

# first

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the magazine for local government



**Interview:**

“Extremism isn’t an easy issue to talk about, **it makes people uncomfortable**”

Sara Khan, Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism

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**Local Government Association**



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Top speakers and key concerns



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**James Brokenshire**

New communities secretary on his priorities



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**LGA in Parliament**

A year lobbying for local government



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# #LGAconf18



The LGA's annual conference (p10) takes place in Birmingham next week (3-5 July), and, as ever, we have a packed and stimulating programme for you (see [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)).

Keynote speakers include Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary James Brokenshire, who talks about his priorities for the sector in this edition of **first** (p14).

We also have an interview with Sara Khan, the Government's Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism, another of our conference speakers (p20)

Conference will also host the grand finale of our annual Local Government Challenge to find the brightest and best council officers of the future (p16), and our ever-popular Innovation Zone (p12).

Elsewhere in this month's **first**, we hear how councils are delivering on their commitments towards residents from the Armed Forces (p19); from Hull, about how it plans to create a lasting legacy for children and young people following last year's City of Culture (p23); and from Luton as to why it is investing in its airport to boost jobs and economic growth (p27).

We have had another busy year lobbying MPs and Peers on your behalf, and recently published our annual report on our work at our parliamentary reception (p29).

**Lord Porter** is Chairman of the LGA

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**20** Sara Khan, Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism

*“Councils are often the first to see the harm that extremism is having in their communities”*



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# news



## Right to Buy 'unsustainable'

**Councils' ability to replace homes sold under Right to Buy will be all but eliminated within five years without major reform of the scheme, new analysis from the LGA shows.**

The current Right to Buy (RTB) scheme only allows councils to keep a third of each RTB receipt to build a replacement home and prevents local authorities from borrowing to make up the shortfall.

A new analysis by Savills, commissioned by the LGA, found that two-thirds of councils will have no chance of replacing homes sold off under RTB on a one-for-one basis in five years' time unless a significant restructuring of the scheme takes place.

Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Housing Spokesman, said: "We know that Right to Buy changes lives – it helps people who otherwise wouldn't be able to get on the ladder to experience the security and independence of home ownership. It is essential that it continues to do so.

"However, we are now in a situation where – without fundamental reform of the way the scheme is funded – this vital stepping stone into home ownership is under threat. Councils urgently need funding to support the replacement of homes sold off under the scheme, or there's a real chance they could be all but eliminated. Without a

pipeline of new homes, future generations cannot benefit from the scheme.

"Enabling all councils to borrow to build and to keep 100 per cent of their Right to Buy receipts will be critical to delivering a renaissance in house building by councils. However, if we're to truly make RTB sustainable, we must also move towards greater flexibility on discounts locally, so we can reflect local community need.

"Councils are closest to their communities and it's essential this money is reinvested in homes in those areas so our residents can access secure, affordable housing. This money is badly needed to deliver homes for our residents. Instead of resting in an account in Whitehall, it should be sent back to where it belongs."

Meanwhile, the LGA is calling on the Government to scrap its planned changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, warning they could lead to just less than 165,000 homes being built by the end of the decade by bypassing local plans. The changes will impose often "undeliverable" house building targets on local areas. If, by 2020, private house builders fail to build more than 75 per cent of those targets, then developers will be able to ignore sites agreed locally and build in places that communities did not want to include in local plans.

## Rates appeals backlog adds to funding woes

More than one million businesses have challenged their business rates bill since 2010 – and 133,060 appeals have still to be ruled on, according to recently published figures.

Councils do not set business rates or rule on challenges by businesses making appeals. However, they must set aside money until appeals are decided by diverting funding from the services that local taxpayers pay for and expect.

Councils have been forced to divert £2.5 billion away from stretched local services over the past five years to cover the risk of business rates appeals, as they have to fund half the cost of any backdated refunds.

The LGA is calling on the Government to take the financial risk from business rates appeals away from local government. Plans to allow councils to keep more of the business rates they collect – something for which local government has long called – make reform even more imperative to protect councils from the growing and costly risk of appeals. This is because they may become liable to pay back even more of the cost of any backdated refunds.

The LGA also wants a time limit for appeals (it is six months in Scotland), councils to be given maximum flexibility on business rates reliefs, and for online businesses to make a fair contribution.

Cllr John Fuller, Vice-Chairman of the LGA's Resources Board, said: "Ongoing delays in tackling business rate appeals from 2010 are heaping further financial uncertainty and pressure on our local services at a time when every penny counts to give councils the best chance of protecting services over the next few years.

"It is right that a business is able to challenge their valuation if they genuinely believe it to be incorrect.

"But despite not setting business rates or ruling on appeals, councils are having to take billions of pounds away from already stretched local services – such as adult social care, protecting children and supporting businesses and boosting local growth – to cover the financial risk and uncertainty arising from this backlog of appeals. This is completely unfair."



# Care and support Green Paper delay 'frustrating'

**The Government's decision to delay publication of the Green Paper on care and support for older people until the autumn is "hugely frustrating", the LGA has said.**

The Green Paper, which had been promised this summer, has been postponed to coincide with publication of details of how an extra £20 billion in funding for the NHS is to be paid for.

Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "It is hugely frustrating and disappointing that this Green Paper has been delayed.

"These reforms were promised to offer funding solutions to the long-term sustainability of adult social care and, by extension, to the health and social care system, but this delay will have a knock-on effect on the subsequent introduction of legislation.

"This means, with rising demand and people living longer, care providers will continue to close and hand back contracts to councils, putting high-quality and effective care and support services in real jeopardy.

"It is nonsensical to start and conclude work on a plan for the NHS before setting out the options on social care funding, as

the two services are inextricably linked.

"For this delay to make sense, there needs to be proper engagement over the summer with the social care sector to enable fully formed proposals to be set out alongside the NHS plans."

Extra funding for the NHS, announced last month to mark its 70th anniversary, has not come with a similar funding boost for social care and prevention services.

Cllr Seccombe added: "By prioritising funding towards those who have hit a health crisis, taxpayers' money is not being used in the most efficient way. Properly funding social care would help prevent crises in the NHS by reducing the numbers of people who are admitted to hospital in the first place."

The NHS funding announcement followed a report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies showing that social care spending has fallen by 9 per cent per person over the last decade, despite government funding injections and councils' efforts to protect social care budgets. The Association of Directors of Adult Social Services' 2018 budget survey found that nearly 40 per cent of councils' overall budgets are now spent on adult social care.

## Tackling loneliness 'saves millions'

Extra funding would help all councils build on effective prevention work to tackle loneliness, which has saved millions of pounds and cut emergency hospital stays, the LGA has said.

Despite significant budget challenges, councils are successfully tackling loneliness, both in terms of the health and wellbeing of individuals and cost effectiveness.

A scheme by Mendip District Council has cut emergency hospital admissions by 20 per cent and related costs to the public purse by £2 million. Sevenoaks District Council has gifted £40,000 to fund events at village halls and pubs to help people who are feeling lonely socialise, sign up for exercise sessions and access the council's services and referrals for funding for home adaptations to address mobility issues.

Loneliness can be as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, increases the risk of premature death by 26 per cent, and is associated with higher rates of depression, high blood pressure and dementia. The LGA is calling for more funding for councils to continue and expand cost-effective prevention work and alleviate pressures on NHS and social care services.



Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Councils, working with communities and health partners, are spearheading successful initiatives which are reducing loneliness, improving the quality of people's lives, and reducing avoidable hospital admissions and health and social care costs.

"But significant government funding reductions are hampering the ability of councils to continue or expand this key intervention and prevention work."

## news in brief

### Carers' action plan

The Government has launched its Carers Action Plan 2018-2020, setting out how it will improve support for carers in England. It recognises the contribution that they make in society, and sets out how to build carer-friendly communities. Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Without these vital informal carers, the safety net of care and support they provide to thousands of people would collapse. We are keen to work with government on the implementation of its action plan, making sure that carers are fully supported and signposted to services to avoid them and families reaching crisis point and care breakdown."

### Rough sleeping

The Government has announced allocations to councils from a new £30 million rough-sleeping fund. Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Housing Spokesman, said the announcement was a "positive step" towards helping councils dealing with rising levels of rough sleeping – and to prevent it happening in the first place. "That preventative approach is essential towards helping people out of homelessness and into a secure form of housing, which is why we have to tackle the root causes of homelessness by adapting welfare reforms and enabling all councils to address our national housing shortage, through being able to borrow to build new homes," he added.

### Public buildings

Libraries, swimming pools, community centres and parks were among 4,131 public assets sold by local councils to developers and other private buyers last year to cover running costs, according to Freedom of Information requests collated by community organisation network Locality. Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, said: "With local government facing an overall funding gap in excess of £5 billion a year by 2020, councils face difficult decisions about how best to use their resources to support local services, day-to-day activities and to protect public assets. Before a decision is made to sell an asset, the cost of selling it versus the benefit it could bring is considered carefully."

## news in brief

### Food safety fears

Leaving the EU without access to reciprocal intelligence will weaken councils' ability to protect public health and the economy, and increase the risk of a new food scandal, the LGA has warned. It wants the Government and the EU to ensure access to Europe-wide food safety and animal health systems remains available after Brexit. Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's Brexit Taskforce, said: "If we lose access to these databases, we will lose access to vital intelligence about the origin of food, feed and animal products, and won't be aware when rapid alerts are issued to the rest of the continent."

### Buses under threat

Nearly half of all bus routes in England currently receive partial or complete subsidies from councils and are under threat, the LGA has warned. Faced with ongoing and significant funding pressures, councils will struggle to maintain current subsidies for bus routes unless the Government urgently addresses the growing funding gaps facing local services. Cllr Martin Tett, the LGA's Transport Spokesman, said: "Councils know how important buses are for their residents and local economies, and are desperate to protect them. Faced with significant funding pressures, many across the country are being forced into taking difficult decisions to scale back services and review subsidised routes."

