

No.627 September 2018

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# first

the magazine for local government

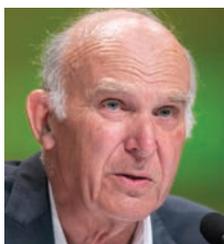
Adult social care

"This is our chance to put social care **and wellbeing at the very heart of government thinking**"

Lord Porter, LGA Chairman

14

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10

**Party conferences**

Sir Vince Cable MP, Brexit and the Spending Review



19

**Clean air**

LGA response to the Government's strategy



23

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## Care debate



As promised in the last edition of **first**, the LGA has launched its own green paper on the future and funding of adult social care, which we hope will inform the Government's much delayed version, due out this autumn.

You can find out more about 'The lives we want to lead' and how to get involved in this important debate on p14-17.

Elsewhere in this edition, we look ahead to the party conferences and discuss the LGA's lobbying work at these key political events (p10). We also hear from Sir Vince Cable, Leader of the Liberal Democrats, ahead of his party's annual conference in Brighton (p12).

We have features on children's services funding issues (p13); the Government's draft Clean Air Strategy (p19); tackling tenancy fraud in Havering (p21); and the LGA's regional Brexit sounding boards (p20), which are helping inform our work with government on making sure councils are ready for the challenges and opportunities arising from our departure from the EU.

Elsewhere, we hear from Cornwall Council about how its policy of ultra-localism is helping save vital community assets (p23) and have top tips for councillors on commercialisation (p30).

**Lord Porter** is Chairman of the LGA

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# contents

## news

**4** The LGA's social care green paper  
Local government finance



**5** Social housing  
Planning policy  
Rough sleeping

**7** Tourism jobs  
Civil society and youth services  
Children's mental health



**8** Plastic packaging  
National congestion crisis  
Broadband speeds



## features

- 10** The LGA at the party conferences
- 12** Sir Vince Cable
- 13** Children's services
- 14** Adult social care
- 18** Asset management
- 19** Clean air strategy
- 20** Brexit sounding boards
- 21** Tenancy fraud

## comment

- 23** Ultra-localism in Cornwall
- 24** LGA chairman and group leaders
- 27** Fair funding for rural areas

## regulars

- 29** Parliament – written ministerial statements
- 30** Councillor – commercialisation
- 31** Local elections



## Big response to LGA social care green paper

**As first went to press, a consultation on the LGA's social care green paper had already garnered more than 115 responses and thousands of online views and downloads.**

The LGA launched its green paper in late July, in a bid to kick-start a desperately needed debate on how to pay for adult social care, and rescue the services caring for older and disabled people from collapse.

Since 2010, councils have had to bridge a £6 billion funding shortfall just to keep the adult social care system going. In addition, the LGA estimates that adult social care services face a £3.5 billion funding gap by 2025, just to maintain existing standards of care, while latest figures show that councils in England receive 1.8 million new requests for adult social care a year – the equivalent of nearly 5,000 a day.

The LGA launched its consultation following decades of failure to find a sustainable, long-term solution to how to pay for adult social care, and in response to the Government's decision to delay its long-awaited Green Paper on the issue until the autumn. 'The lives we want to lead' sets out options for how the system could be improved and paid for. These include increasing income

tax for taxpayers of all ages; increasing National Insurance; a social care premium for the over-40s and working pensioners; means testing universal benefits; and allowing councils to increase council tax.

It also makes the case for a more person-centred and community-based system, based on preventative and early intervention work.

The consultation runs until 26 September – see [www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk](http://www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk) and p14-17. The LGA will respond to the findings in the autumn to inform and influence the Government's Green Paper and spending plans.

Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "We cannot duck this issue as a society any longer. Our green paper is the start of a nationwide public debate about the future of care for all adults, and how best to support their wellbeing. We encourage as many people and organisations to have their say on how we pay for it and the responsibilities of citizens, families and communities."

● Latest NHS England figures on delayed transfers of care show councils have reduced the average number of delays attributed to social care since June 2017 by 40 per cent.

## Consultation on negative RSG

The Government is proposing to use its share of business rates to cover the £153 million cost of negative revenue support grant (RSG), which would otherwise affect 168 councils in 2019/20.

In a wide-ranging written ministerial statement on local government finance, released just before Parliament went into recess, it also published the technical consultation on the 2019/20 local government finance settlement, an invitation to English local authorities to pilot 75 per cent business rates retention in 2019/20, and possible changes to New Homes Bonus.

Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, said: "Many councils have been hugely concerned about the end of core central government funding next year and having to pay vital business rates income to the Government as a result of negative RSG.

"Those affected will be pleased that the Government is taking steps to address this issue next year. The LGA will be encouraging all our member councils to respond to this consultation.

"However, all councils face significant funding pressures and huge financial uncertainty over the next few years and into the next decade. Local government in England faces an overall funding gap of almost £8 billion by 2025 just to maintain services at current levels. The next Spending Review will be make or break for local services and must recognise the urgent need to tackle the funding gap facing local government to improve the lives of residents and reduce pressure on other parts of the public sector."

He added: "We would urge the Government not to increase the New Homes Bonus threshold again. This would risk putting the brakes on house-building schemes and growth-boosting projects, at a time when our housing shortage is one of the biggest challenges facing the nation, and further exacerbate the financial challenges facing some councils."

● See p29, and [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on/funding](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on/funding) for the LGA's latest report building the case for investment in local services.



# 'Small step' towards more social housing

The Government has published its long-awaited Green Paper on social housing, outlining a range of measures aimed at improving access to affordable housing.

Crucially, it has abandoned plans to force councils to sell some of their most valuable social housing when properties become vacant, something for which the LGA has long campaigned.

Other measures include: a new league table, which will rank housing providers based on performance indicators such as repairs and neighbourhood management; new home ownership options, such as allowing tenants to buy as little as one per cent of their property each year; and a consultation on how much money councils should keep from the sale of homes under the Right to Buy scheme.

The LGA wants councils to be able to set Right to Buy discounts locally and keep 100 per cent of receipts from homes sold, to help pay for building replacement homes.

LGA Housing Spokesperson Cllr Judith Blake said the Green Paper marked "only a small step" towards delivering more social homes, compared with the huge and immediate need for more genuinely affordable homes.

"There is a desperate need to reverse the decline in council housing over the past few decades. The loss of social housing means that we are spending more and more on housing

benefit to supplement expensive rents instead of investing in genuinely affordable homes.

"Councils are proud of their housing and their tenants, and continually work to improve how they empower their tenants to achieve a positive and responsive relationship.

"The Government must go beyond the limited measures announced so far, scrap the housing borrowing cap, and enable all councils, across the country, to borrow to build once more. This would trigger the renaissance in council house building that will help people to access genuinely affordable housing."

● Consultations on the Green Paper close on 6 November – see [www.gov.uk/government/consultations](http://www.gov.uk/government/consultations)



## Government imposes new homes test

The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) includes a housing delivery test that could mean the wishes of local communities are bypassed, the LGA has warned.

But in a positive move campaigned for by the LGA and councils, the Government has restored 'social rent' to its definition of affordable housing. Other measures in the NPPF, published in August, include a revised assessment for councils to calculate housing needs in their local areas, and more flexibility in using brownfield land in building.

Lord Porter, LGA Chairman, said: "It is positive to see social rent retained in the definition of affordable housing, although the definition should be clearer in separating social rent from 'affordable' rent, which is often not accessible for people on lower incomes.

"It is also encouraging to see moves towards greater transparency in the planning system, and measures that try to resolve the challenges in negotiating the number of affordable homes through the viability process.

"However, the new proposals fail to give councils the powers they need to ensure homes with planning permission are built out quickly, with the necessary infrastructure, in their local communities."

He added: "It is hugely disappointing that the Government has not listened to our concerns about nationally set housing targets, and will introduce a delivery test that punishes communities for homes not built by private developers. Councils work hard with communities to get support for good quality housing development locally, and there is a risk these reforms will lead to locally agreed plans being bypassed by national targets.

"Planning is not a barrier to house building, and councils are approving nine out of 10 applications."

● See p29

## news in brief

### Brexit impact

Dozens of councils have seized the initiative and produced their own analyses of the potential impact of Brexit on public services, according to a Sky News report based on Freedom of Information requests. As **first** was going to press, government 'no deal' Brexit preparedness reports were expected to be published in August. Cllr Kevin Bentley, Chairman of the LGA's Brexit Taskforce, said: "The UK's exit from the EU will have a significant impact on local government. Brexit will ultimately be judged as a success or failure by local areas: real people in real communities. Councils are taking a lead on preparations for Brexit because our residents and our local businesses expect us to be ready."

### Rough sleeping

The Government's Rough Sleeping Strategy needs to go "much further, much faster", according to LGA Chairman Lord Porter. The strategy, which aims to eliminate rough sleeping by 2027, includes a £100 million fund to support people off the streets and into housing. Lord Porter said it was a "positive first step" towards helping councils tackle rough sleeping, but highlighted how local authorities currently house more than 79,000 homeless families and 123,000 children in temporary accommodation. He called for councils to be allowed to build more social homes, a review of welfare reforms, and for councils to have the "certainty, resources and tools they need to bring together services around people at risk of becoming homeless".

### Supported housing

Housing benefit will continue to be paid directly to landlords for vulnerable people living in supported housing, such as women's refuges, the Government has said, following a consultation on possible changes. The LGA has welcomed the move, saying it will give councils and housing providers funding certainty, and help them "sustain and invest in supported housing for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities". Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "A sustainable funding model for supported housing is critical to ensuring councils can reduce homelessness and help older and other vulnerable people."



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## Tourism faces jobs 'black hole'

England's tourism sector risks being overwhelmed by record numbers of visitors and growing skills gaps, council leaders have warned.

An analysis by Tourism Alliance has revealed that 38 per cent of hospitality and tourism businesses have difficulties in filling vacancies, with 21 per cent indicating they are unable to recruit staff with essential skills.

The UK's tourism sector has a vital role in driving economic growth in the UK. Worth £126 billion, it generates 3.1 million jobs, £7 billion in tax from overseas visitors, and is projected to grow at 3.8 per cent every year up until 2025.

