

LGA in Parliament 2016/17





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As a matter of routine we discuss new policies with the Local Government Association and value the insight that it brings to the table.

**Lord Bourne,
Minister for Communities and Local Government**



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Foreword

Lord Porter of Spalding CBE Chairman
Mark Lloyd Chief Executive

In our last membership survey, 89 per cent of council leaders, frontline councillors and officials surveyed told us the LGA's lobbying on behalf of local government was important. We are delighted, therefore, to take the opportunity to publish this report outlining our work providing a single voice for councils to influence national policy and legislation.

It has been another year of change with the triggering of Article 50 signalling the beginning of the negotiations to leave the European Union, and the local, mayoral and general elections bringing changes to our governance. In Parliament, we have campaigned to reflect councils' concerns that the last year has been another difficult one with unprecedented challenges on finance, housing and social care. But, despite uncertain times, we have also been able to celebrate the ability of councils to find solutions and get things done.

It is this 'can-do' attitude that makes local government highly respected and influential. Our regular independent polling has shown that of the sample questioned, at least three-quarters of MPs and eight out of 10 Peers agree that councils should have greater financial powers and freedoms (77 per cent MPs and 82 per cent Peers), greater control over local public services in their areas (78 per cent MPs and 86 per cent Peers) and that additional funding should go to councils' social care budgets to tackle the funding crisis (78 per cent MPs and 84 per cent Peers).

The LGA has also demonstrated that it is a highly influential membership body. We promised our members that the association will never sit back and allow history to be written about local government without our input. Over the last parliamentary session, we have been working with parliamentarians to shape legislation and political debate in order to bring about positive change for local government and our communities.

The organisation is at the forefront of influencing decision-making and in our view this last year has seen us work together to secure an additional £2 billion of funding for social care. While this is good news as it demonstrates that central government is listening to councils, we will now focus on securing a long-term solution to the care crisis, including that facing children's services. Through our Housing Commission, we also secured a wide range of wins, including a minimum 20 per cent increase in funding for local planning developments and a commitment to further flexibilities for councils to build council homes. We will continue to make the case for these policies to be implemented by the new Government and for councils to be given the powers and money to resume their historic role in house building.

This report sets out the positive changes we've secured to legislation affecting your council, including planning, homelessness, bus and fire and rescue services. It also shows how we've engaged with parliamentary committees to raise your concerns, for example by working with the Chairs of the Communities and Local Government, Public Accounts and Health Committees, who took the exceptional step of writing to the Prime Minister on the issue of social care funding. We hope the report demonstrates that the LGA has reflected your concerns and had notable successes in bringing about positive change.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our President, Vice-Presidents, and parliamentary champions in both Houses. Without their support, the achievements set out in these pages would not be possible. Their work on the floor of both Houses, in the committees and in providing advice and guidance, has helped us make the case for local government. We would also like to thank those of you from across local government who have supported the LGA in its lobbying and influencing, whether giving evidence to Parliament directly, or responding to our calls for ideas and innovations that we should be promoting as practical local solutions to national problems.



Porter of Spalding

Lord Porter of Spalding CBE
Chairman



Mark Lloyd

Mark Lloyd
Chief Executive

Introduction

The LGA is a politically-led, cross-party organisation, working on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice. Our parliamentary lobbying is integral to what we do for councils. We work closely with our network of parliamentary supporters, including our Vice-Presidents – those with a strong interest in the work of local government who champion its causes in Parliament – to lobby for positive changes to policy. We promote the important work of local government in a number of ways, lobbying on legislation, supporting members giving evidence to parliamentary committees, and by bringing together councils, MPs and Peers at events.

In Parliament, the LGA is seen as highly respected and influential, and our work is referenced extensively across both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, where our campaigns provide the basis for debates, questions and parliamentary motions, and our reports and briefings are used by MPs and Peers from all parties. Our close working relationships with parliamentarians allows us to have a notable impact on legislation, and we do this through amendments to Bills and raising important topics for debate through our briefings. As well as undertaking day to day lobbying of Parliament, another important part of our role is influencing legislation and policy before it comes to the House. This year we were at the forefront of calls to reverse the Government's ambition to make all schools academies. After the policy was announced in May 2016 we set out the concerns of local government, and the proposals were subsequently dropped. Similarly, as part of our lobbying on 100 per cent business rates retention, we called for the Government to rule out transferring responsibility for administering



the Attendance Allowance to councils as part of these reforms. We were pleased to secure a guarantee that it would not be devolved to councils at this time as the growth in the number of people in receipt of the allowance will far outstrip any growth in business rates. This is a position backed by the health and disability charities and we were pleased the Government backed it too.