### Road restrictions

The LGA has called on the Government to provide tough new powers to tackle lorry drivers that ignore road restrictions, bringing chaos to the nation's villages and roads. Between 2011 and 2016, fines for 'neglect of traffic signs and directions and of pedestrian rights', which includes enforcement of weight and width restrictions, fell by 32 per cent from 146,500 to 100,400, despite the number of HGVs increasing by 356,000 since 2012. Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Transport Spokesman, said: "These powers would be targeted at the minority of lorry drivers who do not follow the law. This is also about protecting the drivers' safety as well as the safety of residents and other road users."



**The LGA has called on the Government to clarify how access to vital infrastructure funding worth billions of pounds will be maintained post-Brexit.**

As a member of the European Union and a shareholder contributing into the European Investment Bank (EIB), the UK currently has access to the EIB's loans and guarantees, which typically help fund small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development and major infrastructure loans such as housing.

Under the UK/EU draft withdrawal agreement, from the beginning of the transition period next year, the UK will no longer be eligible for billions of pounds of EIB money reserved for EU members.

Examples of EIB investment include a €1 billion loan to expand the Affordable Housing Finance Programme that will build more than 20,000 affordable homes in the UK across diverse areas such as Wigan, Scarborough, Bradford and Cambridge, and a €700 million loan to part-fund the Thames

Tideway, which will improve the sewage infrastructure of the Thames and is the largest investment of its kind in the UK.

Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's Brexit Taskforce, said: "Major affordable housing developments and large infrastructure projects, as well as smaller investments and SMEs, have benefited enormously from access to the EIB.

"Councils are raising legitimate concerns that losing this funding source could result in a reduction of housing developments, council tax receipts and overall revenue of councils that is used to fund essential services.

"The LGA is calling on the Government to give immediate assurances that equivalent lending alternatives will be made available to councils and SMEs, as well as allowing councils to self-finance new homes, lifting the housing borrowing cap, and allowing councils to use 100 per cent of the receipts from Right to Buy sales to invest in new homes to help mitigate the potential problems currently faced by access to the EIB being reduced."

### Council concerns about counter-terrorism changes

Councils need to know more about government plans to share additional information with them as part of its counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, the LGA has said. The recently updated strategy proposes sharing police, security and intelligence agency information about individuals vulnerable to radicalisation more widely, including with devolved administrations and local authorities. The aim is to support more local interventions, including to safeguard those at risk of radicalisation.

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "Councils are committed to safeguarding communities by tackling extremism and already look for tell-tale signs of people at risk of radicalisation and work with the police and other agencies to protect people.

"Local authorities are engaging with all areas of society and working with community groups to help protect their towns and cities and reduce the risk of young people being radicalised. This includes delivering wide-

ranging education and training programmes, training frontline staff to spot signs of radicalisation and undertaking outreach work to engage young people and parents.

"Information sharing could be a positive step but what is crucial is that councils are not treated as a replacement for the expertise and resources of the security services and police. Local authorities are not MI5 and it's essential that the police and security services lead on responding to – and acting on – any threats.

"We will continue to engage with government to ensure residents are kept safe and that local authorities can play their role in supporting and protecting communities. While we can all be on the lookout, preventing and protecting us from terrorism is a responsibility that should remain with the police and security services.

"With councils also facing significant and ongoing funding pressures, local authorities' work to tackle radicalisation also needs to be properly funded over the long term."

● See p20

# Child protection cases doubled in 10 years

**More than 180 children are placed on child protection plans every day to keep them safe from harm – the equivalent of six primary school classrooms' worth of pupils.**

This is double the number who were put on plans 10 years ago, according to LGA analysis of official figures. These show that 66,410 child protection plans were started by councils in England during 2016/17, compared with 33,300 plans in 2006/7. This amounts to 182 plans started each day.

The increase shows the massive demand on councils when resources are being reduced, and highlights the growing number of children and families needing support from children's services.

Cllr Roy Perry, Vice-Chairman of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "It is absolutely vital that councils are able to support families and help children who are at risk of significant harm.

"But, as these figures show, the pressures on councils are mounting as a result of a

huge increase in demand, with the number of children being placed on child protection plans the equivalent of six classrooms' worth of pupils every day. This is no longer sustainable, with many areas struggling to cope. Children's services are being pushed to the brink, and face a funding gap of almost £2 billion by 2020 just to maintain current service levels.

"We really need the Government to commit to fully funding these services so that councils can manage the rising demand for help, while also providing the additional resources they need to support families before problems escalate to the point where a child might need to come into care."

Child protection plans are used to support families and keep children safe when it is thought they are at risk of significant harm, and are different from taking a child into care. Plans can be initiated for a range of reasons, including neglect and physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

## School places: call for more powers

The LGA is calling for more powers for councils over academy and free schools' places and admissions policies, as the latest figures show demand increasing for secondary places.

This year, there was the highest number of secondary school applications since 2008 and the lowest number of primary applications in the five years that the figures have been collected. A total of 82.1 per cent of secondary applicants received an offer of their first-preference school compared with 91 per cent at primary level.

The LGA said: "Since 2010, councils have created more than 800,000 extra new places, and more than 85 per cent of these were in schools rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding. "With nearly 70 per cent of secondary schools now academies or free schools, the lack of any council power or influence over the expansion and admissions policies of academies and free schools is a real concern.

"Councils must be given powers to force schools to expand if local agreement cannot be reached voluntarily where this is in the best interests of new and existing pupils. Most academies will be keen to work with their local authorities, but – in the minority of situations where this isn't the case – appropriate powers are vital to ensure all children get a suitable place.

"Councils should also have the lead role in judging and approving applications for new free schools to make sure they're appropriate for communities, and need to be given the powers and funding to open new council-maintained schools where there is a need for additional places."



## news in brief

### SEND funding

The Department for Education has announced £50 million to improve facilities and create school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The LGA, which wants a review of SEND funding, said it was pleased the Government had recognised the need for additional resources but warned that this should not be a one-off cash injection. A spokesperson said: "This needs to be significant, on-going and sustainable funding, otherwise councils may not be able to meet their statutory duties and many children could miss out on a mainstream education."

### Severely obese

Around 22,000 children are severely obese when they leave primary school – nearly double the number starting reception classes. The LGA is warning that severe child obesity rates, which have been published for the first time, are contributing to a multi-billion pound ill-health time bomb. Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "Today's obese children will become tomorrow's obese adults whose years of healthy life will be shortened by a whole host of health problems including diabetes, cancer and heart disease. Cuts to councils' public health grants are having a significant impact on prevention and early intervention services. This short-sighted approach risks causing NHS costs to snowball because of the ill-health consequences of obesity in our younger generation."

### Less cash per child

The Government is spending 10 per cent less public money per child than a decade ago, according to research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies for the Children's Commissioner for England. It also says the cost of the current children's social care system is unsustainable and warns that vital preventative and support services for children are being cut back. An LGA spokesperson said: "We have warned for some time that the current situation facing children's services is unsustainable, with a funding gap of almost £2 billion by 2020 just to maintain current service levels. The Government urgently needs to commit to fully funding these services."

# letters

## Time to review drugs policy

The recent deaths of two young people at the Mutiny Festival in Portsmouth should never have happened. As a parent, I cannot imagine the impact this must have on their families.

Despite our best advice, some young people will choose to take drugs. Councillors and MPs, who shape policy, need to look afresh at the risks and consequences of drug use and how best to protect young people. Regular and increasing numbers of deaths indicate our current approach is not working.

After Mutiny, the media highlighted the work of The Loop, a not-for-profit community interest company, that attends festivals and city centres, offering drug-safety testing. This service allows people to hand over drug samples, which are analysed to ascertain their identity, strength and purity. The results are delivered back, alongside advice on the risks of drug use, and information on how to reduce those risks.

The Loop reports that more than half of those using its services choose to hand over the rest of their drugs for disposal or to reduce their intake. However, to operate, it requires the consent of festival organisers, police and the licensing authority, which are often reluctant to support its work. Had this service been offered at Mutiny, two young lives may well have been saved. Drug dealers will not stop selling, and councils and police forces are picking up the costs of a failed drugs policy. We must demand drug-safety testing in our city centres and music events, before any more entirely preventable deaths take place.

**Cllr John Fisher (Con)**, Broadland District and Norfolk County Councils

## Home schooling

With reference to the article on home schooling in **first** 623, I am gravely concerned that the draft elective home education guidance for local authorities and parents makes it the local authority's duty to determine suitable education, rather than the parents'.

I believe that the parent is better placed to identify the child's education needs and that the draft guidance is shifting responsibility onto local authorities without recognising the huge resource implications for their overstretched budgets.

The debate should start with the needs of the child. Perhaps we need to ask why increasing numbers of children are either rejecting, or being rejected by, the school-based educational system?

As someone who has family who educated their children at home, I recognise the many positive reasons why parents can feel that they will do a better job than schools, especially if the children are finding schools a negative experience. However, I also recognise that home schooling will be easier and better if parents get the positive support that some local authorities provide. What is going to make everyone's job harder is if the guidance becomes heavy-handed and puts parents and local authorities at loggerheads. The LGA recognises that the majority of home educators are currently doing a good job and there is plenty of council best practice that shows how to positively engage with these parents. Let's use this best practice to create guidance that will leave children even better supported in the future.

**Baroness Jones** of Moulsecoomb (Green), LGA Vice-President

## Plastic waste

Devon County Council has pledged to phase out its use of the most polluting single-use plastic products within two years, as part of a new

## sound bites

**Cllr Liam Walker** (Con, Oxfordshire)

"A useful Councillor street surgery this morning in #Freeland discussing potholes, buses and broadband with local residents. Thank you District Cllr @AlaaAlYousof for joining me."