But the LGA has warned that current and future shortages in skilled staff risk bringing our booming tourism industry to a halt, unless improved training opportunities needed for a career in the sector are made available.

The sector will need to recruit 1.3 million new employees by 2024, but limits on EU migration after Brexit could make it more difficult to fill vacancies. Currently, 46 per cent of those employed in tourism are non-British EU nationals.

The LGA wants the Government to adopt the LGA's 'Work Local' proposals to devolve control over centrally run skills and employment schemes to local areas – which can better target funding, training and apprenticeships – and to bring forward plans for vocational hospitality T levels (see [www.local.gov.uk/work-local](http://www.local.gov.uk/work-local)).

Cllr Gerald Vernon-Jackson, Chair of the LGA's Culture, Tourism and Sport Board, said: "Tourism has a vital role in driving future economic growth. It provides a wealth of employment opportunities for residents, it attracts new visitors to our communities, and it promotes our local and national arts and heritage.

"It is crucial that government supports councils in providing residents and young people with resources and training.

"As the employment market changes over the next few years, there could be an array of opportunities in the tourism sector, but it is vital that councils are able to direct skills funding to meet the increasing demand for skills in the industry."

## 'Use NCS to plug youth services gap'

The LGA is calling for funding from the Government's National Citizen Service (NCS) scheme to be devolved to councils to reinvest in local youth services.

This comes after latest figures revealed only a small number of eligible youngsters were taking part, despite hundreds of millions of pounds of government investment.

Nearly all government spending on youth services is currently invested in the NCS, a four-week voluntary initiative for 15 to 17-year-olds. The Government spent £634 million on the NCS – 95 per cent of its youth services budget – between 2014/15 and 2017/18.

At the same time, locally run youth services have been significantly scaled back. Councils were forced to cut spending on local youth services from £650 million in 2010/11 to just £390 million in 2016/17 as a result of government funding cuts.

Cllr Anntoinette Bramble, Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, said: "While the National Citizen Service is a good programme, which can be a positive experience for those who take part, we believe this should be part of a much wider youth service offering to support children and young people.

"A time-limited programme of work cannot provide the trusted, longer-term relationships that are a valued element of youth work, and that are needed by some young people to develop the self-esteem, confidence and skills to take part in such programmes."

Meanwhile, the Government has announced its Civil Society Strategy, which sets out how it will work with and support different sectors for the benefit of wider society. This includes putting youth services back on the agenda, but the LGA warned that the current system for getting people into work was "inefficient and ineffective", with 20 different funding streams managed by eight government departments and agencies.

## news in brief

### Children's mental health

Government action on children and young people's mental health doesn't go far enough, according to the LGA. Responding to the Government's response to the consultation on its Green Paper on the issue, Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of the LGA's Community Wellbeing Board, said: "With only an estimated fifth to a quarter of the country's children benefiting from the Government's proposed scheme by 2022/23, this risks leaving many young people without vital support. As a starting point, we want to see councils and schools given the funding to offer independent mental health counselling so pupils have access to support as and when they need it."

### Care services help

Does your council need help improving the experience and support for people discharged from hospital, improving support for carers, or redesigning information and advice for when people first seek support? If so, you can apply to a new LGA Design in Social Care Programme, developed with design agency Snook. In 2018/19, help with developing person-focused services across adult social care will be available for up to nine councils. They will receive more than 40 hours of structured training and support through workshops and onsite support visits. For more details and to apply, from 3 September, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/disc](http://www.local.gov.uk/disc) or contact [abigail.vella@local.gov.uk](mailto:abigail.vella@local.gov.uk)

### Councillor survey

The LGA will be emailing the 2018 Councillor Census to every elected member in English councils in early September. We would be grateful if you could respond because the findings are vital to our understanding of councillors' needs and will inform our practical support to authorities and councillors. They will also allow us to be a successful advocate of the sector to government. The LGA will publish a full report in spring 2019, giving aggregate data and breakdowns by type of authority, English regions, gender, ethnicity and political party. For more information, or if you have any problems accessing the survey, please email [stephen.richards@local.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.richards@local.gov.uk)

## news in brief

### Product safety

A new website offering advice to consumers about recalled products, and increased support for local authorities, are among the measures set out in a new strategy from the Office for Product Safety and Standards.

Cllr Simon Blackburn, Chair of the LGA's Safer and Stronger Communities Board, said: "Councils support the new strategy, which sets out plans to develop much needed central capacity to help local trading standards teams on product safety issues. It is essential that consumers have access to as much information as possible, and we support the introduction of an easily accessible, comprehensive database of recalled products."

### Broadband speed ads fall into line

Most broadband providers have cut the headline speeds they advertise when selling deals, following changes to advertising rules, according to new Which? research. Previously, suppliers were able to advertise 'up to' speeds that only one in 10 customers could reach – but now, at least half must be able to get the advertised speed. Cllr Mark Hawthorne, Chairman of the LGA's People and Places Board, said: "It is great to see that these tougher standards, called for by the LGA, are leading to improved transparency around the advertising of broadband speeds. This is particularly important in more rural areas, where actual speeds can fall well below expectations."

### LEP changes

All areas – not just mayoral combined authorities – will be invited to develop local industrial strategies backed by government support, following calls from the LGA and LEP Network. However, the LGA has warned that government proposals on the composition of local enterprise partnership (LEP) boards "risk diluting both the views of local people and undermining the role and investment that local authorities make in the success of their local economies". It said: "The best local partnerships are created bottom-up and driven by local partners that have the economic wellbeing of their local communities at the heart of what they do."

## 'Two-thirds of plastic packaging unrecyclable'

**Only a third of plastic used by households can be recycled, an LGA analysis has found. Around 525,000 tonnes of plastic pots, tubs and trays are used by households each year, a survey of councils has suggested, but just 169,145 tonnes of this type of waste can be recycled by local authorities.**

The LGA has called for manufacturers to develop a plan to stop unrecyclable packaging from entering the environment in the first place, arguing that doing so would make a huge contribution to cutting down on the amount of plastic that goes to landfill.

It also wants the Government to consider a ban on low-grade plastics, and for producers and manufacturers to contribute to the cost of collection or disposal.

Fruit and vegetable punnets and yoghurt pot lids, which are made of low grade, non-recyclable polymers, are just two examples of the unrecyclable material which could be easily replaced with recyclable packaging.

Another example of inefficient packaging is microwave meals, which are often encased in predominately black plastic material for aesthetic reasons. However, black is the only colour that cannot be easily scanned by recycling machines and sorted, meaning this unnecessarily hinders the recycling process.

Cllr Judith Blake, LGA Environment

Spokesperson, said: "It's time for manufacturers to stop letting a smorgasbord of unrecyclable and damaging plastic flow into our environment. Some of the measures that could help us reduce landfill and increase recycling are no-brainers; for instance, microwave meals should be stored in a container that is any other colour than black, to enable quicker recycling.

"We've been calling for producers of unrecyclable material to develop a plan to stop this from entering the environment for years. That needs to happen urgently, but the Government should now consider banning low-grade plastics, particularly those for single use, in order to increase recycling."



## National congestion crisis



The number of vehicles on England's clogged roads has risen by nearly two and a half million in the past five years, while road space has increased by just 0.6 per cent.

That means significantly more vehicles per mile of road – leading to increased congestion, air pollution and more wear and tear on our roads, the LGA has warned.

It says congestion is having a significant impact on our towns, cities and communities, and acting as a drag on local growth. Worse still, it can lead to toxic air and reduced quality of life. The LGA wants to see better funding for local roads.

Cllr Martin Tett, LGA Transport Spokesman, said:

"England's roads are currently gripped by a growing congestion crisis.

"Very few journeys begin and end on a motorway or trunk road, yet government funding on the strategic road network is 52 times higher than for local roads. Spending more on improving our national roads will only serve to speed vehicles up between increased delays and congestion on local roads.

"Councils are working hard to combat traffic and congestion, but need to be able to do more to tackle this growing problem. The Government should implement the recommendations of the National Infrastructure Assessment and give councils long-term funding certainty for transport investments that will enable them to embark on the widespread improvement of our roads that is desperately needed – to the benefit of all road users up and down the country."

# letters

## Single-use plastic

I have just received **first**, which is an excellent publication. I am struck once again, though, that you distribute this in a single-use plastic wrapper which, given the massive concern about plastic, sends out the worst of examples.

I was encouraged to learn that the LGA has released information on the use of disposable food containers (see p8), and I hope you will keep on informing about the damage to the environment, and to all of us, that our use of plastics is causing.

There is really no need to wrap your magazine. I know a number that are now sent out unwrapped, fastened at the centre by a small adhesive tag with the address printed on the cover. We can also put magazines in paper envelopes. I appreciate this may be more expensive, but I would prefer to pay more rather than use damaging plastic.

Darlington Borough Council has passed a motion requiring the authority to set out to prevent single-use plastics being used in its activities and procurement. This is as it should be, with government at all levels being the exemplars. **first** could become an exemplar and I hope that you will set out to be so.

**Cllr Alan Coultas (Ind)**, Darlington Borough Council

● Editor's comment: With thanks to Cllr Coultas. The plastic wrapping we use for **first** can be recycled at some facilities, but not all. We are reviewing the

packaging we use and looking at other options, but will, of course, need to balance this with any additional costs involved.

Meanwhile, we are planning to launch a **first** e-bulletin in the autumn, with links to online versions of stories in **first**. If readers find this service useful, you will be able to opt out of receiving a printed copy of the magazine.

## City-wide pledge to children

We recently launched the Bristol Children's Charter, a set of 10 pledges – made by a range of city organisations – to set the rights and best interests of children as a priority for decision-makers in Bristol.

Organisations across the city are making daily decisions that affect the lives of children and young people. Our charter provides those organisations, both private and public and across all sectors, with aspirations that their decision-making can contribute towards achieving. The Children's Charter doesn't replace existing strategies. Instead, it has been developed with reference to these individual strategies and pulls together a set of high-level ambitions with shared themes. It will also influence the development of the One City Plan, our emerging shared vision for Bristol.

