Closeness of community, strong social bonds and neighbourliness (including business networks) are all key elements. This study will examine how to build social resilience in the face of disparate degrees of affluence and a transient population (through commuting or casual labour). It will consider partnership structures, information sharing, joint projects and volunteering. It could extend to an examination of the quality of life and the affordability of living in a particular city/locality, as well as the 'spirit of place' i.e. the meaning, attachment and social value of the location and buildings.
   c. *Trust in civic authorities.*
   The lessons of Covid-19 show how the message in communication is as important as the delivery. Good communication forms the bedrock of trust which can so easily and quickly be destroyed. This study will consider the best ways to build and retain trust for the benefit of strong communities.

Next steps

- Agree and refine the aims of the work stream.

- Further develop the scope of the proposed reports.
- Identify appropriate topics for the City of London to contribute to.
- Identify external sponsors to support the various elements of the work stream and identify researchers or institutions to prepare the different reports.