[www.twitter.com/\\_Liam\\_Walker\\_](http://www.twitter.com/_Liam_Walker_)

**Cllr Gary Ridley** (Con, Coventry)

"Good luck to #England ahead of the #WorldCupRussia2018 – When it comes to the football I'm definitely hoping for a #softbexit with full access to the semi finals at least!"

[www.twitter.com/CllrGaryRidley](http://www.twitter.com/CllrGaryRidley)

**Cllr Leigh Redman** (Lab, Somerset)

"Attending my @LGAcomms leadership academy presentation along with many other colleagues Amazing coordinator @Gracie3110"

[www.twitter.com/Bridgwater\\_Lab](http://www.twitter.com/Bridgwater_Lab)

**Cllr Tom Hayes** (Lab, Oxford)

"UK Government and dignitaries in Russia for the World Cup could signal solidarity by spending time with LGBT groups in the country to learn of their difficulties first-hand, object to the anti-gay laws and call for their removal, meet activists, wear rainbow pins, and much more."

[www.twitter.com/CllrTomHayes](http://www.twitter.com/CllrTomHayes)

**Cllr Jason Zadrozny** (Ind, Ashfield)

"Off to the first @AshfieldInds administration cabinet meeting since taking over @ADCAshfield. As well as many other great initiatives we are putting through today will be new Public Space Protection Orders and £84,000 for new public area improvements."

[www.twitter.com/JZadrozny](http://www.twitter.com/JZadrozny)

action plan. The 'Plastics Strategy' also summarises how the council will use its position and responsibility to raise awareness of the issues around single-use plastics and encourage and support collective action across the county.

The problem of marine waste washing up on beaches is growing worldwide. The UK has seen a 140 per cent rise since 1994, with about 5,000 items of plastic pollution now found per mile of beach. Our county boasts more than 500 miles of beautiful coastline and we must do all we can to help protect it.

As an employer, we are committed to carefully managing our impact on the environment, and are constantly working to improve our environmental performance. We have been working hard to reduce the use of plastic in our workplaces, for example removing plastic cups and replacing bottled water with plumbed-in filtration systems, and around 80 per cent of waste from our offices is recycled.

This new strategy will focus attention on the consumption and disposal of single-use food and drink packaging and tableware. This type of waste is most prominent in marine litter and discouraging its use will greatly reduce the amount of plastics in the environment.

**Cllr Roger Croad (Con)**, Cabinet Member for Environmental Services, Devon County Council




**What do you think?** Please submit letters for publication by emailing [karen.thornton@local.gov.uk](mailto:karen.thornton@local.gov.uk). Letters may be edited and published online



The logo for ENGIE, featuring the word "ENGIE" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font. The letters are set against a white, semi-circular shape that resembles a stylized sun or a lens flare, with a gradient from white to light blue. The background of the entire page is a bright blue gradient.

# ENGIE

A large, colorful circular graphic composed of various icons representing different sectors and environmental elements. The icons include wind turbines, houses, buildings, trees, and abstract shapes. The colors are vibrant and varied, including shades of blue, green, yellow, orange, red, purple, and brown. The central text "We bring great things together" is written in a blue, sans-serif font within a white circle in the center of the graphic.

We bring  
great things  
together

**ENGIE is focused on improving  
the environment we live in**

To do that we work alongside local authorities and housing associations, combining our energy, services and regeneration capabilities, to responsibly create more sustainable, efficient and vibrant communities through partnership & collaboration

[places.engie.co.uk](https://places.engie.co.uk)

# features

## Moving the conversation on

With councils now lacking the resources to support local people and help local economies grow, the LGA will launch a campaign for long-term and sustained investment in local government at its annual conference next week

Every day, councils change lives for the better.

From morning until night, councils help grow places where people can thrive. They keep us safe and provide parks, libraries and open spaces for everyone to enjoy; they make sure families have access to good childcare and schools; and they build affordable homes for us to live in. Councils help people live as independent and fulfilled lives as possible. They keep our streets clean, build roads and fix potholes, and make sure the food we eat is safe.

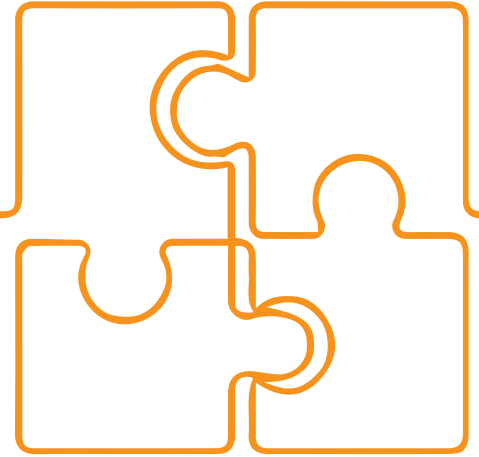
Councils provide the right training to help people get jobs, give them the tools to set up new businesses, support existing businesses to grow, and ensure the local workforce has the correct skills for its economy. They are at the heart of communities that residents are proud to call home.

When people are struggling, councils are there to get them back on their feet – helping residents stay in their own homes and supporting families when they need it. They help keep young people away from crime, prevent homelessness so that people are not sleeping on our streets, and support people into work.

Councils are our safety net, often when all else has failed. But all of this is now at risk. The LGA has long warned that vital and valued

services were reaching the brink of collapse, and would not be able to hang on for much longer. But now, this is today's reality.

More and more councils are struggling to balance their books. Some are driven to make cuts that they know will increase demand on their own and other public



sector services by inconsistent and perverse funding challenges. Others, meanwhile, are considering whether they have the funding to even deliver their statutory requirements.

Despite councils prioritising the most vital services, some are beginning to crumble. We have reached a point where councils will no longer be able to support our residents as they expect – including our most vulnerable – let alone help the country to prosper.

Councils have done all they can. In the past eight years, they have lost 60p out of every £1 of government funding for local services – a reduction of nearly £16 billion by 2020. They have shouldered more than their fair share of austerity and have tried to reduce any impact on residents.

So next week, at its annual conference in Birmingham, the LGA will be launching its 'Moving the conversation on' campaign, with the publication of a series of papers aimed at helping build the case for long-term, sustained investment in local government, ahead of next year's Spending Review.

The papers – covering housing, planning and homelessness, funding, improving schools, Brexit, the future of non-metropolitan England, and adult social care – will also set out the positive outcomes for the country of investing in local government.

By this time next year, Britain will have left the European Union. After Brexit, the country will be different. Brexit could provide the opportunity to fundamentally change the way decisions are made, paving the way for a new partnership between local and national government, and ensuring the powers we take back from Brussels aren't transferred to Whitehall, but devolved to local areas instead, putting the people of our country first.



The success of Brexit will, ultimately, be judged by local people in their communities. People expect things to be different. They expect to see a difference in their local area – in their own community – not at a national level.

The Government knows the challenges the country is facing. It is rightly consulting on social housing, adult social care and children's mental health. Each of these consultations, the opportunities provided by Brexit, and next year's Spending Review present a once-in-a-generation opportunity for the Government to urgently address the issues facing every one of us.

In the 2018 Spring Statement, the Chancellor committed to increasing public spending if public finances continue to improve. In the Spending Review, if it is to deliver its own priorities, the Government must focus on funding for local services and work in partnership with councils. The risks of not doing so are too great.

By properly funding local services and giving councils the powers to work on behalf of their communities, local government can be the driving force for a new chapter in our country's history.

Councils can be the solution to the challenges our country is facing.

**i** This is an overview of the LGA's new 'Moving the conversation on' campaign, which will make the case for sustained and long-term funding for local government ahead of next year's Spending Review. The document and a series of papers – on local government funding, Brexit, the future of housing, the future of education, the future of non-metropolitan England, and adult social care – will be launched at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham from 3-5 July. They will also be available online from 3 July at [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on). To book your place at conference, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)



## See you in Birmingham...

The LGA's annual conference kicks off in Birmingham on 3 July, with a host of speakers from across local and national government, other public services, business and the third sector addressing more than 1,300 delegates.

It's not too late to book your place, at [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference). You can also download the conference app via the App Store or Google Play (search for 'LGA events'). And you can follow events on Twitter using #LGAconf18, or by visiting [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk).

In addition to councillors, elected mayors and chief executives from across local government, this year's conference and fringe speakers also include:

- James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Secretary
- Angela Rayner MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Education
- Sir Vince Cable MP, Leader, Liberal Democrats
- Sophie Walker, Leader, Women's Equality Party
- Caroline Dinenage MP, Minister for Care
- Rishi Sunak MP, Minister for Local Government
- Nigel Adams MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, MHCLG
- Suella Braverman MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Exiting the EU
- Andy Burnham, Mayor, Greater Manchester Combined Authority
- Andy Street CBE, Mayor, West Midlands Combined Authority
- James Palmer, Mayor, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority
- Hilary Benn MP, Chair, Exiting the European Union Select Committee
- Stefaan de Rynck, Senior Advisor to Michel Barnier, Chief EU Negotiator for Brexit
- Sir Amyas Morse, Comptroller and Auditor General, National Audit Office
- Dame Louise Casey DBE CB
- Hope Virgo, Author and Mental Health Advocate
- Dr Fiona Twycross AM, Deputy Mayor, Fire and Resilience, Greater London Authority
- Sir David Behan CBE, Chief Executive, Care Quality Commission
- Dany Cotton, Commissioner, London Fire Brigade
- Tim Shipman, Political Editor, Sunday Times
- Anita Anand, Broadcaster
- Denis Wormwell, Chair, VisitEngland
- Melanie Leech CBE, Chief Executive, British Property Federation
- Nick Walkey, Chief Executive, Homes England
- Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive, Public Health England
- Niall Dickson CBE, Chief Executive, NHS Confederation
- Polly Neate, Chief Executive, Shelter

## Your local place

Council innovation and good practice will be showcased in the interactive Innovation Zone at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham

**M**ore than 60 contributors will be highlighting innovations that are not only benefiting individual residents, but also shaping and enhancing their local communities, at the LGA's sixth annual Innovation Zone.