The pledges range from the protection of children from harm and having opportunities to play a full role in shaping the city around them, to being able to have positive choices about their lives and development – and they apply to every child, whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, language, abilities or any other status, and family background. I thank Cllr Helen Godwin, my Cabinet Lead for Women, Children and Families, for driving the development of the charter with our partners. We recognise that, separately, we can each achieve many things for children and young people, but it's only by working together to deliver our shared vision that we can create an environment where every individual has the opportunity to flourish.

**Marvin Rees (Lab)**, Mayor of Bristol

## New Directors

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# features

## Conference season

The LGA will be working hard to ensure the voice of local government is heard at the party conferences this autumn

The autumn party conferences are some of the most high-profile events in the political calendar.

With the expected date of Britain's departure from the European Union imminent, the conferences will give the political parties a platform to set out their priorities ahead of the final few months of negotiations.

Meanwhile, domestic spending plans will be at the forefront of the parties' minds as they prepare for key economic milestones, including the Budget and 2019 Spending Review.

As well as the chance to promote the

important work of councils, the conferences allow us to make the case that by giving local areas the funding and powers they need, local government can be the driving force for a new chapter in our country's history.

In this context, the LGA will be working to ensure local government has a high profile in the major policy discussions, including on economic growth, adult social care, housing and children's services.

Our councillors, including our chairman and group leaders, will be speaking at debates, roundtables and receptions, as well as meeting stakeholders, to raise the profile of local government.

We will be hosting our own debates at the conferences, including discussions on improving social mobility at the Liberal Democrat conference, and why the Spending Review must prioritise investment in local services at the Labour and Conservative conferences.

These debates will explore how investing in the council services our residents value and rely on will help councils tackle some of the big challenges, such as those associated with housing, children's services, adult social care and skills.

The Liberal Democrats meet in Brighton where they will be looking to build on their successes in the 2017 General Election for future elections. With this in mind, Sir Vince Cable and his team will be keen to push his party's policy priorities on both the domestic and international agenda.

At the Labour Party Conference in Liverpool, Jeremy Corbyn and the shadow frontbench team are likely to set out their vision for the country and our public services. With a strengthened position in Parliament, Labour will be maximising any media opportunities as they develop their policy platform ahead of the next General Election.

In Birmingham, the Conservative Party gathers as the Prime Minister seeks to flesh out her priorities for Brexit and build the Government's momentum ahead of the Budget. In this context, we will be looking to engage with ministers, MPs and stakeholders on the measures councils would like to



deliver economic growth and high-quality public services.

Councillors from the LGA's Independent Group will also be speaking up for local government at the UKIP, Green and Plaid Cymru conferences. These take place respectively in Birmingham from 21-22 September, in Bristol from 5-7 October, and in Aberteifi (Cardigan) from 5-6 October.

Following the national party conferences, our Independent Group then holds its annual event on 23 November at the LGA's offices in London, giving another chance for politicians and stakeholders to discuss the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Conferences will be followed by an important parliamentary session in the autumn, as Westminster's attention continues to be dominated by Brexit.

*“The conferences allow us to make the case that by giving local areas the funding and powers they need, local government can be the driving force for a new chapter in our country’s history”*

The Treasury will also be finalising announcements for a Budget that is likely to focus on short-term measures, while setting the scene for the 2019 Spending Review.

It will be important that the LGA and

local government have helped shape the debates across the conference season to ensure we are influencing the thinking of MPs and Peers, as key national decisions are made.

**i** A full list of the LGA's speakers and debates across the conferences will be available in short guides, which you can read on our website at [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/party-conferences-autumn-2018](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/party-conferences-autumn-2018)

## LGA events at the party conferences



### Liberal Democrats, Brighton

- **The LGA evening reception**  
Sunday 16 September  
7.45-9.00 pm  
Buckingham Room, Metropole Hotel

**Speakers include:** Cllr Howard Sykes, LGA Liberal Democrat Group Leader; Sir Vince Cable MP, Leader of the Liberal Democrats; Cllr Bridget Smith, Leader of South Cambridgeshire Council; Cllr Gareth Roberts, Leader of London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

- **The LGA debate**  
**Unlocking talent, fulfilling potential: local answers to the social mobility challenge**  
Monday 17 September  
1.00-2.00 pm  
Buckingham Room, Metropole Hotel

**Speakers include:** Cllr Ruth Dombey, LGA Liberal Democrat Group Deputy Leader; Wera Hobhouse MP, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Communities and Local Government; Ruth Davison, Executive Director of Public Impact, National Housing Federation; Stephen Evans, Chief Executive, Learning and Work Institute; Baroness Liz Barker, Lords' Spokesperson for the Voluntary Sector (Chair)



### Labour, Liverpool

- **The LGA evening reception**  
Sunday 23 September  
8.30-10.00 pm  
Hall 2H, ACC Liverpool

**Speakers include:** Cllr Nick Forbes, Leader of the LGA Labour Group; Cllr Lib Peck, Deputy Leader of the LGA Labour Group; Andrew Gwynne MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (invited); Preet Kaur Gill MP; Cllr Simon Henig, Chair of the Association of Labour Councillors

- **The LGA debate**  
**Show us the money: why the Spending Review must invest in our local services**  
Monday 24 September  
1.00-2.30 pm.  
ACC Concourse, Room 4,  
ACC Liverpool

**Speakers include:** Cllr Nick Forbes, Leader of the LGA Labour Group; Cllr Lib Peck, Deputy Leader of the LGA Labour Group; John McDonnell MP, Shadow Chancellor (invited); Emily Andrews, Associate Director, Institute for Government; John Harris, Guardian columnist (invited)



### Conservatives, Birmingham

- **The LGA evening reception**  
Tuesday 2 October  
9.30-11.00 pm  
ICC Media Suite, ICC Birmingham

**Speakers include:** Cllr James Jamieson, Leader of the LGA Conservative Group; Lord Porter, LGA Chairman; James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (invited)

- **The LGA debate**  
**Investing in our future: why the Spending Review must provide for communities**  
Monday 1 October  
3.45-5.00 pm  
Hall 9, ICC Birmingham

**Speakers include:** Cllr James Jamieson, Leader of the LGA Conservative Group; James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (invited); Helen Grant MP, Vice-Chair for Communities (invited); Emily Andrews, Associate Director, Institute for Government

# Exit from Brexit



Sir Vince Cable MP is Leader of the Liberal Democrats

Liberal Democrats will be debating housing, climate change, plastic pollution and Brexit at their annual conference this autumn

**A**s I write this, our agenda has just been published for the Liberal Democrat Conference in Brighton, including the party's new policy paper on local government, 'Power to people and communities'.

Thank you to all who have been involved in producing this, including the Association of Liberal Democrat Councillors and the LGA Liberal Democrat Group.

Other important debates that will have an impact on local government include housing, climate change and tackling plastic pollution. I am also looking forward to catching up with Liberal Democrat councillors at the LGA's reception at our Brighton conference, which is always a regular fixture in the party leader's diary.

Hopefully I will speak with some of those I saw at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham in July, both in the plenary session with all parties and then in a meeting with the LGA's Liberal Democrat Group.

I was the only party leader to address this conference, which emphasises the importance our party places on local government. We discussed many issues, including local government funding, social care and planning – but a key concern was, of course, Brexit and its likely impact on local councils and councillors.

I met two councillors – in this case of Danish origin – who have made Britain their home, have worked hard for their communities and have contributed to our country and society. They are worried that others from EU member states who have come to the UK may not be given the chance to contribute in the way they have, and be denied the right to stand as councillors. That is why I am pleased to see that the LGA, on a cross-party basis, is challenging the Government to clarify this issue urgently.

Councils across the country are issuing serious warnings about the risks of a 'no deal' Brexit. But still the ideologues of the Conservative right shamelessly talk up the prospects of this dangerous scenario.

In last month's **first 626**, Cllr Howard



*“Councils across the country are issuing serious warnings about the risks of a ‘no deal’ Brexit”*

Sykes, LGA Liberal Democrat Group Leader, rightly drew people's attention to the serious problems of leaving without arrangements being in place for structural and regional investment funding, and the importance that any future bids at the very least match current EU funding.

The latest set of reports, released through Freedom of Information requests, make for worrying reading. Dover District and Kent County Councils are both warning that a 13-mile Brexit lorry park on the southbound

M20 could be needed for years. Others have warned of the impact on the numbers of social care staff, on food costs and availability, and demand on services.

Different councils, as you would expect, have different perspectives on what the risks would be – but a common theme is that the Conservatives are making a mess of Brexit.

The Liberal Democrats will continue to campaign for the British people to have the final say on any deal – or, worse still, no deal – including the option of an exit from Brexit.



**The Liberal Democrat Conference kicks off in Brighton on 15 September.** You can find out about LGA party conference events by visiting [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/party-conferences-autumn-2018](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/party-conferences-autumn-2018)



## Save the children

### A series of recent reports have echoed local government concerns about the funding of children's services

Funding for children's services remains a significant concern for councils across the country. The LGA's Bright Futures campaign is calling for a financial solution to plug the immediate funding gap and provide sufficient resources for sustainable investment in early intervention services.

This summer saw the publication of several reports supportive of the LGA's campaign. The charity Action for Children published 'Revolving Door' (see <https://bit.ly/2tRHMXb>) in June, highlighting the impact of cuts to early intervention services on the ability of councils to offer timely help to children and families before problems become serious.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Children published a similar report, 'Storing up trouble', highlighting variable thresholds for access to children's services across the country and warning that many children are now reaching crisis point before they are able to access support (see [www.ncb.org.uk/storinguptrouble](http://www.ncb.org.uk/storinguptrouble)).

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*“Almost half of all council spending on children's services is now spent on the 73,000 children in the care system”*

These concerns were further highlighted by the multi-agency Care Crisis Review (see [www.frg.org.uk](http://www.frg.org.uk)), which reported that the number of applications to courts for orders to take children into care had doubled over the past decade. The review identified a number of potential practice improvements to help address this increase, with a particular emphasis on the importance of work with families prior to care proceedings. But it concluded that practitioners were increasingly “overstretched and overwhelmed” and too often unable to

offer the support that families need until problems have escalated.