Throughout the year we aim to influence the Government's set piece announcements, such as the Budget. As a result of extensive lobbying in the months leading up to the 2017 Budget, we helped to secure an extra £2 billion to plug the immediate gap in social care funding, and we will continue to press the Government to undertake an urgent review of health and care, in order to find a long-term solution. We have been involved in shaping the Homelessness Reduction Act from the outset, and were instrumental in securing an extra £61 million from the Government to fund the new burdens on councils to tackle homelessness.

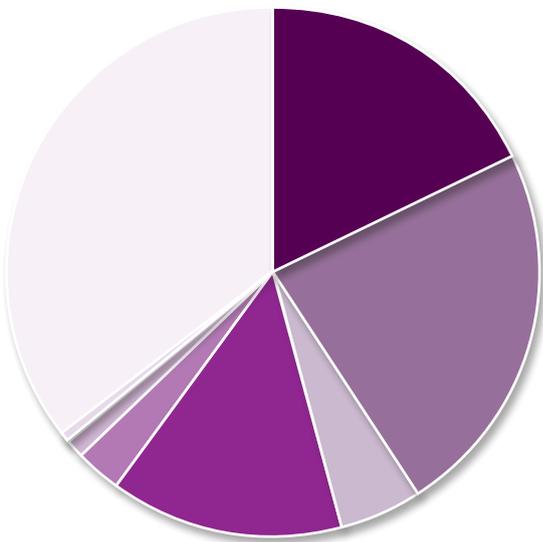
We have influenced a range of significant legislation across areas such as planning, bus services, education and broadband provision. Each Bill that the LGA has lobbied on will change the way services are delivered locally, and we have sought to make the legislation more deliverable for our members where they have told us the legislation will not work. Whether on the Children and Social Work Bill, Neighbourhood Planning Bill, or Bus Services Bill, we have worked with Parliament at every opportunity to improve outcomes for local communities. In making the case for local government, the LGA has been referenced on 691 occasions in the House of Commons and on 362 occasions in the House of Lords during this parliamentary session, or the equivalent of four times every day that Parliament sat in 2016/17.

This report summarises how the LGA has been representing its members in Parliament, raising awareness of significant issues and influencing the way that vital council services are funded and configured.

The LGA has said that, by 2020 ... there will be a gap of £5.8 billion... All I ask of the Secretary of State and the Minister is that they please think carefully when the time comes to make decisions about the scheme for 100% business rate retention.

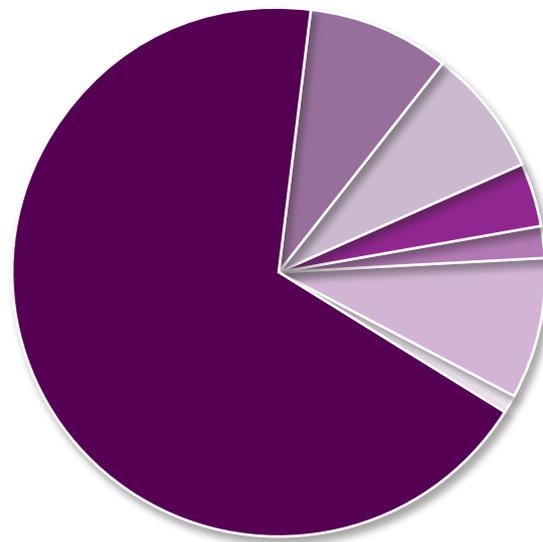
Clive Betts MP, Chair of the Communities and Local Government Select Committee

Commons mentions 2016/17



- Public Bill committee
- Chamber debate
- Westminster Hall debate
- Written answer
- Committee evidence session
- Oral answer
- Written question tabled
- Oral question tabled

Lords mentions 2016/17



- Debate
- Written answer
- Oral answer
- Written question tabled
- Oral question tabled
- Committee evidence session
- Future business

Legislation

Bus Services Act 2017

The Bus Services Act puts in place vital reforms to the bus franchising and partnership system and provides local transport authorities with more effective powers to improve bus services for local residents. We have called for the funding for bus services to be devolved to councils. Following our lobbying on the Act, the Government confirmed it would review the Bus Service Operators Grant, and we will continue to lobby for more funding for local council-run services. We will now be working with the Department for Transport to ensure the secondary legislation is clear about the process for accessing franchising powers, in order to secure the best deal for all councils.