The zone, again sponsored by Newton, allows councils and their partners to showcase and discuss a range of innovations through small group sessions. Practical and lively, these sessions encourage supportive, honest discussion, exploring how councils can be more innovative and inspire new ideas.

'Your local place' is this year's theme and, among other things, sessions will be looking at how councils and others are tackling homelessness, loneliness and social care – very personal issues that also have an impact on wider local society.

Among the speakers, Sarah Baker from Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and colleagues will demonstrate how Pepper the Robot is engaging with local people, including those with Asperger's and autism.

Jenny Rollinson, from Knowsley Council, will share details of its behavioural insights project to increase the take-up of assistive technology by residents.

And Cllr Colin Noble, Chairman of the Improvement and Efficiency Panel, East of England LGA, will discuss how partners in the East of England are testing a radical Dutch model, Buurtzorg, which increases trust in frontline professionals to lead change and develop new approaches to health and social care.

Marvin Rees, Mayor of Bristol, will outline how the council is developing new, more inclusive city governance, uniting public purpose. He will illustrate how co-creation of inclusive public services can be achieved and leadership lessons for other councils.

Cllr Phil North, Leader of Test Valley



Borough Council, will discuss how its councillors and others are changing what it is like to be an elected member based on their innovative 'Community Councillor' model.

An initiative teaching young people about the dangers of open water and the importance of staying safe will be showcased by Ruth Hyde OBE, the Chief Executive of Broxtowe Borough Council, and Nicola Jenkins, founder of the Open Water Education Network.

Stuart Errington, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service's Chief Fire Officer, will explore the potential of introducing firefighter apprentices as an alternative recruitment path. This is a first for UK fire and rescue services and aims to

provide excellent employment opportunities to local young people.


And Cllr Matthew Brown, from Preston City Council, will be one of several colleagues talking about their work on the Flying High Challenge with Nesta, the global innovation foundation. The programme is the first of its kind to bring together local authorities to explore the future of drones based on public needs and ambitions.

These are just some of the highlights of this year's Innovation Zone programme – there is something for everyone, and you can find out more using the links below. We look forward to seeing you in the zone!

● We are reviewing the look and feel of the LGA's first magazine, and are taking some initial design ideas to Birmingham. If you are attending annual conference, please drop into the LGA Hub to have a look and let us know what you think of them. Karen Thornton, Editor of first, will be at the Hub from 4.05pm to 4.45pm on Tuesday 3 July, 1pm to 2pm on Wednesday 4 July, and 10am to 10.30am on Thursday 5 July.



Please visit [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference) and click on 'Innovation Zone' to view the full programme. The Innovation Zone will be in Hall 3 of Birmingham's International Convention Centre. The LGA also has approximately 900 case studies of council good practice and innovation, available at [www.local.gov.uk/case-studies](http://www.local.gov.uk/case-studies). You can submit your own council's innovations for inclusion by emailing [webmaster@local.gov.uk](mailto:webmaster@local.gov.uk)



“A garden requires patient labour and attention. Plants do not grow merely to satisfy ambitions or to fulfill good intentions. They thrive because someone expended effort on them.”

— *Liberty Hyde Bailey, Horticulturalist and Botanist*

**CCLA**

INVESTMENT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES  
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# Getting the funding review right



James Brokenshire MP is Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government



## Local government finance is top of the new Secretary of State's to-do list, along with housing, growth and integration

I was delighted when the Prime Minister asked me to be Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government just over two months ago.

Local government is in my blood. It's personal for me. My father was a council chief executive so I grew up hearing all about the challenges faced by the sector, and the fantastic work undertaken by local politicians and officials alike.

Now, years on, despite the time that has passed, local government is still the frontline of public services, continuing to lead communities and respond to challenges.

In just a year, authorities across the country have displayed extraordinary resilience and compassion in dealing with disasters like the London attacks, the Manchester bombing and Salisbury poisoning.

And the sector continually works hard to

deliver high-quality services up and down the country. It is to local authorities' great credit that public satisfaction with services has been maintained in tough circumstances.

Local government is the beating heart of my department's work, inextricably linked to our housing ambitions and our desire to build stronger, more integrated communities.

So what are my priorities as the new Secretary of State?

Finance is top of my agenda. It is essential we get our review of funding right, and I am encouraged by the richness of the 312 responses to our most recent consultation.

There is a strong consensus around our principles – such as simplicity, transparency and sustainability – and the way that we have approached the work so far. In short, the sector has given us the green light for

what we are trying to do and it is the right time to progress to the next stage.

Local government has raised important issues – such as concerns around additional burdens like homelessness and the current complexity of the formulas. I am listening and my team will be looking closely at these in the coming months.

Crucially, this next phase will allow us to propose an overall structure for our assessment of local authorities' resourcing needs. As we take this forward, have no doubt that you will be at the heart of this piece of work.

I am also acutely aware of the pressure the sector is under from social care responsibilities. I am pleased a funding boost was provided in February's settlement, including for adult social care. But there is no silver bullet. There is much more to do, but you can be assured I am working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care on more fundamental reform, as part of its upcoming Green Paper.

Structurally, I also think there is scope for more unitary authorities, where there is appropriate local support.

The ministry is working hard with local leaders to power growth and higher productivity across regions through the Northern Powerhouse and Midlands Engine strategies, and local industrial strategies. These efforts, to invest in skills and infrastructure, will stand communities in good stead as we prepare for Brexit – something I know is on all our minds.

As I have mentioned, I have an ambitious housing agenda; to ensure young people, families and many others struggling for a home have a place to call their own. Thanks to councils' efforts, we have made significant



*“It is to local authorities' great credit that public satisfaction with services has been maintained in tough circumstances”*



*“I have an ambitious housing agenda; to ensure young people, families and many others struggling for a home have a place to call their own”*

Account cap by £1 billion to help councils build more homes.

But, as the sector knows, this is not just about building more homes; it is about building strong, integrated communities. And that is something councils are very familiar with.

To this end, I will shortly be taking forward our new ambitious integration strategy. From my previous roles, I know how important this work – to spread opportunity and break down barriers – is to bringing divided communities together and creating a stronger, more united Britain.

Integration challenges vary from place to place. We are currently working with five councils who have demonstrated a keen grasp of the challenges they face, and shown a desire to try new things and learn from what works. Learning from these areas, in tackling the root causes of poor

integration, will be shared more widely as the programme develops.

I know I will have to make tough decisions in this role, but I am determined to fight your corner in government. Because, whether it's providing vital local services, boosting local growth or building a new generation of affordable homes, I know you do what you do because you are passionate about making a difference in your areas.

progress, with planning permissions up and 217,000 homes delivered in 2016/17 – the highest level in all but one of the last 30 years.

Again, there is more to do. And local government is central to these efforts. This is why I am lifting the Housing Revenue

**i** **James Brokenshire**, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, is speaking at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham on 3 July. For more information and to book your place, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)

## Rentplus

### Delivering Home Ownership Through Rent to Buy

Rentplus is the leading provider of Affordable rent to buy homes, offering homeownership opportunities to those struggling to save for a deposit. RP's and Councils, manage the homes. Tenants pay affordable rent and save to buy their homes with an extra 10% gifted cash deposit from Rentplus.

Rentplus homes are available at an affordable rent (up to 80% market rent including service charge or LHA at initial let) for periods of 5, 10, 15, or 20 years, to suit the needs of individuals households.

We are already positively assisting local authorities to meet local housing need and demand in their areas by housing people through choice based

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We offer bespoke strategic partnerships for local authorities to achieve accelerated delivery of affordable housing without the need for Grant.

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# Local Government Challenge 2018

**T**he LGA-run Local Government Challenge, uniquely, brings together ambitious officers seeking to develop their leadership skills and raise their profiles with local councils that have tough problems to solve.

Over the first six months of this year, 10 contestants criss-crossed the country to compete in a series of real-life challenges, spanning frontline, financial, creative and leadership services and issues. At stake is the prize of a £10,000 Bruce-Lockhart scholarship to spend on their own project in their local authority.

These rising stars of local government again proved themselves to be highly competent, driven and professional, both in their day jobs and the challenges they faced during the competition.

The ninth LG Challenge kicked off on a glacial Wednesday morning in early February with a task hosted by the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. The contestants were split into two teams and given just 24 hours to develop an action plan to help disabled residents find and keep employment, and benefit from the new opportunities offered by the growth of the borough.

The following day, each team faced a 15-minute grilling on the financials of their business plans, their understanding of the issues behind the challenge, and their adherence to the council's core 'No one left behind' philosophy. Team Ambition's innovative '5% Pledge' – proposing a mix of incentives and marketing designed to persuade local businesses to fill at least 5 per cent of their workforce with disabled people – impressed the judges the most, and the first victory was theirs.

For challenge two, our contestants headed to Staffordshire County Council, where they learned about the council's innovative approach to motivating older residents to support their own health and wellbeing and remain independent. Their task was to come up with proposals to encourage the use of digital technology as a tool in helping residents maintain their wellbeing.

After two days of hard work, both teams impressed the judges with their

## Delegates at the LGA's annual conference will help decide the winner of the ninth contest to find the best council managers of the future

presentations. Team Ambition's radical proposal gambled on the judges' appetite for true innovation. Bet on Your Goals – an arms-length partnership with a local bookmaker, encouraging residents to bet on their health goals in return for incentives from local companies and sports organisations – gained them the prize, and a commendation for bravery.

With Team Ambition leading 2-0, the contestants headed to Wiltshire Council for challenge three. Their mission: to decide which further services Wiltshire Council should devolve to their area boards – and to convince the judges about why.

After two days of research and interviews, the teams handed in their costed business cases and presented their ideas to the judges.

Up first were Team Vision with their inventively titled 'Devolved Neighbourhood Action (DNA)' – a community-based model of support for people with mental health issues or who are feeling the effects of loneliness or isolation.