This view was supported by the Children's Commissioner for England, who published two reports in July. The first of these identified an estimated 2.1 million children in England living vulnerable lives due to complex family circumstances, 1.6 million of whom were apparently receiving no known support or help from the system. The second highlighted that almost half of all council spending on children's services is now spent on the 73,000 children in the care system, leaving little to meet the needs of the remaining 11.7 million children in England.

Early summer also saw the publication of Newton Europe's report 'Making sense: understanding the drivers of variation in spend on children's services' (see <https://bit.ly/2vXdcff>), commissioned by the LGA.

This research comprehensively disproved the argument, often stated by government officials, that differences in spend between different councils are simply due to inefficiency. The report concluded that differing levels of spend are inevitable, and demonstrated that the majority of variation is due to economic or geographic factors largely outside the control of local authorities.

Deprivation was found to be the most significant factor, accounting for 31 per cent of variation alone, though the study also identified inconsistencies in financial reporting and offers advice to help councils more accurately compare their spend with other areas on a like-for-like basis.

An examination of social work practice found that a relatively small proportion of variation (13 per cent) was due to work with children in care, primarily caused by interventions coming too late, but concluded that closing this gap would often involve additional investment in early help or 'edge of care' services to support families before problems become serious.

With councils facing a funding gap of almost £3 billion for children's services by 2025, pressure is growing on government to provide a sustainable solution. The range of reports published over the summer has added considerably to the evidence base in support of the additional investment that councils need, and we will continue our campaign to galvanise support for that action within Whitehall and beyond.



For more information about the LGA's Bright Futures campaign, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures](http://www.local.gov.uk/bright-futures)

# A green paper for wellbeing

## The LGA has launched a nationwide debate on tackling the adult social care crisis



**H**igh quality social care and support help people live the life they want. They help bind our communities, sustain our NHS and provide essential economic value to our country.

The LGA, like its many partners in the social care sector, has worked hard to ensure that the question of how to fund social care for the long term has had the time in the national spotlight that it deserves. But we have still not secured the action we urgently need.

The continued absence of a sustainable, long-term solution has brought care and support to breaking point. It now also means that, across the country, local government is

struggling to sustain universal local public services, like roads and waste collection, as it has to prioritise statutory duties like social care for children and adults, and support for the NHS.

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*“There are no single or easy solutions and even within the sector there are different views on how we should move forward”*



The failure to address this creates a deeply uncertain outlook for people who use social care services now, and the growing number of people who will need the service in the years to come.

The approach of governments past and present in dealing with mounting pressures in social care has been to limp along with piecemeal measures from one year to the next.

But with demand growing, costs rising, people’s expectations rightly increasing and funding declining, this approach of short-term sticking plasters must be abandoned. The need to resolve the long-term future of care and support is now urgent.

The Government’s decision to delay its own green paper is disappointing and frustrating. But it offers an opportunity for local government – so often the pragmatic front-runner on difficult agendas – to seize the initiative and take the lead in forging a way ahead.

That process begins here with the LGA’s green paper for adult social care and wellbeing, ‘The lives we want to lead’. It is supported by all political parties within the LGA, demonstrating the required level of cross-party support among local politicians that we need to see matched by our national politicians.

Much of our green paper is about the future of care and support for all adults, and how we pay for it. But if our starting point is the individual and what is important to them (see right), then one service alone can never support them to live the life they want to lead, no matter how good it is.

Our green paper, therefore, looks beyond social care and considers the importance of housing, public health and other council services – including those delivered by district councils – in supporting wellbeing and prevention, and the vital work with councils’ local partners, families and communities.

And, of course, we consider the NHS. This year we rightly celebrate the 70th birthday of our health service, but if we are to look ahead with confidence to its centenary, then it, too, must change for the benefit of those it serves.

This is therefore a green paper for wellbeing. It seeks to lay the ground to secure both immediate and long-term funding for social care, as well as make the case for a shift in approach from acute treatment to community prevention. It is about people, population and place, not structures, systems and silos.

It is also just a starting point. Too often policy is developed in isolation. With this green paper we are seeking as wide a selection of viewpoints as possible, recognising that this is complex territory. There are no single or easy solutions and, even within the sector, there are different views on how we should move forward.

We want to build momentum and help stimulate a truly nationwide debate about how best to fund the care we want to see in all our communities for adults of all ages, and how our wider care and health system can be better geared towards supporting and improving people's wellbeing.

We encourage you to respond to the consultation on our green paper, which closes on 26 September. We will reflect on our consultation findings in a further publication later in the autumn, in time to influence the Government's plans – not just its green paper, but also the Budget, the NHS Plan and the 2019 Spending Review.

This is our chance to put social care and wellbeing right at the very heart of the Government's thinking.

We have a vision for people's wellbeing that is rooted in local areas and backed by clear and strong local democratic accountability. It is about helping to build a society where everyone receives the care they need for a good life: well, independent, at home for as long as possible and contributing to family and community life.

It is our time to drive this agenda forward.

**Lord Porter of Spalding CBE**, LGA Chairman  
**Clr Nick Forbes**, Labour Group Leader and LGA Senior Vice Chair

**Clr James Jamieson**, Conservative Group Leader and LGA Vice Chairman

**Clr Howard Sykes MBE**, Liberal Democrat Group Leader and LGA Vice Chairman

**Clr Marianne Overton MBE**, Independent Group Leader and LGA Vice Chairman



This is an edited version of the foreword to 'The lives we want to lead: the LGA green paper for adult social care and wellbeing'.

To find out more and respond to the consultation on the green paper, which closes on Tuesday 26 September, please see p16-17 and visit [www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk](http://www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk)

## Putting people first

The LGA's green paper starts with the voice of people with experience of our care and health system, illustrating the diversity of people supported by the sector

### Josie's story

At the moment, I get three short visits a day from a care worker to cook my meals, help me shower and keep the house clean.

I get two hours every two weeks 'social' time, which at best – on a good day – gets me over to the park and back. It's not long enough to join in any activities, but I value this hugely as it's uninterrupted time with actual real conversation, not just "what do you need to eat?" or similar.

My basic needs are met – I'm clean and I'm fed. But I haven't got enough support to actually get me out of the house. It means that some days I barely get to speak to anyone, let alone have a social life.

People like me, who were professionals and could make a contribution with the right support, are being cut out of the workforce. I still have skills and experience that I would like to use, if I had the means of doing so. In the end, it is a question of equality. I don't feel like I'm living, just existing.

(Reproduced with the kind permission of Scope).

### Vicki and Keegan's story

I was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy when I was young. I am now 36 years old and I need assistance to get out of bed, to eat, to use the bathroom and to leave the house. I need someone with me day and night.

My partner Keegan cares for me around the clock. If he didn't, I would need a full-time carer or I would have to live in a residential home. Yet, Keegan is only paid for four hours a day and we have no funding for respite. I worry every day about what would happen to me if he couldn't look after me anymore. He is my independence and my dignity.

In the past I have been offered some support to help me at home, but as my condition worsens and my needs grow, I am being offered less and less because there is no money available to help me. Something as simple as getting a hoist to help me in and out of bed has become a battle.

It's hard enough living with this condition without feeling like I have to face a challenge every time I ask for help. The sad thing is none of us know when – or if – we will need people to care for us one day, so it is vital that everyone is aware of the issues before it is too late to do anything about it.

### Lucy's story

My daughter Lucy has a learning disability and spent 12 years in hospital after being sectioned under the Mental Health Act.

Lucy went through a very stressful time in her life, which was when things started to go wrong for her. This caused her to suffer from severe anxiety. She began having more epileptic seizures. When she was hospitalised, we struggled to get her out. As a family, we didn't know what to do or where to get help.

After 12 long years, Lucy came out of hospital, supported by the local commissioner and a care and support provider who worked with Lucy and us to plan what she needed and wanted from her life. They really listened to us.

Lucy now lives in her own bungalow, close to us. She is supported by a staff team that she chose and who are trained to support her in a way that works for her.

Lucy is doing really well, but there are always worries in the back of your mind that something will change and the support might stop or reduce. We need to recognise that good support now will prevent more expensive hospital stays down the line.





# Paying for social care

## The LGA's green paper sets out some of the options for funding local care services

Many of the most significant problems facing social care are primarily driven by a lack of funding, with the LGA estimating the sector faces a £3.56 billion funding gap by 2025 just to maintain current levels of service.

While the Care Act 2014 remains a widely supported, broad legislative framework, more funding is needed to implement it fully. So why has it proved so hard for successive governments to deliver sustainable long-term funding for this crucial service?

The answer lies partly in how the public views social care, which is linked to the fact that it is complex and hard to understand. Contrary to what many people think, adult social care and support is not free for everyone, and is means-tested.

The LGA's social care green paper, 'The lives we want to lead', sets out options for how the funding system could be improved, covering issues of fairness and transparency. It also outlines costed options for paying for adult social care, both immediately to prop up services and in the long-term. These include:

- Increasing income tax for taxpayers of all ages – a 1p rise on the basic rate

- could raise £4.4 billion in 2024/25.
- Increasing National Insurance – a 1p rise could raise £10.4 billion in 2024/25.
- A social care premium – charging the over-40s and working pensioners an earmarked contribution (such as an addition to National Insurance or another mechanism). If it was assumed everyone over 40 was able to pay the

same amount (not the case under National Insurance), raising £1 billion would mean a cost of £33.40 for each person aged 40-plus in 2024/25.

- Means-testing universal benefits, such as winter fuel allowance and free TV licences, could raise £1.9 billion in 2024/25.
- Allowing councils to increase council tax – a 1 per cent rise would generate £285 million in 2024/25.

The LGA is not suggesting a preferred option. However, we are clear that a mix of solutions is likely to be required, both to reflect the scale of the funding challenge we face, which will continue to grow over time, and to reflect different individuals' and different generations' particular circumstances.

## Get involved

The launch of the LGA's social care green paper is just the starting point. We have launched a nationwide consultation on 'The lives we want to lead' to kick-start a desperately needed debate on how to pay for adult social care and rescue the services caring for older and disabled people from collapse.

We have developed a suite of resources to help you communicate the green paper with your residents, media, partners and staff. These include: a communications pack designed to promote an understanding of the issues surrounding adult social care, and to encourage as many people as possible to respond to our green paper; and a facilitators pack to help councils and other groups organise and hold planned engagement sessions with residents or members about the green paper.