Children and Social Work Act 2017

The Children and Social Work Act is intended to improve decision-making and support for looked after children and care leavers. It contained proposals allowing the Secretary of State to relax or amend children's social care legislation in a local authority in intervention without proper local consultation or consent. We worked with parliamentarians and the Government to remove this power. The Government also amended the legislation to include our call for sex and relationships education to be made compulsory in all secondary schools.

Digital Economy Act 2017

The Digital Economy Act is a wide ranging piece of legislation, covering access to broadband, mobile connectivity, data sharing by public bodies, and digital skills. The Act guarantees a minimum standard of broadband

connectivity for residents and businesses, as well as ensuring internet providers compensate residents for poor performance. On behalf of councils we have called for the Government to tackle digital exclusion by guaranteeing internet connectivity in law, which has been achieved through the introduction of a broadband Universal Service Obligation (USO). Supported by our broadband campaign, Up to Speed, we worked with MPs and Peers to strengthen the USO so that minimum broadband connectivity keeps pace with average speeds. We also sought to introduce a social tariff which would mean the least well off could benefit from decent broadband, and the Government has indicated it is exploring this option. We will continue to encourage the Government to do more to support councils in their work providing digital skills training and delivering broadband locally.

Homelessness Reduction Act 2017

The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 sets out new duties for English local authorities with the aim of preventing homelessness. This was a Private Member's Bill which attracted the support of the Government, the cross-party Communities and Local Government Select Committee and the main political parties. We engaged extensively with the Government and the Bill's sponsors, LGA Vice-Presidents Bob Blackman MP and Lord Best, to ensure the legislation is more workable for councils. As a direct result of LGA lobbying, major changes were made to the Bill which reduce the proposed burdens on councils. We also secured a commitment from Government to fully fund the new duties in the Act, and this has led to £61 million in additional funding

for councils. In response to our concerns, the Government has also committed to a comprehensive review of the Bill's impact two years after implementation. Legislative change alone will not reduce homelessness and we will continue to push for councils to be able to build more genuinely affordable homes and for the impact of welfare reforms to be redressed. We will now work to ensure the legislation is deliverable for councils as the Government draws up secondary legislation and guidance.

Investigatory Powers Act 2017

The Investigatory Powers Act 2017 amends the use of communications data and establishes the role of Investigatory Powers Commissioner. As a result of the LGA's lobbying, councils will retain access to communications data, which is used by local government trading standards teams to tackle a range of criminal activity and fraud. This ranges from doorstep crime, which targets vulnerable and elderly people, to large scale cybercrime.

National Citizen Service Act 2017

The National Citizen Service Act creates a statutory framework for the National Citizen Service, a Government-funded personal development summer programme for 15 to 17-year-olds. The Act aims to ensure proper oversight of the management of public funding for the programme. When the legislation was announced in the Queen's Speech, it contained duties on councils to promote the scheme. As a result of our work, these duties have been removed from the legislation.

Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017

The Neighbourhood Planning Act is intended to help free up land on which to build homes, to give communities more certainty about where development will take place. It also aims to reduce the time between planning permission being granted and new homes being built. We worked with parliamentarians to table amendments allowing local planning authorities to recover the full costs of planning, which

helped secure a Government commitment in the Housing White Paper to increase fees by a minimum of 20 per cent – something that represents a significant boost for council planning departments. We also secured greater powers for councils in the development of new towns and villages, as well as the ability for councils to limit office-to-residential conversion in some cases.

Policing and Crime Act 2017

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 seeks to enhance the democratic accountability of police forces, and fire and rescue services, and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency services through closer collaboration. We worked with parliamentarians to ensure Police and Crime Commissioners fully consult with local authorities before a transfer of governance takes place with a Fire and Rescue Authority. We secured amendments on licensing conditions, which will mean that licensing authorities will have the power to decide whether a late night levy should apply to premises in a particular part of their area, rather than to whole local authority areas. We also secured an amendment which will help reduce distress to bereaved families and ease cost pressures on councils by removing the duty on coroners to conduct an inquest in all cases which have involved a deprivation of a person's liberty or a court of protection order.

Local Government Finance Bill

The Local Government Finance Bill sought to allow local government, as a whole, to retain 100 per cent of its business rates income. This is something which has long been called for by councils. Progress on the Bill was halted by the General Election, as legislation cannot be carried over into the new Parliament. However, having secured positive commitments in the last Parliament, we will continue to call for further fiscal freedoms and measures to help tackle issues such as business rates avoidance.

Debates and questions

Each week Parliament sits, the LGA looks for opportunities to raise issues of importance to local government. This is often achieved through briefing for Opposition Day, Backbench Business or Westminster Hall debates in the Commons, debates in the Lords, or the tabling of Parliamentary Questions. Ahead of Prime Minister's Questions, and Departmental Questions in areas such as health and transport, we ensure MPs are aware of local government's priorities. We provide information, evidence and advice for parliamentarians which helps to illustrate the effects of national policy changes on communities.