In contrast, Team Ambition's proposal

– 'Community Assemblies: what matters to everyone?' – put greater emphasis on changing structures and governance, increasing the pool of engaged local people, replacing area boards with more inclusive local assemblies and connecting more widely with the network of existing groups. This time it was a win for Team Vision.

For the penultimate challenge the contestants headed north, to Huddersfield and Kirklees Council – a unique borough that, while not lacking in pride or character in its individual towns and rural areas, has struggled with its overall identity since its creation 44 years ago. This was the nub of the challenge: to develop a vibrant cultural offer that helps establish a clear identity for Kirklees as a whole.

Team Ambition's innovative approach took the history of Kirklees as its starting point. Despite notable demographic variances, the team identified aspects of the area that united all residents.

In contrast, Team Vision proposed an 'I Am Kirklees' brand, and a partnership with local businesses and event organisers







The 10 Local Government Challenge contestants, who took part in five demanding, real-life tasks up and down the country

offering a range of opportunities and incentives to local people through an 'Am Kirklees' card. The judges were keen to highlight how impressed they were by both teams, but – in the end – the creativity of Team Ambition won them their third victory.

The final challenge took place in Carlisle, hosted by Cumbria County Council. The sheer size and rural, remote nature of much of the county – along with its lack of broadband connection in parts – means the digital agenda is still developing. Our contestants had to consider how to balance the council's face-to-face offer with a Digital First approach.

Demonstrating their customary flair for a snappy title, Team Ambition's 'Digital Leg Up' programme would empower frontline staff to support, encourage and develop the skills of their customers to access services digitally. Meanwhile, Team Vision, whose Equity cards must surely be in the post, entertained the judges with a series of sketches to demonstrate how their 'Thriving Cumbria' would give local communities the confidence to easily access a new joined-up digital offer. The judges considered Team Ambition's proposal more practical to deliver, but awarded an extra bonus point to Team Vision for their entertaining presentation.

*“Team Vision entertained the judges with sketches to demonstrate how they would give communities the confidence to access a new digital offering”*

After the five challenges, and a quick final tie-break, the 10 contestants were whittled down to four finalists – Amanda Askham, from Cambridgeshire County Council; Ellen Care, from the London Borough of Bexley; Kartar Singh, from Wiltshire Council; and Hannah Lucey, from Kent County Council.

The quartet will be at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham (3-5 July) to sell their proposals for the £10,000 Bruce-Lockhart scholarship to conference delegates, as well as a panel of judges from the LGA, Kent and Essex County Councils, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Municipal Journal.

Conference delegates can meet the

finalists and hear about their proposals at stands E1, E2, E3 and E4, or in the LGA Hub on Tuesday 3 July at 6pm for our 'Meet the finalists' session. The winner will be announced at the LG Challenge reception on 4 July, from 6pm, at the LGA Hub.

The LGA would like to thank all the contestants – our four finalists, plus Usman Mirza (Tower Hamlets), Nikki Middleton (Luton), Daniel Gooch (Swale), Natalie Morrissey (Staffordshire), Peter Sebastian (MHCLG) and Richard James (Shropshire) – for their hard work, enthusiasm and commitment over the past six months. We would also particularly like to thank the members and officers at the host councils, who contributed the time to making their five outstanding challenges a success.



**For more information about the Local Government Challenge**, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/lg-challenge](http://www.local.gov.uk/lg-challenge). To book your place at the LGA's annual conference, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)

# Water under the bridge?



**Councillor Robert Light** is Deputy Chairman of the LGA's City Regions Board and Chair of the Consumer Council for Water's Northern Region

## Support is available to help councillors aid residents struggling to pay their water bills

In my time as a councillor, national policy on water has not been one of the big political debates in the council chamber or in Whitehall. This is changing.

Water is now political. While I am not going to comment on the national debate, we know that our residents will continue to bring their concerns about water bills or burst mains to our surgeries even if we are not directly responsible for the service. So I wanted to bring to councillors' attention the support they can call on when residents need help.

I sit on the Board of the Consumer Council for Water (CCWater), the water watchdog, representing all water users in England and Wales. Some councillors may have heard of it, but few will know that we can call on its support to help our residents.

Many councillors know people who are struggling to pay their water bills or are in debt, and they should get in touch with their water company and ask for help as soon as possible. Following CCWater's work with the industry, every water firm in England and Wales now has a social tariff that can help reduce the bills of eligible low-income households.

More than 330,000 water customers are currently receiving help through these lower tariffs. Social tariffs are just one of a range of financial assistance schemes companies now offer, but awareness of this support remains very low.

There is more information on the website (see [www.ccwater.org.uk](http://www.ccwater.org.uk)), where you'll also find the watchdog's water meter calculator. In the last year, this online tool has helped tens of thousands of households identify potential annual savings on their water bills totalling more than £14.5 million.

Switching to a meter will not benefit everyone but some people find they can shave more than £100 a year off their bills. Water companies will install a meter free of charge and, in many cases, households have up to two years to trial one and switch back to unmeasured charges if they do not save.



*“It would be great if councillors could make local businesses aware of their right to switch water retailer when the opportunity arises”*

Sometimes water companies simply get it wrong and people need to complain. CCWater offers independent and free advice and can investigate complaints if customers have tried and failed to resolve issues with their water company. Since 2005, it has secured more than £27 million in financial redress for consumers across England and Wales.

Since 1 April 2017, most businesses, public sector organisations and charities in England have had the freedom to switch water retailer. It has opened up the opportunity for organisations to secure

lower bills and better service. But a year on, research shows only around two out of five small and medium-sized businesses are aware of their right to switch.

It would be great if councillors could make local businesses aware of their rights when the opportunity arises, and CCWater can provide useful briefing materials.

Water companies are also currently preparing their business plans for the next five years as part of the 2019 Price Review. These will include their investment proposals, and it's a great opportunity for stakeholders, including local authorities, to influence water firms' future priorities.

### **i** Councillors and officers are meeting at the LGA's annual conference

to discuss how we can help our residents more effectively through working together on water policy. If you are in Birmingham and would like to get involved, please join us in executive room 9 of the ICC at 6pm on Wednesday 4 July



# Supporting those who have given the most

Armed Forces Day is an opportunity to raise awareness of how councils are supporting our military personnel

**A**s you receive this edition of **first**, people across the country will be coming together to show their support for former and serving military personnel and their families by marking Armed Forces Day on 30 June.

Every council has signed the Armed Forces Covenant – the nation’s promise that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly and have equality of access to services, and that we look after those who have given the most.

Up and down the country, councils are helping serving and ex-service personnel and their families to have the same equality of access to public services as their civilian neighbours in areas such as housing, health, employment, education, welfare and transport.

The events and activities organised to mark Armed Forces Day are an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about how councils are delivering on the Armed Forces Covenant at a local level.

In Northamptonshire – as well as festivities and a parade – councils, health trusts, clinical commissioning groups, emergency services, the voluntary sector and the Ministry of Defence are re-signing the covenant pledge to show their continued support for the Armed Forces community.

City of York Council has developed and shared an integrated referral model that helps adult social care providers identify



**Councillor Izzi Seccombe OBE** is Chairman of the LGA’s Community Wellbeing Board

members of the Armed Forces community and provides relevant data, thus promoting cost efficiencies and enabling faster and more effective joined-up support (see [www.local.gov.uk/armed-forces-covenant-implementation-city-york](http://www.local.gov.uk/armed-forces-covenant-implementation-city-york)).

Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull councils have developed an Armed Forces Covenant e-learning programme (see [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/armedforcescovenantlearning](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/armedforcescovenantlearning)), to help frontline staff respond more effectively to the needs of military personnel. The resource is available to all councils, and modules include housing and homelessness.

As an employer, Surrey County Council has received the Ministry of Defence Gold Employer Recognition Scheme Award for its commitment to the Armed Forces in not

only recruiting ex-military personnel and reservists but also for the support it offers for its current employees.

The South West local authority partnership (Wiltshire, Bristol, Cornwall, Devon, Gloucestershire, Plymouth, Somerset and North Somerset) is planning how joint working can improve awareness and delivery of the covenant. It is also developing a mobile outreach vehicle to deliver services across the region to areas identified by a needs assessment.

Established to be the first point of contact for support, the Veterans’ Gateway (see [www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk)) is a service that can connect veterans, their families and carers to the right organisations, including local councils, to help with a range of issues including housing, finance, mental health and employment.

The majority of councils have appointed an Armed Forces Champion to drive forward the delivery of local covenant pledges and bring together partners to agree how best to support the local Armed Forces community.

Last year, the LGA worked with the Forces in Mind Trust to publish the second edition of the ‘Our community – our covenant’ report (see [www.fim-trust.org](http://www.fim-trust.org)). The report includes a practical self-assessment tool to help councils understand their progress with implementing local covenant pledges and a ‘core infrastructure’ framework to assist councils that are keen to strengthen their support for the Armed Forces community.

It’s vital we all recognise the valuable contribution of our Armed Forces community to our everyday lives and do everything we can to ensure they are supported to access the right local services.

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*“Councils are helping serving and ex-service personnel and their families to have the same equality of access to public services as their civilian neighbours”*

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# interview

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## Challenging the extremists

Extremism threatens our values as a country – and councils have an important role to play in tackling it, according to **Sara Khan, Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism**



**A** little over a year ago, England was rocked by a succession of terror attacks – first in Westminster, then Manchester, London Bridge, and Finsbury Park. The attacks claimed dozens of lives, with many more injured.

The tragic loss of life demanded a serious re-evaluation of the extent of extremism in our communities and prompted Prime Minister Theresa May to create the Commission for Countering Extremism. Its remit is to better understand and combat the ideology that has such a profound impact on communities, causing division, undermining human rights and fostering hatred.

Heading the commission is Sara Khan, a British Muslim human rights activist and former Chief Executive Officer of Inspire, an independent counter-extremism and women's rights organisation. She has made local government a key organisation to seek input from since her appointment at the start of the year.