All the resources are free to download at [www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk/resources](http://www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk/resources).

We'd also really like to hear more about your experiences. If you have a story to tell, please email [socialcareconversation@local.gov.uk](mailto:socialcareconversation@local.gov.uk), and tweet your support and comments using #FutureofASC and tagging @LGAcomms.

# Adult social care at a glance

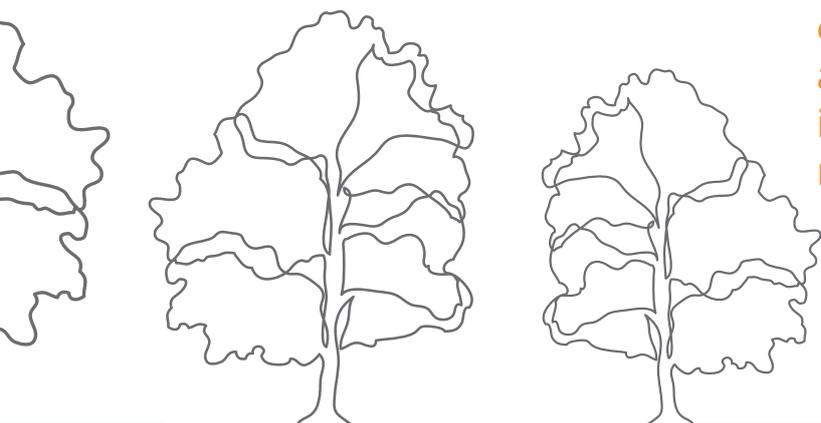
Councils spend over  
**£15 billion**  
on social care every year.



Demography, inflation and National Living Wage pressures mean that the gap in adult social care funding will be

**£3.56 billion**  
by 2025 (just to stand still).

This is more than five times the amount spent annually on councils' park services, and close to the cost of councils' waste management for a year (£3.6 billion).



By 2019/20 councils could be spending as much as **38 pence out of every £1 of council tax** on adult social care.

This is up from just over 28 pence in 2010/11. As councils spend more on social care, less money is available to keep valued local services running.



**The funding gap is putting providers under impossible pressure.**

In more than **100 council areas** residential care home and home care providers have ceased trading, affecting **more than 5,300 people** in the past six months. This is a direct result of funding pressures.

# Working your assets



**Councillor Peter Fleming**  
is Chairman of the LGAs  
Improvement and Innovation  
Board

The One Public Estate programme is helping councils get the best use out of their land and property by taking a strategic approach to asset management

One Public Estate (OPE) celebrated its fifth birthday this summer. Since 2013, the programme has grown from a small pilot involving 12 areas to one of national significance, working with nine out of 10 councils in England and supporting the delivery of 500-plus projects up and down the country.

A national programme delivered in partnership by the Office of Government Property (OGP) within the Cabinet Office and the LGA, OPE provides practical and technical support and funding to councils to deliver ambitious property-focused programmes in collaboration with central government and other public sector partners.

Our operating model allows the public sector to work in partnership to get the best use out of its land and property. OPE has been driven by local areas deciding what their priorities are – for example, releasing land for new homes – and using the programme to deliver them.

Early projects have already raised £145 million in capital receipts, cut running costs by £23 million, created 5,700 jobs and released land for more than 2,900 homes. Projects are expected to deliver £615 million in capital receipts and £158 million in reduced running costs by 2020. Additionally, it is estimated that they will create 44,000 new jobs as well as release land for 25,000 homes.

Our new partnership with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), to jointly administer its £45 million Land Release Fund, will see us work much more closely with Homes England to help them deliver their aim of a million new homes by 2020.

Greater Lincolnshire's Blue Light Wider Estates Programme illustrates the ambition we have come to expect from OPE projects. The scheme involves co-locating local emergency services (fire and rescue, police and ambulance) on shared sites, helping improve services through better collaboration and releasing surplus sites.

For example, the new Louth Fire and Ambulance Station will release a surplus



*“One Public Estate provides practical and technical support and funding to councils to deliver ambitious property-focused programmes”*

property with an estimated capital receipt of £250,000 and help reduce running costs by around £37,000 a year. The programme has the potential to release 27 surplus property assets, generate around £3.9 million in capital receipts, reduce running costs by around £700,000, and provide much needed sites for housing development.

OPE has also been responding to the lack of affordable housing for NHS staff, which affects staff supply and retention. Working with the Department of Health and Social Care and the Greater London Authority, it is funding a number of schemes helping release NHS land for residential development.

In London, projects include Croydon

University Hospital, Sydenham Green Health Centre in Lewisham, and Kingston's key worker accommodation, with each receiving £70,000 through the 'Homes for NHS staff' pilot. The number of homes that will be delivered for NHS staff will be determined on a site-by-site basis once masterplans and feasibility studies are completed.

The next OPE funding round will launch in the autumn, offering regional support and collaborative ways of working, with funding of up to £500,000 for project development. The focus will be on delivering more housing, and the LGA is committed on behalf of councils to matching the Government's target of 160,000 homes on public land.

One Public Estate aims to continue to grow and develop as we look to become a more sustainable programme, seeking private sector investors as well as investigating alternatives to our current funding model, to include repayable grants.



For more information, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/topics/housing-planning-and-homelessness/one-public-estate](http://www.local.gov.uk/topics/housing-planning-and-homelessness/one-public-estate) or email [onepublicestate@local.gov.uk](mailto:onepublicestate@local.gov.uk)



# Improving air quality

A new regulator will hold the Government to account on its plans for tackling air pollution

Outdoor air pollution is a major public health issue, costing the UK economy £20 billion a year and contributing to more than 25,000 deaths a year.

As four House of Commons select committees concluded in their joint report into air quality published earlier this year, we need to place the protection of public health and the environment at the centre of air quality policy.

So it is pleasing that the Government's draft Clean Air Strategy 2018 explicitly recognises poor air quality as a public health challenge.

The strategy deals with the main airborne pollutants harmful to health. These are currently regulated by the EU. Post-Brexit, the country will have to come up with a new way of reducing them and the harm they do to our health.

The draft strategy makes a wide variety of suggestions over a whole host of policy, including how we monitor air pollution, communicating with the public, how we label harmful products, transitioning to electric vehicles, the legislative framework, and who will hold the Government to account for meeting its targets.

The most significant change contained within the strategy is the announcement that the Government intends to introduce new primary legislation to rationalise all the relevant duties and powers concerning air quality. The introduction of clean air zones and aligning them with air quality management areas is specifically referenced.

There is also a commitment to review

*“Government intends to introduce new primary legislation to rationalise all the relevant duties and powers concerning air quality”*

smoke control powers, which are now decades old and considered a poor tool for current patterns of pollution.

The LGA intends to investigate to what extent these powers are currently used and how authorities would prefer to see them reformed. In two-tier areas, the powers that are currently available are concentrated in district councils, although some of the powers that were proposed to form part of clean air zones – primarily those concerned with traffic measures – are highway authority (county) functions.

It is not clear in the strategy whether these powers and responsibilities would be redistributed by new legislation.

Post-Brexit, we also want to know exactly how the Government will be held to account

by a proposed new independent body for environmental monitoring, and how the membership of this body will be appointed. The strategy does mention it, but falls short of offering definitive proposals, which are part of a separate, ongoing consultation.

Our preference is that this new regulator concentrates on holding central government to account for meeting targets in a similar way to the current arrangements, rather than expanding its remit too wide and diminishing its impact.

The draft strategy sets out a variety of different actions across a number of different public agencies. What it does not acknowledge sufficiently is that these actions are in addition to current activity. New activity will have to be resourced and local authorities are not in a position to take on the amount of activity envisioned without either significant additional investment, or by ceasing other equally vital environmental health protection work.

While we agree with the Government's ambition and the vital nature of the challenge of air pollution, we need a strategy that is either realistic about the capacity of many public agencies to take on more work, or identifies how new resources will be made available.



## Consultations on the Government's draft Clean Air Strategy 2018 closed on 14 August.

This is an edited version of the LGA's response, which you can read in full at [www.local.gov.uk/topics/transport](http://www.local.gov.uk/topics/transport). Responses to the consultation will inform the final UK Clean Air Strategy and detailed National Air Pollution Control Programme, to be published by March 2019



# Leaving the EU

Councils have been sharing local perspectives on the potential impacts and opportunities of Brexit at a series of regional sounding boards organised by the LGA

**B**rexit will have a significant impact on local communities and businesses, and the LGA continues to work with local authorities to highlight the potential impacts of Brexit to central government and the wider public sector.

Part of this work includes facilitating regional Brexit sounding boards, led by local councils and shaped around the local perspective of the host authority. The events are attended by officials from the LGA and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).

They provide an opportunity to raise and discuss key issues, while strengthening the voice of local government with local evidence. This has been invaluable in shaping the LGA's agenda and broader Whitehall policy around Brexit.

The most recent session, the Yorkshire and Humber Brexit Roundtable, took place in July, in Leeds, and included representatives from local authorities, local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), and business, education and worker sectors.

Speakers from the LGA, MHCLG and CBI discussed both the national and local



**Councillor Kevin Bentley** is Chairman of the LGA's Brexit Taskforce

picture, including the Government's Brexit White Paper and the Brexit Ministerial Local Government Delivery Board, announced at the LGA's annual conference in Birmingham. A full roundtable discussion followed, with all participants sharing views on clarity, both gained and still to come, and relevant risks and opportunities.

The key issue identified by the group surrounded the need for the Government to work for the region, devolving powers to the local level, enhancing councils' ability to take control of inward investment, transport, infrastructure and skills, and enabling businesses in the region to grow and flourish.

The group also acknowledged the need for local partners to view themselves as part of the solution, not the problem, and there was a desire to shape how funding – such as the replacement for EU funding – is allocated locally.

Yorkshire and Humber is currently the third most successful region overall for European funding allocations, behind London and the South East, and the North West. This funding attracts further inward investment into the region, with the Humber LEP estimating that the £88 million worth of EU funds in the Humber area has led

to a further £68 million from other sources.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund – the proposed replacement for these funds – represents an opportunity to design a new system, taking all the positive aspects of the EU systems while reducing cumbersome bureaucracy and restrictive administrative and monitoring requirements.