We are regularly quoted in both the House of Commons and House of Lords. This ensures local government's concerns and policy recommendations are kept high on the parliamentary agenda and helps central government to understand the challenges councils face.



Pressure from the Local Government Association and the Opposition Benches in the other place has led to the Government agreeing to a full-scale review before the initial two-year funding runs out.

Lord Best, Crossbench Peer

Key highlights from the year include:

- On several occasions throughout the year the LGA's Chairman, Lord Porter of Spalding, has tabled parliamentary questions to ministers on issues including the environment, local skills provision, children's services, the costs to councils of statutory notices and local representation on the BBC's current affairs programmes. Each question tabled receives a formal response from the Government and ensures policy is scrutinised.
- During Prime Minister's Questions in February 2017, the Leader of the Opposition, Jeremy Corbyn MP, referenced an LGA media release in which our Chairman warned that rises in council tax permitted through the use of the social care precept would be insufficient to adequately fund social care.
- Leading the Homelessness Reduction Bill through the House of Lords, Lord Best acknowledged that LGA lobbying had led to a concession on reviewing the impact of the legislation.
- In March 2017, our Chairman spoke during the debate on the Chancellor's Budget statement. During his speech Lord Porter raised concerns that the Budget did not include greater measures to facilitate local authority housebuilding, but acknowledged the announcement of £2 billion to alleviate the immediate pressures on social care.
- While debating budgets for social care in Liverpool in March 2017, Labour's Steve Rotherham told MPs that he could not agree more with Lord Porter's assessment of social care services across local government. He said his Party was fully in agreement that services for the most vulnerable in our communities were at breaking point.

- During a House of Commons debate on homelessness in January 2017, Minister for Local Government Marcus Jones MP thanked the LGA, individual councils and others in local government for working with the Government on shaping new legislation to tackle homelessness.
- In a statement to the House of Commons in December 2016, Defence Secretary Michael Fallon MP presented the Government's armed forces covenant annual report, during which he praised the LGA's covenant toolkit for councils, compiled jointly with the Forces in Mind Trust. Our toolkit received further praise by the Defence Committee in its 2017 report on the armed forces covenant, in which the Committee states that the publication includes "some examples of outstanding action at the local level".
- Speaking in January 2017, in support of an LGA-supported amendment to the Digital Economy Bill which called for an annual review of the broadband Universal Service Obligation, Liberal Democrat Peer Lord Fox asked the Lords to note that the LGA had proposed the review in order to put some pressure on service providers to ensure they fulfilled their broadband obligations.



- In July 2016, shortly after local government had been promised a say in Brexit negotiations through the LGA, Labour MP Grahame Morris asked the Government to ensure that some EU laws are devolved to the local level. Mr Morris referred the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid MP, to our statement following the EU referendum, in which we offered our full cooperation in helping to make Brexit work for local communities.
- Speaking in a committee stage debate on the Children and Social Work Bill in January 2017, Conservative MP Simon Hoare praised the LGA's work holding the Government to account.
- Steve Double MP quoted the LGA's former Children and Young People spokesperson, Cllr David Simmonds, when urging the Government to clarify rules around penalty fines for unauthorised pupil absence in schools. During a debate in July 2016, Mr Double said, "The policy does not enjoy broad support. Even the Local Government Association does not support it."

Parliamentary inquiries

We gave evidence to more than 40 parliamentary inquiries in 2016/17.

These encompassed a range of issues including health and care, housing, council finances, child migrants, food waste, rural tourism, multi-academy trusts and housing for older people. Each separate inquiry covered policy areas of relevance to local government, and presented an opportunity to put forward councils' concerns and interests to parliamentarians. Our evidence to inquiries often forms part of the key recommendations to Government contained in the final committee reports. Key highlights include:

- Our lobbying for the Government to urgently invest more money in social care throughout the year was reflected when the Prime Minister, Theresa May MP, appeared before the House of Commons Liaison Committee in December 2016. Particular highlights of the session included questioning on adult social care funding, and the LGA's key concerns being repeatedly raised by the Committee. The Chair of the Health Committee, Sarah Wollaston MP, echoed our calls for an improvement on the funding announced in the local government finance settlement, and the Chair of the Communities and Local Government Committee, Clive Betts MP, told the Prime Minister that the LGA was one of many high-profile organisations calling for an urgent review of long-term social care funding. Following the session a joint letter to the Prime Minister was published imploring the Government to take action.
- Both the LGA's Chief Executive, Mark Lloyd, and Deputy Chief Executive, Sarah Pickup, raised councils' serious concerns over their ability to fund social care when they gave evidence to the Communities and Local Government Committee's inquiry into social care. Following publication of the inquiry report in March 2017, the Committee recommended an increase in immediate funding from the Government, and an urgent review into the long-term funding of the sector. MPs also called on the Government to work with the LGA in order to improve the sharing of best practice. The announcement of an additional £2 billion for social care in the Budget showed that the Government has listened to some of our concerns.