Ms Khan has set out three clear objectives for the commission's first year: engagement with communities and relevant organisations; production of a comprehensive study into extremism; and building a robust commission that produces recommendations for the Home Secretary.

Discussing the importance of engagement, Ms Khan stressed that she had already met more than 200 activists, experts, academics and councils, including

an early meeting with Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board.

She said: "Councils play a fundamental role, being on the frontline, not only challenging extremism but they are often the first to see the harm that extremism is having in their community. I am a firm believer that councils have an incredibly important role to play, which is why I am so keen to engage with them."

Her engagement work with local government has already taken her to meetings with Luton Council, to discuss its injunction against Britain First, and Manchester, which is launching its own extremism commission, as well as to Birmingham, Portsmouth, east London, Bradford and Leeds.

Ms Khan said she was keen to "collect evidence" from councils who she said were "often the first to have to respond" to extremism in their communities, towns and cities.

"Local responses are often the most effective and I have never believed that there is a one-size-fits-all approach... I am really keen to learn about how councils deal with their local problem of extremism."

She added: "Extremism isn't an easy issue to talk about, it makes people uncomfortable, but that is a conversation that we have to have, and if we don't, we won't be able to identify best solutions."

Ms Khan was appointed in January by the

then Home Secretary Amber Rudd, with the commission formally launched in March.

Her appointment was initially met with criticism from some quarters, with 100 Muslim groups petitioning for her to be removed from the role as lead commissioner. Ms Khan, however, is clear that she will work with anyone who is committed to tackling extremism.

"I've spent a long lifetime challenging extremism and championing human rights. I am very proud of all the work that I delivered in the past, whether it is promoting gender equality, standing up for gay rights or speaking out against anti-Semitism.

"I have made it clear from day one of my appointment that I will engage widely and that is exactly what I have been doing. I am keen to engage with anyone who, like me, recognises the threat extremism poses and wants to do something about it."

Ms Khan has a clear vision of what she hopes to achieve in the role. She said: "The mission, quite simply, is really to help everybody do more to tackle extremism. I also feel quite strongly that it is to help build our understanding of extremism, the threat it poses and the best responses that we should be having to counter it.

"My key concern is that it appears that extremism is certainly on the rise in this country. The Government has made quite clear the threat from the Islamist extremists and extreme right wing...but, in my view, there is also a wider harm that this form of extremism is having in our country.

"I am very much of the view that the threat of extremism presents itself in two ways; first in 'acute' form, where we see radicalisation leading on to terrorism. But we are also seeing a sort of 'chronic' threat of extremism...resulting in division within communities, polarisation, the breeding of hatred towards minority groups and others, and the undermining of democratic values and our fundamental human rights."

Ms Khan was also keen to stress the importance of the comprehensive study into extremism, an area that she believes has previously been lacking from the debate.

"The comprehensive study looking at the scale of extremism... is going to be a really key focus of our work. It is going to be groundbreaking, and part of that study is going to be very much looking at gathering existing evidence and identifying where the gaps are in our knowledge."

When discussing the issue of counter-terrorism and Prevent, which is not part of the commission's remit, Ms Khan believes it will still play an important role. "I think one thing that the commission will do is provide a kind of bird's-eye view looking at this issue," she said.

De-radicalisation programmes are also not part of the commission's remit, but when



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asked about a study by the Behavioural Insight Team, commissioned by the Home Office, which found that more than 95 per cent of de-radicalisation programmes are ineffective and some are counterproductive, Ms Khan said she was "very keen to understand what are the most effective counter-extremism projects that are around today".

Ms Khan stressed why the work of the commission is so important, and something councils and the LGA should be involved with at every stage.

"Britain is such a great country, we have such a diverse, plural country that is multicultural, multifaith. Having worked in this space for a long time, what I have seen is how extremism threatens our values as a country, it threatens everything that makes us great. That is why it is so important that we do challenge extremism."



For more information about the **Commission for Countering Extremism**, please visit [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/commission-for-countering-extremism](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/commission-for-countering-extremism). **Sara Khan is speaking at a workshop at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham, on 3 July. For more information or to book your conference place**, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)

*"Councils are often the first to see the harm that extremism is having in their community"*





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# comment

## A legacy for future generations



**Councillor Stephen Brady**  
OBE (Lab) is Leader of  
Hull City Council

**The economic, social and artistic success of UK City of Culture 2017 has raised Hull's ambition and now the city is embarking on an even greater challenge.**

From the outset, UK City of Culture was just one part of a bigger scheme – our City Plan, launched in 2013 with a 10-year goal of kick-starting the city's economy and creating 7,500 jobs.

In just five years, we've experienced a remarkable turnaround in Hull's fortunes with £3 billion of investment flowing into the city, more than 6,500 jobs created, and a huge increase in pride and confidence.

Recently refreshed, our City Plan now has a 30-year horizon, reinforcing our commitment to long-term, inclusive growth, and ensuring that

the benefits of economic success can be shared by everyone in the city. As part of this, we are firmly focused on transforming the life chances and opportunities of current and future generations of young people in our city.

The University of Hull's evaluation of Hull 2017 showed the impact that culture can have on the lives of people of all ages. The sense of pride, confidence and collective wellbeing was palpable as people got involved and used the opportunities that City of Culture brought to learn new skills, get to know their neighbours and actively participate. Every school in the city took part and, as part of our legacy programme,

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*“We want to use culture to unlock the potential of children and young people in Hull, encouraging them to aim high”*

we want to build on that: to use culture to unlock the potential of children and young people in Hull, encouraging them to aim high.

As with the delivery of the UK City of Culture 2017, its legacy is a collective responsibility requiring a long-term commitment from many partners. As a council, it's vital that we continue to play our part and invest in culture, creating the conditions for others to do the same.

The city launched its 10-year Cultural Strategy in September 2016 and, on the same day, we announced a £250 million legacy programme to support its delivery. Alongside this, we have set up a new Culture & Place Board, putting cultural leaders at the forefront of delivering the city's ambitions.

We're also continuing to support the city's newest arts organisation, Absolutely Cultured, which has been built on the foundations of the Hull 2017 company. The new organisation will continue to stage world-class events in the city and, importantly, will have a long-term commitment to embedding culture and the arts in the lives of young people.

The initiative, called 'Generation Hull', is about harnessing the arts to inspire young people and to raise aspirations through creative education and access to cultural opportunities. All parts of the Absolutely Cultured programme will include a learning element, and the company will be undertaking an innovative project to assess the impact that creative and cultural activity can have on the lives of children and young people.

This commitment to inspiring and reaching out to young people is already being put into practice every day by Absolutely Cultured and the many other arts organisations in the city that grasped the opportunities to get new audiences involved during 2017. They are now developing this work as part of our reinvigorated cultural sector. This is our UK City of Culture legacy in action and it will be at the heart of all of our work to raise aspirations and attainment in the years to come.

● For more information on Hull City Council, please visit [www.hull.gov.uk](http://www.hull.gov.uk)



'A day in the life of an artist' – children from Clifton Primary School in Hull at the city's Ferens Art Gallery

## group leaders' comments

### Honours for hard-working councillors

*“We are all proud when our colleagues receive public recognition for their achievements and their hard work”*

I was delighted to hear that several Conservative councillors from across the country were recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours in June.

Congratulations go to Cllr Patricia Bradwell, Deputy Leader of Lincolnshire County Council, and to Cllr Gillian Brown, the Leader of Arun District Council and Vice-Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, who are made OBEs; and also to Cllr Ian Carr, Mayor of Test Valley Borough Council, and Hilary Cox, lately a councillor at Norfolk County Council, who are made MBEs.

Councillors play a crucial role in our political life and are the voice of their local communities. As Conservatives, we are all

proud when our colleagues receive such public recognition for their achievements and their hard work.

The LGA's annual conference, which will take place next week in Birmingham, is the showpiece event for local government and provides a great opportunity for all of us to get together, share ideas and network. I look forward to meeting many of you at the conference.

While the conference itself is largely a cross-party event, there will also be time for us to gather as Conservatives in group sessions to discuss key topics among ourselves and with guest speakers.

As such, I would urge colleagues to make every effort to attend both our LGA



Councillor Sean Anstee is Deputy Leader of the LGA's Conservative Group

Conservative Group AGM on Tuesday 3 July, and the group meetings on Wednesday 4 July and Thursday 5 July, when our guest speakers will be, respectively, Gavin Barwell, the Prime Minister's Chief of Staff, and Liz Truss MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Our group dinner will take place on the evening of Wednesday 4 July. Tickets for the dinner can be obtained from the LGA Conservative Group stand (B11). Please do visit the stand to get your tickets, meet the group office staff, and see what goodies are available!

Further details about the group's activities at the conference will be sent out in our monthly email bulletin, so please do look out for that.

### chairman's comment

#### Looking back, looking forward



Lord Porter is Chairman of the LGA

I'm sure all of you will have joined in the 72-second silence to mark the first anniversary last month of the Grenfell Tower fire, and been moved by the dignity of the survivors, the bereaved families and the local community at the various commemorative events.

The best way to remember those who died and help their loved ones is to ensure nothing like this can ever happen again. That's why the LGA has pressed for a ban on the use of combustible materials on high-rise and complex buildings, and to outlaw the use of desktop studies to attempt to prove safety compliance.

I'm glad to say the Government has

listened. It will be studying the responses to the recent consultation on desktop studies with a mind to banning them, and recently launched a consultation on banning combustible materials on the external walls of high-rise residential buildings.

The other big news has been the additional funding announced for the NHS. As a very recent and grateful recipient of the NHS's outstanding critical care, I can say it deserves no less on its 70th birthday. But we all know that adult social care needs sorting out too.

Recent reports from the Children's Commissioner for England and Care Crisis Review have focused on the demand and cost pressures facing children's services, reinforcing our calls for help to close an estimated

£2 billion funding gap and invest in preventative programmes.