The group dispersed with the expectation that discussions begun at the roundtable would continue through refreshed partnerships as we draw closer to the UK's exit from the EU. Similarly, the LGA continues to work to reiterate the local government position to central government, to ensure the sector's perspective influences preparations as the countdown to the October Summit, and to Brexit, continues.

Since the referendum, we have run successful sessions in Newcastle, Cornwall, West Lancashire, Bristol, Staffordshire and Tees Valley, as well as wider sessions in the London, South East and East regions, and with the East of England LGA. We continue to invite councils interested in putting on a Brexit sounding board to get in touch by emailing [brexit@local.gov.uk](mailto:brexit@local.gov.uk).

**i** For more information on the LGA's work on Brexit, including our ongoing call for information about the potential impacts and opportunities in your area, please go to [www.local.gov.uk/brexit](http://www.local.gov.uk/brexit) or email [brexit@local.gov.uk](mailto:brexit@local.gov.uk). Information about the Government's Brexit Delivery Board is available at [www.gov.uk/government/news/brexit-ministerial-local-government-delivery-board-update](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/brexit-ministerial-local-government-delivery-board-update)

**The LGA's Post-Brexit England Commission** is holding roadshows in the West Midlands on 4 October, the North West on 16 October, the East of England on 27 November, and the South East on 18 December. For more information, or to book a place, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)

*“There was a desire to shape how funding, such as the replacement for EU funding, is allocated locally”*

# Closing the door on fraudsters

A project tackling tenancy fraud has saved more than £6 million and returned 66 homes to people in genuine need in east London



Kevin Hazlewood is Assistant Director of Housing (Acting) at Havering Council

Over the past few years, housing demand has exceeded housing supply. Consequently, council waiting lists have got longer and there have been delays in placing people in appropriate housing.

As part of their strategies to lessen the strain on housing lists, local councils have looked to crack down on those people occupying council properties who have no right to be living in them.

Despite the impact on genuine residents waiting for social housing, tenancy fraud was often seen as a low-level offence until the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 came into effect in October 2013.

This Act gave local councils much needed powers to deal with tenancy fraud, clearly setting out that anyone found guilty of tenancy fraud could be fined up to £50,000 and/or face a two-year jail sentence. In addition, any profits made by a fraudster can be reclaimed by the local authority.

After studies in 2015 found that more could be done to stamp out housing fraud in Havering, a specialist team was assembled whose sole function was to audit every single council tenancy in the borough.

This meant that an officer would enter

*“A specialist team was assembled whose sole function was to audit every single council tenancy in the borough”*

each household and talk to the tenant, confirming who lived there and checking formal identification and proof of residence for the tenant. Most importantly, though, these visits would be unannounced, as making any form of appointment would play right into the hands of fraudsters.

The project launched in October 2015, in parallel with an amnesty, which encouraged anyone committing tenancy fraud to return their keys within a set timescale to avoid prosecution. Since then, the vast majority of the council's general needs housing stock has been visited, with audits completed on more than 8,500 individual households. To date, 66 properties have been returned to the council's housing stock from the hands of fraudsters, some willingly and others after legal action.

“KNOCK, KNOCK!”  
“Who’s there?”  
“YOU TELL US!”  
TENANCY FRAUD IS #NoJoke  
SEE IT OR SUSPECT IT?  
Report it anonymously  
**£1,000** reward\*  
Tenancy Fraud hotline  
01708 432405  
[www.havering.gov.uk/knockknock](http://www.havering.gov.uk/knockknock)  
Havering LONDON BOROUGH

\*The reward depends on your information leading to the Council reclaiming the property

To boost the efforts of the audit team, last year the council launched a public awareness campaign called ‘Knock Knock’. This involves a fresh amnesty, and a £1,000 reward for information directly leading to the return of a sublet property.

It greatly increased visitors to the council's tenancy fraud webpage and has led to an increase in referrals, with 71 made between the campaign launch in July to October 2017, rising from an average monthly number of 10 referrals.

The tenancy fraud project received strong support from the residents of Havering and has proven to be a big success, with impressive results. In a climate where demand for council homes greatly outweighs supply, the success of this project becomes more critical than ever, as we continue to return council properties to those who truly need them.

## Success in numbers

- Properties reclaimed – 66
- Right To Buy refusals – 69
- Savings made – £6,445,182

# The Health and Care Political Leadership Offer

Our **free** support offer, funded by Department of Health and Social Care, is aimed at:

- health and wellbeing board (HWB) chairs/co/vice chairs
- portfolio-holders/lead members with responsibility for adult social care
- anyone with any other leading political role in a health and care system.

## Leadership essentials

### Warwick Conference Centre, Coventry

These **free** two day residential sessions are an opportunity to reflect on the leadership challenges of these roles. Using the LGA's tried and tested approach to leadership development, the programme will be led by LGA peers and national partners and focus on a range of current and crucial issues.

If you are a HWB chair/co/vice chair or have a leading political role in a health and care system:

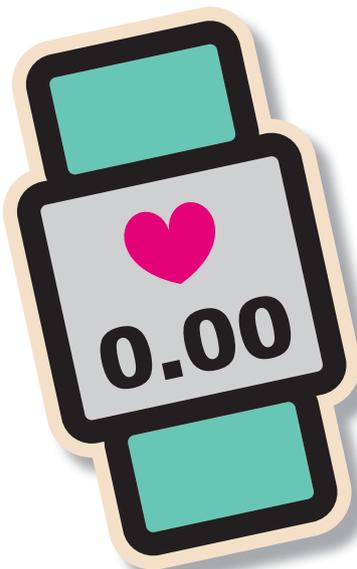
**9 – 10 October 2018**

If you are an adult social care portfolio-holder or lead member:

**9 – 10 October 2018**

Reflecting responsibilities across health and social care, the October sessions will run simultaneously, linked by shared speakers, facilitators and a joint dinner to provide a wider networking opportunity.

Places are limited and early booking is recommended. For further information and to book a place, please contact Grace Collins on 020 7664 3054 or [grace.collins@local.gov.uk](mailto:grace.collins@local.gov.uk)



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# comment

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## Ultra-localism: shaping our own destiny



**Councillor Adam Paynter**  
(Lib Dem) is Leader of Cornwall Council

**Like every other local authority, Cornwall Council faces an ongoing struggle to balance rising demand with shrinking resources.**

How to provide services for a rapidly ageing population while nurturing young people with the education and vocational skills to flourish, and ensuring those in between have access to jobs, housing and important infrastructure, remains a constant challenge.

These challenges demand a new way of thinking, doing and delivering. For us, that means power should sit as close to the community as possible. As Cornwall Council wins more control from government over Cornwall-wide services, we are giving more control of council services to the very communities that use them. We call this double devolution.

Our double devolution work, also known as localism or ultra-localism, is proof that using local knowledge to protect and redesign services works. We spoke to town and parish councils rather than closing down services, and have now transferred numerous libraries, sporting facilities, parks and community allotments back to local communities.

Take, for example, the multi award-winning Jubilee Pool (pictured). This 1930s art deco lido in Penzance is now run by a community group, which championed the pool and worked with the council to restore it to its former glory.

The council handed over management of the pool to a community benefit society, the members of which are looking forward to it becoming the first and only pool in the UK to be heated by geothermal energy. It demonstrates what can be achieved when a community takes ownership of a cause close to their hearts.

Under local management, Penryn Library is

now open for longer. The transfer of Camborne Library to local town council management is another project that's received widespread support from residents. Devolved libraries are holding more events and becoming much more community oriented.

Our double devolution approach means we've supported more than 100 communities across Cornwall to develop neighbourhood development plans – one of the highest levels in the country. We've also committed £1 million a year for the next four years to our community network panels, giving them the power to decide which highways and road improvement schemes will be delivered.

And our leisure centres are now run by a charitable social enterprise, improving our offer to residents while saving £3.5 million every year.

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*“Using local knowledge to protect and redesign services works”*

At a more strategic level, our 'New frontiers' plan is looking to the future and has the potential to increase the region's contribution to the UK economy by £2 billion, and to support the delivery of at least 38,000 additional jobs by 2030.

If supported by central government, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly could be the world's first net extractor of marine plastics and see a boom in lithium mining. Our recent partnership deal with Virgin Orbit could see the first satellites launched from British soil within three years.

As a unitary authority, it's this balance between planning a bold and ambitious future for Cornwall and giving local communities a greater say in their own destiny that sets us apart from many other authorities.

As we face less and less funding from central government, our approach reaffirms our belief that our future – whether you're shaping plans for a spaceport or concerned about regeneration of a much-loved lido – rests in shaping and controlling our own destiny, and in giving power to the people.



### Housing crisis: more needs to be done

*“The Government should devolve greater power to local authorities, as they are best placed to deliver the best local solutions for their residents”*



Councillor James Jamieson  
is Leader of the LGA's  
Conservative Group

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published its revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July. It is good to see that some areas where the LGA has lobbied have improved, such as the definition of affordable housing and greater transparency in the planning system.

But it is disappointing that more power has not been given to local authorities in the new proposals, to ensure we build communities, not just houses.

Britain is currently suffering from a housing crisis and new affordable homes must be built. However, a more efficient and transparent approach is required to help local authorities build the right homes in the right places.

Building more homes involves far more than designing good properties; it should meet the different aspirations of our communities now and into the future, be beneficial to both new and existing residents, and be well supported by services, including health, leisure, education and infrastructure.

The Government would like to build 300,000 new homes every year, but to achieve this ambition they should devolve greater power to local authorities, as they are best placed to deliver the best local solutions for their residents – for instance, by giving greater planning freedom and flexibility on borrowing, and enhanced involvement for local tradesmen and housing associations.

As such, while the new NPPF changes are welcome – and show the Government acknowledges the epic scale of the housing crisis and its complexity – much more needs to be done to tackle this matter.

I hope that you had an opportunity to enjoy a well-deserved break in August and I look forward to seeing many of you at the Conservative Party Conference, which will take place from 30 September to 3 October in Birmingham.

You can find out more about LGA events at the party conferences on p10-11 of this edition of **first**, and look out for more coverage ahead of our own event in Birmingham in next month's magazine.

### chairman's comment

#### Action on social care



Lord Porter  
is Chairman of the LGA

Successive governments have failed for more than 20 years to get their heads around adult social care, with services now at crisis point and facing a £3.5 billion shortfall by 2025.

So, when the Government announced that it would yet again be delaying its green paper on social care, we decided we'd had enough. Councils have a well-deserved reputation for 'getting on with the job' – one which we have tried to emulate by publishing our own green paper. Turned around in less than a month, it has the support of all the LGA's political

groups – demonstrating the kind of cross-party support we need to see matched by our national politicians.

Much of our green paper is about how we could pay for adult social care now, and in the future. More importantly, though, it gives a voice to those currently using our creaking care services, and makes the case for a shift in approach from acute treatment to community prevention.

While good social care is vital to helping people live the lives they want to lead, it is all the other things – housing, public health and other council services (including those delivered by districts), and our work with partners, families, communities and the NHS – that also help keep people well and independent for longer.

Our green paper is out for consultation until 26 September, and we've already had 115 responses. Please contribute your views and insights. None of us knows if, or when, we or a loved one may need care, and the pressures on adult social care mean other vital local services we all expect and rely on are being starved of cash.

I want to thank everyone who contributed to our green paper and who continues to engage with this debate, from local government colleagues to our partners in the wider care, health and voluntary sectors.

We have demonstrated that we are not prepared to sit around waiting for these essential local services to collapse. It's time for ministers to step up to the plate.

*“Our green paper demonstrates the cross-party support we need to see matched by national politicians”*

## group leaders' comments



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

### No new ideas or money for housing

*“The Social Housing Green Paper was so lacking in ideas it may as well have been printed on tissue paper”*

This August, the Government produced two major housing announcements, which should have provided plenty for the media to chew over in ‘silly season’ – but which, in fact, produced more disappointment than substance.

First, a much-heralded Homelessness Strategy – desperately needed given that rough sleeping has doubled since 2010 and is one of the most visible effects of the human cost of eight years of unrelenting austerity.

But despite some warm words, it entirely lacked a sense of urgency in tackling the root causes of homelessness through genuine preventative action, and no new money was pledged to make it work.

The level of disappointment this generated was exceeded a day later by an even more unambitious Social Housing Green Paper, which was so lacking in ideas it may as well have been printed on green tissue paper.

None of the measures proposed match the scale of the housing crisis and, yet again, there was no new investment. This is all the more disappointing given the clear political consensus across local government that councils should be given a key role in increasing supply – rather than being prevented from building the council homes their communities need.

No urgency, no ideas, and no new money. This is how the Government's boast that it would tackle the housing crisis died this summer – not with a bang, but a whimper.



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

### Government is failing young and old

*“The LGA's social care green paper is filling the vacuum left by the Government”*

The Government is failing young and old with its obsession with Brexit.

It is paralysed by the issue, meaning that it is failing, yet again, to step up and tackle some of the major issues affecting our communities, such as its failure to show any leadership on social care funding and to tackle the deepening housing crisis.

Someone had to do something, so I was delighted when the LGA released its own green paper, filling the vacuum left by the Government and starting a nationwide public debate about the future of care for all adults, and how best to support their wellbeing.

The Government must stop ducking the issue. The support the LGA has received to date in doing this has been great.

It's not just social care on which the Government has let us down. In June, ministers promised us a Social Housing Green Paper ahead of the parliamentary recess, which has now finally materialised – and it's a complete damp squib!

There is no money for local councils to build new homes and councils will continue to lose their stock year after year through Right to Buy.

The Government has missed yet another opportunity to address the housing crisis, which leaves me wondering – does it even want to?



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

### Time to contribute to the social care debate

*“We all will either need care ourselves or know someone who needs care”*

Seizing the initiative, the LGA has worked solidly on producing our own social care green paper for discussion.

It includes costed options on how to fund adult care in the long term – and thus help tackle the yawning £7.8 billion funding gap faced by all our council services by 2025 (of which £3.5 billion relates to adult social care).

We all will either need care ourselves or know someone who needs care. LGA Independent Group members, who think widely and are in touch with local people, are well placed to be an effective voice in this debate.

Councils only provide essential care to those in high level of need, or who have no other way of meeting their care needs.

The squeeze on funding is also reflected in councils' reducing ability to provide other essentials for our communities, and the breadth of that becomes ever clearer as our resources continue to diminish.

Those essentials include tackling mental health problems, drug and alcohol abuse, employment, homelessness and highways.

We must have solid and even some radical solutions or our society is at risk. Now is the time for your contribution to the debate and I look forward to hearing from you.

You can find out more and respond to our green paper, 'The lives we want to lead', at [www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk](http://www.futureofadultsocialcare.co.uk).



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

# LGA Annual Conference and Exhibition

2-4 July 2019  
Bournemouth  
International  
Centre

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To book your place visit [www.local.gov.uk/conference](http://www.local.gov.uk/conference)

The national voice of local government



# Fair funding for rural areas



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

**The City of London and the Northern Powerhouse are obviously major contributors to the engine room of the country's economy, but so too are rural areas.**

Greater digital adoption in rural areas could add between £12 billion and £26 billion to the UK economy annually, according to recent research by the Rural England Community Interest Company (CIC). Studies for the County Councils Network have demonstrated the huge value of investing in shire areas.

Almost a quarter (24 per cent) of all registered businesses in England are based in rural areas, with an annual turnover of £434 billion. But a consistent flow of investment and fair funding deals are needed in our rural areas to strengthen resilience and enable the rural contribution to our national economy to grow.

Average earnings in rural areas are around 10 per cent lower than in urban areas. Rural residents suffer higher costs of living and pay, on average, £91 per head more council tax.

Property prices in rural areas are typically 7.6 times average annual earnings, compared with 6.5 in urban areas. 'Affordable rents' are not affordable. Rural families struggle to find

affordable housing to remain in their local communities.

If they find housing, families can still face a 'rural penalty' in simply sending their children to school. School transport costs are almost 10 times higher than in cities.

Meanwhile, access to health services is becoming increasingly challenging for rural residents. GP practices are often merging to become more sustainable, which can put them at greater distance from vulnerable rural residents without access to cars or public transport.

Older people make up a significantly higher percentage of the total population in rural areas (29 per cent) than in urban areas (21 per cent). Projections indicate a doubling of the rural population aged 85-plus over the next 20 years.

Research by Rural England CIC into issues facing providers of social care at home has highlighted several worrying factors. Lower population density in rural areas prevents economies of scale, resulting in higher per unit costs. Distance from providers to users involves higher travel costs, lost opportunity costs and unproductive time for staff.

Nevertheless, all is not gloom and doom. An ageing society is one of the four great challenges in the UK Industrial Strategy and rural areas are finding innovative ways to improve care in the community through

working with digital technology and health and social care providers.

There is huge potential for sustainable growth within rural areas. Tech start-ups present an important opportunity to bring new vitality and dynamism to complement existing rural sectors, particularly food and drink production.

In addition to digital adoption, government needs to think about how bespoke funding packages can support innovative business solutions in rural areas. A comprehensive approach is needed – energising the rural economy will not succeed without adequate services, housing, transport, connectivity, access to education, healthcare and support services.

A new ad hoc House of Lords Select Committee has called for written evidence on the rural economy by 10 September (see [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)). It understands that a thriving rural economy relies on a successful interdependence of the multiple factors mentioned above, to avert deprivation, inequality and rural isolation.

The Rural Services Network understands that the government piggy bank is shrinking every year. But to enable the rural economy to achieve its potential and contribute alongside the Northern Powerhouse and the City of London, the 2019 Spending Review must ensure we get fair treatment.

**i** 'Delivering services differently in rural areas', the Rural Services Network's national conference in Cheltenham on 4-5 September, will be discussing the above challenges and more, see [www.rsonline.org.uk/rsn-rural-conference-2018](http://www.rsonline.org.uk/rsn-rural-conference-2018)



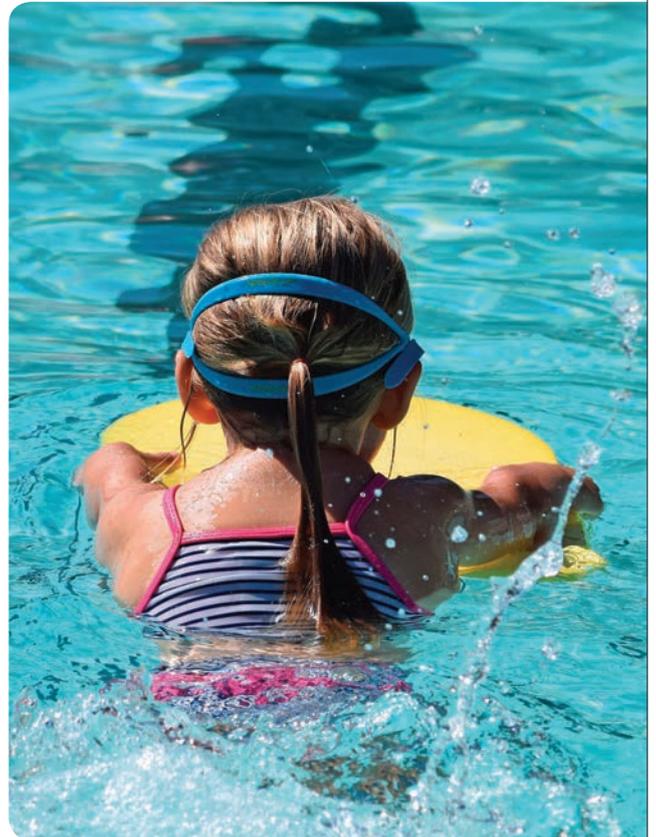
## Sport and Physical Activity Conference 2018

Wednesday 5 December 2018

The Local Government Association is organising the premier sport and physical activity conference for local authorities and their partners. Keynote speakers will talk about the latest challenges, innovations and solutions within the sport and physical activity sector.