Housing also remains under the spotlight. The Government's announcement of £30 million to help combat rough sleeping is much needed, but the LGA has highlighted how Right to Buy is unsustainable and continues to call for all councils to be able to borrow to build the homes that are needed in their local communities.

I look forward to seeing many of you at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham, where all these issues will be debated. They underline the fact that what we do in local government matters, and that we can and do make a real difference to people's lives.

*“The LGA wants all councils to be able to borrow to build the homes that are needed in their local communities”*



## group leaders' comments



Councillor Nick Forbes  
is Leader of the LGA's  
Labour Group

### Green Paper delay a 'huge disappointment'

*"There cannot be a sustainable NHS without a sustainable adult social care system"*

This year we are celebrating the 70th birthday of the NHS.

Opinion polls regularly show that it is the NHS that is the greatest source of national pride – it is rightly considered to be a national treasure.

But adult social care, too, should also be considered in the same way. It is vitally important, not just for giving elderly and disabled people the care that they need, and for preventing the NHS from buckling under the pressure of demand, but also because it offers the chance for dignity for all.

While I welcome the promise of a long-term funding plan for the NHS, it is essential that adult social care does not get overlooked. Simply put, there cannot be a sustainable NHS without a sustainable adult social care system.

Adult social care has been in the headlines again in recent weeks, as pressure mounts from across the sector for the Government to do something about the looming crisis. It's a huge disappointment that the expected Green Paper has been delayed yet again. There is already an annually recurring gap of £1.3 billion in adult social care, which is set to reach £2.2 billion by 2020.

If adult social care is not given the cash injection it so desperately needs now, both the social care provision of local authorities and the NHS are at risk.



Councillor Howard Sykes MBE  
is Leader of the LGA's  
Liberal Democrat Group

### Adult care – the Cinderella service

*"The £20 billion extra for the NHS is very welcome – shame it is wrapped up in some post-Brexit dividend smoke screen"*

I look forward to seeing many of you at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham. The list of issues and concerns of local government is growing daily on the eve of our gathering.

The NHS will celebrate its 70th birthday this year after a difficult decade since the financial crisis, culminating in one of the most testing years in our history.

The terrorist attacks in London and Greater Manchester, along with the Grenfell Tower tragedy, saw all emergency services, including NHS staff, respond with skill and bravery, so the £20 billion extra a year is very welcome. Shame it has taken until now and is wrapped up in some post-Brexit dividend smokescreen.

But one can't help but wonder whether the clamour to influence the size of the Prime Minister's promised multi-year funding plan for the NHS will have an impact on adult social care's own 'present' – the care and support Green Paper. Will this include any extra cash for social care? Who knows, as it has been delayed yet again.

Adult social care has its 50th birthday with the anniversary of the Seebohm report, which laid the foundations for the model of adult social care and support we know today.

We will have to wait and see. Despite Mrs May producing a glass slipper, I think, once again, Cinderella will be overlooked.



Councillor Marianne Overton  
MBE is Leader of the LGA's  
Independent Group

### Pressures on NHS 'will spiral'

*"Providing adequate funding for adult and children's care, alongside the extra funding announced for the NHS, is essential"*

The LGA annual conference is looking very exciting with some top national speakers and a chance to discuss and develop ideas to help your residents and council.

The results of our LGA Independent Group deputy and treasurer elections will be announced and I look forward to welcoming the new members into our successful team.

We have worked hard and cross-party to get better funding for care, but Prime Minister Theresa May again failed to take the opportunity to make our public health system sustainable.

Providing adequate funding for adult and children's care, alongside the extra funding announced for the NHS, is essential. These services help prevent people from needing the NHS, and provide the assistance they need to leave hospital to get on with their lives. Without this preventative work, the pressure on the NHS will continue to spiral.

Funding for the NHS needs to be matched by investment in prevention and early intervention in children's and adult care for the whole system to be effective and sustainable. And now the Government has further delayed the Green Paper on care and support for older people until the autumn, which was to offer funding solutions for adult social care.

Addressing this must become a priority for the Government if the 70th anniversary of the NHS is to have any meaning at all.



For more information about the LGA's political groups,  
see [www.local.gov.uk](http://www.local.gov.uk)

# Care costs in rural areas

**Funding for adults' and children's care is in crisis. The present system is unsustainable in both urban and rural areas, even in the short term.**

The Public Accounts Committee has predicted that the social care system 'could soon be on its knees' but, in reality, that point has already passed and the situation is deteriorating.

Council tax is an unfair way of funding demand-responsive services because it produces a postcode lottery of supply. Local taxation can no longer meet the rising care costs of a growing elderly population



**Councillor Cecilia Motley**  
(Con, Shropshire)  
is Chair of the Rural Services Network

– it's time for central government to accept responsibility.

Our research has revealed the funding crisis is demonstrably more acute in rural areas. Why? For starters, significantly more residents aged 65-plus live in rural districts, business rates income is lower, and council tax levels are much higher than in urban areas. The Office for National Statistics predicts that by 2039, one in three rural residents will be aged 65-plus and, of those, 11 per cent (currently 6 per cent) will be aged 80 or more.

Ageing populations are more likely to need complex, more intense and wider-ranging social care support, which is more expensive to provide. Furthermore, adult and children's social care costs are substantially higher in sparse rural areas where demand is higher per capita and markets weaker.

Rural local authorities have historically been chronically underfunded, despite higher service delivery costs. Government's core spending power figures for 2018/19 again demonstrate that rural residents will face a greater council tax burden than urban. Rural residents pay higher council tax but receive fewer services, costing more to access.

Recent research demonstrates that rural residents pay some £3,000 more per year for essentials than their urban counterparts, despite earning less. In 2019/20 Improved Better Care Funding will benefit urban residents by some £37.74 per head – £8.20 more than rural residents at £29.54. Thus, the inequity continues.

Government can no longer ignore this huge funding discrepancy. Action is needed now.



**The Rural Services Network** is a non-governmental organisation representing the interests of rural service providers and the communities they serve. For more information, please visit [www.rsonline.org.uk/](http://www.rsonline.org.uk/)

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# The power of place



**Councillor Hazel Simmons MBE**  
(Lab) is Leader of Luton Borough Council

**Local government has long recognised the strategic benefits of leveraging the power of place to improve outcomes for people.**

Each of our locations has a unique selling point. But have we all been getting the most out of them? In Luton, the honest answer was 'maybe not'.

Our biggest asset is London Luton Airport (LTN): owned by the council and operated by a concessionaire. As the fifth biggest and fastest-growing major airport in the UK, it is also one of the key drivers for the national aviation sector and the whole of the sub-regional economy.

In 2015, LTN contributed some £1.5 billion to UK GDP and supported more than 30,000 jobs. Thanks to its public ownership, the council's airport company has also provided more than £120 million for key voluntary and community services since 2004.



Nonetheless, we recognised it would require a change of strategic approach for the airport to make even more of a difference to Luton and its surrounding communities.

So this year, we are bringing forward two major investment programmes: a £225 million fast transit system (Luton DART), which will help cut the fastest journey time from London to LTN to under 30 minutes; and a public consultation on our Vision for Sustainable Growth at the airport.

Each additional million passengers travelling through the airport translates into up to 800 new jobs and a £76 million uplift for the regional economy. LTN will reach its permitted capacity of 18 million passengers a year (mppa) by 2021. Our long-term ambition is for up to 36-38 mppa by 2050, while doing everything possible to minimise and mitigate impacts through environmentally sensitive solutions.

The work we are doing around the airport constitutes a huge single investment, and an enormous amount of effort is going into understanding, assessing and mitigating the risk.

Growing our airport is part of a much wider change in strategic direction the council has taken to transform the town and make life better for people who live and work here. The biggest risk is doing nothing.

● [hazel.simmons@luton.gov.uk](mailto:hazel.simmons@luton.gov.uk)

# For those in peril on the sea

**In the last 10 years, 100 fishermen have lost their lives around the UK coast, a further 500-plus received serious injuries, and more than 200 fishing vessels were lost.**

These statistics make for grim reading and demonstrate the real risks that our brave fishing fleets take to bring us our fish suppers every day.

Plymouth, Britain's Ocean City, may be placed in the heart of the English fishing industry, but if you are a coastal councillor, you will not be far from the realities behind these losses – and you can make a difference.

A personal flotation device (PFD) is a life jacket that can be worn while working on deck, and is already worn by fishermen working around our coasts. In Plymouth, we have rolled out our own version, and the big difference is that ours also houses a personal locator beacon (PLB). The roll-out has been coupled with some research to encourage fishermen to wear the life jackets and to change behaviours.

Once activated, the PLB will alert the HM Coastguard services within minutes that someone is in trouble. It will give an accurate location within metres of where they are.



**Councillor Tudor Evans OBE**  
(Lab) is Leader of Plymouth City Council

Our fishing fleet is always within an hour of either a Royal National Lifeboat Institution lifeboat or air-sea rescue coverage. Getting to someone inside that 'magic hour' raises the chances of their survival dramatically.

As of late last year, 250 of these life-saving kits had been distributed. It was a journey to design a project that was able to secure a grant from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, and other councils in the South West, including Torbay and Cornwall, have embraced the concept and are working on similar projects.



**If you have a fishing fleet and would like to learn more about this initiative**, Plymouth City Council is happy to share details of our project, grant applications and so on, to give you the fast track to do the same in your communities. **For further details please email [jane.hunt@plymouth.gov.uk](mailto:jane.hunt@plymouth.gov.uk)**

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# parliament

## Review of the year

**Our parliamentary lobbying is essential to champion the work of local government to drive public service reform – which is reflected in our recent ‘LGA in Parliament 2017/18’ report.**

The report gives an opportunity to update councils on our work with parliamentarians to ensure we have a continuing impact on policy and legislation in the best interests of councils and their residents.