Session topics include: sport and physical activity post Brexit, tackling inactivity and engaging new audiences through digital solutions to name but a few, as well as workshops and networking opportunities with like-minded individuals.

To book your place visit [www.local.gov.uk/events](http://www.local.gov.uk/events)



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# parliament

## Written ministerial statements

Every summer before Parliament goes into recess, government tends to publish a raft of ministerial statements.

This year was no exception, with written ministerial statements (WMSs) on everything from planning to school funding, and many other issues of interest to local government.

These included a WMS on local government finance, which included the technical consultation on the 2019/20 local government finance settlement and an invitation to English local authorities to pilot 75 per cent business rates retention in 2019/20.

The statement (see [bit.ly/2uMA3dE](https://bit.ly/2uMA3dE)), covering the final year of the current four-year funding settlement, also referenced the New Homes Bonus and potential future reform, council tax referendum principles, and dealing with negative revenue support grant (RSG).

In response, Cllr Richard Watts, Chair of the LGA's Resources Board, said councils affected by negative RSG would be pleased that the Government is responding, but warned all councils face significant funding pressures and financial uncertainty. He also urged the Government not to increase the New Homes Bonus threshold again, for fear of putting the brakes on house building schemes and growth-boosting projects.

Our updated analysis of the funding gap facing local services by 2025 (see [www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on/funding](http://www.local.gov.uk/moving-the-conversation-on/funding)) will feed into our response to the local government finance consultations and next year's Spending Review.

The Government also made a number of announcements relating to Brexit. HM Treasury confirmed that, in the event of a 'no deal' outcome, UK organisations can continue to compete for, and secure, structural and investment funds until the end of 2020 (see [bit.ly/2nA1kfj](https://bit.ly/2nA1kfj)). We have repeatedly campaigned for there to be no gap in funding before the start of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), the Government's replacement for EU funds. Our Brexit briefing, to be published shortly, outlines some of the headline issues for local



*“The delivery test will punish communities for homes not built by private developers”*

government under a 'no deal' scenario and advises government on what needs to be addressed through national action (see [www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses)).

The Government also published a policy paper on strengthening local enterprise partnerships, and confirmed the next steps of its phased approach to developing local industrial strategies. The latter will feed into the design of the UKSPF.

The new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in another WMS, on housing policy. The Government has restored 'social rent' to its definition of affordable housing, after campaigning by councils and the LGA, which is positive.

However, the new framework means house

builders would be able to ignore local plans if fewer than 75 per cent of the houses required by central government targets for 2020 are constructed. This is hugely disappointing, as the delivery test will punish communities for homes not built by private developers. Our briefing aims to help councils navigate the key announcements in the revised NPPF (see the previous link).

Finally, the Government confirmed details of school revenue funding for 2019/20 and planned updates to the national funding formula for schools. This also recognises the important role councils can play and are playing in the implementation of the national funding formula by allowing councils to continue to set local funding formulae with local schools for a further year, in 2020/21.

We are continuing to work on the issues and consultations raised in the written ministerial statements, much of which will be discussed at this autumn's party conferences (see p10-12).



For more information about the LGA's parliamentary work, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/parliament](http://www.local.gov.uk/parliament)

# councillor

## Top tips for commercial success

Commercialisation is one of the top issues raised by councils with the LGA, as they look for support and opportunities to share best practice. As funding shrinks, exploring new ways to maximise income is essential, so we have pulled together guidance, case studies and our support offer – including masterclasses for councillors (see right) – at [www.local.gov.uk/commercialisation](http://www.local.gov.uk/commercialisation). Innovative councils are using their assets wisely, trading services with others across the public and private sectors, and selling commodities to generate income. The role of the councillor is integral to commercial success, so here are some key areas for you to consider:

### 1 'Commercialisation' is different for every council

Although all councils face funding challenges, each council is unique in terms of geography, assets and opportunities. The balance of efficiencies and income generation will also be different for each council. While it's important to be inspired by the commercial activity undertaken by other local authorities, the key is to find the right balance for your council.

### 2 Elected members are critical to commercial success

Elected members are uniquely placed to take an objective view of proposals, and to draw from previous experience and market knowledge. The councillor role as an enabler, challenger and decision-maker is key to making sure the right investments happen at the right time to achieve the best result for the council.

### 3 Ensure your governance is appropriate

Before committing to commercial activity,



ensure you have robust and supportive governance that will enable appropriate decision-making, and a pre-determined level of risk in line with the markets within which your council plans to trade. A commercial strategy will clarify the activity that your council is prepared to undertake, and set parameters around risk and return for each category. This helps to mitigate risk and to support confident decision-making.

### 4 Choose an appropriate vehicle

Local government has a range of powers that support trading without the need to create a company. If a company is the most suitable option, ensure the organisation and directors clearly understand the company's purpose and the directors' duties and responsibilities. The LGA's 'Enterprising councils' guidance gives a high-level summary of local authorities' legal powers to trade, and case studies for how local authorities have used these to support commercial activity (see [www.local.gov.uk/enterprising-councils-supporting-councils-income-generation-activity](http://www.local.gov.uk/enterprising-councils-supporting-councils-income-generation-activity)).

### 5 Be prepared to stop

At the planning stage it is important to include an exit strategy linked to milestone objectives. If investments fail to perform

## Masterclasses for councillors

The LGA is running free, one-day 'Commercial skills for councillors' masterclasses in Leeds, Cambridge and Winchester.

The sessions are hosted by an LGA member peer and an experienced commercial trainer. They are appropriate for councillors with all levels of commercial experience, whether learning skills for the first time or reinforcing existing knowledge.

Each is designed to share practical commercial skills and case studies about how these skills have been put into practice, focusing on the importance of the councillor's role within the commercialisation process.

The masterclasses take place in Cambridge on 24 September, Winchester on 5 November, and Leeds on 17 January. To book a place, or to join the waiting list for Winchester, please email [productivity@local.gov.uk](mailto:productivity@local.gov.uk)

against projections, there needs to be a mechanism to stop activity. Piloting new initiatives can create a contained space to gain an indication of how a particular investment will perform, while limiting the risk. Investments that fail to perform can give your council valuable learning for further opportunities. By sharing successes and lessons learned, the local government sector can develop stronger commercial capabilities.

## local by-elections

### Bury, Besses

LAB HELD  
14.9% over Con      Turnout 23.6%

### Carmarthenshire, Saron

PLAID CYMRU HELD  
44.5% over Lab      Turnout 35.1%

### Cornwall, Newquay Treviglas

CON GAIN FROM LIB DEM  
7.1% over Lib Dem      Turnout 25.4%

### Fylde, Ansdell

CON HELD  
44.9% over Lab      Turnout 29.3%

### Kings Lynn & West Norfolk, Snettisham

CON HELD  
69.1% over Lib Dem      Turnout 23%

### Merthyr Tydfil, Gurnos

IND GAIN FROM LAB  
0.8% over Lab      Turnout 27%

### Milton Keynes, Bletchley East

LAB HELD  
12.4% over Con      Turnout 23.1%

### New Forest, Fawley Blackfield & Langley

CON HELD  
16.7% over Lib Dem      Turnout 26.5%

### Northampton, St. George

LAB HELD  
14.6% over Lib Dem      Turnout 21.4%

### North East Lincolnshire, Freshney

LAB HELD  
2.5% over Con      Turnout 23.2%

### Oxford, Headington

LIB DEM HELD  
34% over Lab      Turnout 36.6%

### Peterborough, Orton Longueville

CON HELD  
2.9% over Lab      Turnout 26%

### Plymouth, Stoke

LAB HELD  
16.5% over Con      Turnout 27.2%

### Thanet, Birchington South

CON GAIN FROM UKIP  
37.4% over Lab      Turnout 20%

# elections

## Party competition

As the frequency of local by-elections began to wind down for the summer, it was the Conservatives who picked up seats.

In each case, though, the outcome could plausibly be laid at the door of changing patterns of party competition, rather than a dramatic shift in underlying voter loyalties.

In Thanet, UKIP did not even contest the Birchington South ward, where they had taken all three seats fairly comfortably in 2015. In Torrington, the Conservatives appeared on the ballot paper for the first time since 2011 and won at a canter. And in Newquay Treviglas in Cornwall, the intervention of a Labour candidate may well have been sufficient to tip the balance against the sitting Liberal Democrats.

The other seat to change hands, in Wales, saw the Independents strengthen their control of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council by gaining a seat in the four-member Gurnos ward, which they had split 2-2 with Labour at the 2017 contests.

Elsewhere, no change was the order of the day, though the Conservatives did run Labour close in North East Lincolnshire, where the collapse in the UKIP vote panned out in their



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



favour. This must count as a disappointment, however, as they had won the ward with a majority approaching 100 back in May.

Summer or not, the thoughts of many party activists will be turning to next year's local elections, when more than three-quarters of the English electorate will have an opportunity to vote.

Those elections will mark a further stage in the incremental reorganisation of local government, with council mergers expected in three areas.

The most radical change is in Dorset, where the nine current authorities – including the county council itself – will be slimmed down to just two unitary councils. In Suffolk, four districts become two, with the creation of East Suffolk and West Suffolk; and, in Somerset, Taunton Deane and West Somerset are due to combine.

In addition, more than 50 councils will be having elections based on new ward boundaries, as recommended by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.

In both types of case, a reduction in councillor numbers seems to be the priority; in Dorset alone, the total number of elected councillors will more than halve, from 330 to 158. Across all councils with boundary changes, the reduction is around 15 per cent, or nearly 500 councillors.

Those stalwart defenders of local democracy, authors John Stewart and the late George Jones, have long bemoaned the comparatively large councillor/elector ratio in Britain, and how this takes local government further away from its community base. It looks as if their arguments are now falling on ever-deaf ears.

### Torrington, Hartland & Bradworthy

CON GAIN FROM LIB DEM  
29.3% over Lib Dem      Turnout 28%

### West Lancashire, Hesketh-With-Becconsall

CON HELD  
6.4% over Lab      Turnout 37.8%

### West Lancashire, Moorside

LAB HELD  
6.1% over Other      Turnout 35%

For all the latest by-election results in full, please visit [www.local.gov.uk/first](http://www.local.gov.uk/first)

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