Since our last annual update, there has been a General Election and we are midway through a two-year parliamentary session that has had a significant focus on the Government passing the legislation needed to implement Brexit.

Despite some of the uncertainties, we have produced more than 92 parliamentary briefings in this session to influence debates on policy and legislation, and have responded to 52 parliamentary inquiries, either by providing written submissions or through our councillors and officials giving evidence in person.

Our work is referenced extensively across both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, where our campaign recommendations feature in debates, questions and parliamentary motions.

Through our parliamentary engagement, we have sought to promote messages on a range of subjects, including fair funding, social care, Brexit and devolution, improving mental health services, changing children's lives, building new homes and devolving employment and skills support. We do this because councils have told us these issues are important to them and their residents.

Our regular polling of parliamentarians shows strong support for the campaigns we run on behalf of local government. Of those polled in November 2017, 86 per cent of MPs and 89 per cent of Peers agreed with us that councils should have more financial powers and freedoms; and 84 per cent of MPs and 81 per cent of Peers agreed that additional



From left, LGA Vice-President Baroness Eaton, Communities Secretary James Brokenshire MP, LGA Deputy Chairman Cllr Nick Forbes and Baroness Smith of Basildon at the LGA's parliamentary reception

*“Our work is referenced extensively across the Commons and the Lords, where our campaign recommendations feature in debates, questions and parliamentary motions”*

funding should go to councils' social care budgets to tackle the funding crisis.

Over the past year, we've helped achieve some notable wins for councils, including: the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee urging the Government to use further business rates retention as an opportunity to meet the funding gap facing local government, rather than transferring in grants; and a recommendation from the influential cross-party Treasury Committee calling for the housing borrowing cap to be lifted.

We also secured a commitment from government to reduce the maximum stakes that can be gambled on fixed odds betting terminals, and a positive commitment, through our engagement with the European Union

(Withdrawal) Bill, that local government remains a key partner as new laws are proposed.

As well as influencing parliamentary debates and committees, we also run a programme of events in parliament. Our Bright Futures parliamentary exhibition promoted the positive impact that social care and mental health services have on children's lives, and featured a number of early intervention case studies from across local government (see **first** 624).

We further engage with the party conference season to promote the work of local government and the campaigns the LGA runs on behalf of its membership. In 2017, we delivered a full programme of events and our councillors spoke on issues including adult social care, housing, improving the life chances of children, and public finances.

The final year of this parliamentary session will bring challenges to the local government family, as there is less money in the pot to fund increasing demands on our services. We will continue to strive to lead the conversation on public service reform to ensure the important democratic role of local government features in national debate, and that we remain an influential voice in Westminster.



**‘LGA in Parliament 2017/18’**

can be read in full at [www.local.gov.uk/lga-parliament-20172018](http://www.local.gov.uk/lga-parliament-20172018)

# councillor

## Prepared for emergencies



Councillor Ketan Sheth (Lab) is Chair of Brent Council's Community and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee

Over the spring and summer of 2017, terrorist incidents in Westminster, Manchester and London Bridge, and then the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in Kensington, rightly put emergency response at the forefront of minds across the UK – communities, politicians and public servants alike.

While the terrorist incidents in London were managed by individual local authorities and emergency services with minimal need for support from their neighbours, the scale of the Grenfell Tower disaster required a pan-London response.

We are proud that many of Brent's councillors had a visible presence, and that more than 100 Brent Council staff answered the call for mutual aid. They covered roles as diverse as working at the borough emergency control centre and providing support directly to affected families. Brent's chief executive temporarily joined the head office of the Grenfell Fire Response Unit to head up the humanitarian assistance response.

In light of the number and scale of incidents in 2017, Brent Council's Audit Committee agreed there would be benefit in reviewing Brent's own emergency preparedness. Given the cross-cutting nature of incident response, the task group was drawn from the council's three scrutiny committees and the Audit Committee; I was chosen to chair it.

During this work, we looked at best practice and benchmarking from other London boroughs, heard from experts in



the field, reviewed documents and plans, took part in a scenario exercise, and visited the facilities that would be used as our own borough emergency command centre in the face of a major incident.

The resulting report, which was discussed at full council, outlined a number of Brent's strengths, and made nine recommendations, many of which were already under way or completed by the time the report was published.

Emergency duty rotas have been reviewed and numerous more senior council officers have been trained to coordinate major incident responses. New training has been commissioned from the Cabinet Office for both senior council staff and local ward councillors, to ensure they are ready to respond if needed. A review of emergency accommodation and rest centre locations has been carried out, and meetings and exercises have helped maintain our already very strong relationships with the police, ambulance, fire, and localised partners such as Wembley Stadium.

Thankfully, incidents on the scale

of Grenfell are rare. Outside of Brent's support for the Grenfell response, our civil contingencies team dealt with 21 incidents last year – mostly domestic house fires, floods, or explosions, and a few localised issues such as power cuts, storms and burst water mains.

The exception was the discovery of an unexploded bomb that required the (thankfully temporary) evacuation of a large number of households in the Brondesbury Park area, which tested officers and local ward councillors, all of whom rose to the occasion.

While we all hope that the people of Brent are spared any major incident, they can feel reassured that strong foundations are in place should the council be called upon to respond.



For more information about Brent Council's Emergency Preparedness Task Group Report, please visit [www.brent.gov.uk/scrutiny](http://www.brent.gov.uk/scrutiny)

# elections

## Something for everyone

There is something for everyone in the by-elections running from mid-April to mid-June, but the Liberal Democrats will claim overall bragging rights.

The postponed contest in Southwark's London Bridge and Bermondsey ward was held on 14 June. We estimated this newly created ward would result in two Labour councillors and one Liberal Democrat. By taking the first three places, the Liberal Democrats will claim that their total of net seat gains at the May elections now exceeds that of Labour.

Five further by-election gains certainly suggest the party is finding a winning recipe, at least in areas where it has some prior strength. The West Berkshire and Warrington gains, for example, were in areas where the party had polled well for a decade or more. Thatcham West had only moved into the Conservative column in 2015, while Lymm South's predecessor wards show a Liberal Democrat core vote.

The gain in Aylesbury Vale's Quinton ward was far less predictable, however, since the Liberal Democrats did not stand in 2015. The by-election saw both UKIP and an Independent absent from the ballot paper, but the local Conservative party must have felt secure.

This is now the third time that the Liberal Democrats have notched up a by-election victory in Broadland's Aylsham ward. The three-member ward split two to one for the Conservatives in 2015 and this recent win now gives the Liberal Democrats all three seats.

The most recent gain from the Conservatives came in South Oxfordshire, where Richard Pullen resigned over internal party differences. The Liberal Democrats duly selected former councillor Susan Cooper to contest the vacancy. She fought the ward in 2015, when she eclipsed her fellow Liberal Democrat, suggesting a strong personal vote underpinned her success this time.



Professors **Colin Rallings** (right) and **Michael Thrasher** are Associate Members, Nuffield College, Oxford



One split ward that did fall in the Conservative party's favour was Westbury-on-Trym & Henleaze in Bristol. In 2016, the party failed by just 70 votes to secure the third seat against Liberal Democrat Clare Champion-Smith's large personal vote. Her resignation on health grounds presented the opportunity for a rare Conservative win.

Another success came in Bideford East where the death of Sam Robinson, one of two UKIP candidates elected in 2015, caused the vacancy.

Labour made three gains, each from a different party. Bocking North was gained from the Conservatives, in a ward that split between the two parties in 2015.

Labour group leader Roma Mills regained the St Albans North county division from the Liberal Democrats, having been narrowly unseated in 2017, and won a district council seat on the same day.

Labour's third gain, in Lancaster's University and Scotforth Rural ward, came at the expense of the Greens, whose 2015 candidate garnered a large personal vote when three-quarters of electors voted – a considerably higher proportion than that voting in the by-election.

Close finishes were associated with a notable gain and another seat held by candidates from smaller parties. In North Kesteven, the Lincolnshire Independents held off the defending Conservative challenge by just seven votes.

Meanwhile, Farnham Residents retained the Castle ward by the comparatively comfortable margin of 16 votes. This is the group's second successful by-election defence in this ward, the other being in 2016.

### local by-elections

#### Aylesbury Vale, Quinton

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

5.9% over Con

Turnout 47.6%

#### Braintree, Bocking North

LAB GAIN FROM CON

6.2% over Con

Turnout 30.7%

#### Bristol, Westbury-on-Trym and Henleaze

CON GAIN FROM LIB DEM

2.9% over Lib Dem

Turnout 44.9%

#### Broadland, Aylsham

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

6.9% over Con

Turnout 34.1%

#### Hertfordshire, St Albans North

LAB GAIN FROM LIB DEM

6.6% over Lib Dem

Turnout 47.6%

#### Lancaster, University and Scotforth Rural

LAB HELD/LAB GAIN FROM GREEN

4.7% over Lab

Turnout 27%

#### North Kesteven, Kirkby la Thorpe and South Kyme

LINCS IND GAIN FROM CON

1.2% over Con

Turnout 30.8%

#### South Oxfordshire, Benson & Crowmarsh

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

21.6% over Con

Turnout 27.8%

#### Torridge, Bideford East

CON GAIN FROM UKIP

9.3% over Lab

Turnout 25.3%

#### Warrington, Lymm South

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

6.7% over Con

Turnout 35.7%

#### West Berkshire, Thatcham West

LIB DEM GAIN FROM CON

17.5% over Con

Turnout 34.3%

Only results where a seat has changed hands are shown here. For all the most recent by-election results and more statistics and information, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/first](http://www.local.gov.uk/first)

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- **1 in 5** buyers have problems with second hand electrical goods
- Over 50% of online sellers never check their electrical products **they sell for safety**
- The UK Government has **no strategy** to tackle sales of second hand electrical goods online
- Elderly electrical products should be **banned from sale**
- We want councils to ensure more **recycling of unwanted electrical appliances**