- Alongside our calls for extra funding to plug the gap in social care, we argued that councils should be able to allocate additional revenue raised from the transition to 100 per cent business rates retention to fund immediate shortfalls in social care. The Communities and Local Government Committee backed our call in its March 2017 report on social care, following our written and oral evidence.
- To support our work on housing, we provided written and oral evidence to the Public Accounts Committee's (PAC) Housing: State of the Nation inquiry. In February 2017, our Chairman, Lord Porter, gave evidence to the Committee alongside Shelter, the Department for Communities and Local Government, and the Department for Work and Pensions. He spoke about the need for local government to play its part in increasing housing supply, called on the Government to remove public borrowing for housing from contributing towards public debt, and argued that planning departments need to be better resourced.
- Following the PAC's Housing: State of the Nation inquiry, the Communities and Local Government Committee produced a report into capacity in the homebuilding industry. One of the report's recommendations was that all Housing Revenue Account borrowing caps should be raised, which has been a key component of our lobbying on housing over the past year.
- In summer 2016 we gave evidence to the Home Affairs Committee's inquiry into the quality of accommodation provided to those people seeking asylum. Following our written submission and evidence from Cllr David Simmonds, Chairman of our Asylum, Refugee, and Migration Task Group, the Committee published its final report, which contained some key LGA recommendations. In particular, the Committee recommended that the long-term funding, early involvement, and voluntary nature of all involvement of local authorities in the design of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme should be replicated across all local support schemes.

In light of the severity of the housing crisis (we) recommend that all HRA borrowing caps should be raised.

Communities and Local Government Committee, report on Capacity in the Homebuilding Industry, April 2017



The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, addressing an LGA reception

- Cllr Izzi Seccombe, Chairman of our Community Wellbeing Board, appeared before the Women and Equalities Committee as part of its inquiry into disability and the built environment. Further to our written submission, Cllr Seccombe reiterated the LGA's concerns about a lack of capacity in local government planning departments. The Committee shared our concerns in its report, and recommended that the Government work with councils on providing the specialist expertise necessary for the creation of an accessible and inclusive built environment.
- The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Fixed Odds Betting Terminals (FOBTs) published a report in January 2017, containing a number of important recommendations. Our evidence to the inquiry called for the maximum stakes on FOBTs to be lowered to £2 and we were pleased that the report supported these calls and urged the Government to take swift action to limit the harm caused to vulnerable individuals.
- The Chair of the LGA's Children and Young People Board, Cllr Richard Watts, gave evidence to the Education Committee on multi-academy trusts (MATs) in July 2016 in order to reflect our members' concerns about the accountability and performance of MATs. Echoing recommendations made by Cllr Watts before the Committee, the inquiry's final report stated that councils with a good track record should be able to establish their own MATs, as well as highlighting issues with local accountability.
- As part of the Health Committee's inquiry into suicide prevention, Cllr Richard Kemp, Lead Member of our Community Wellbeing Board, gave evidence on behalf of the LGA in January 2017. The Committee's report emphasised the need for greater clarity over funding arrangements for mental health services, which we have been consistently calling for.
- The House of Lords Financial Exclusion Committee reported on the findings of its recent inquiry in March 2017, which took evidence from Cllr John Fuller, Vice-Chairman of our Resources Board in October 2016. The Committee took on board our offers of greater council collaboration with partners, and recommended that all councils immediately implement the joint LGA/Citizens Advice best practice guide on the collection of council tax arrears.

Events

We host a number of events each year, as part of our engagement with the Government, Parliament and the political parties, in order to raise awareness of the opportunities and challenges facing councils.

Parliamentary reception

In June 2016 we hosted our annual parliamentary reception, bringing together Secretaries of State, MPs and Peers of all parties with council leaders and other representatives of local government. We were delighted that Ministers addressed our members, congratulating councils on their impressive achievements.

Roundtable briefings

Throughout the year we hosted several roundtable briefings in Parliament, attended by ministers, MPs, Peers, MEPs and senior councillors. At these meetings guests discussed policies on a range of issues including Brexit, devolution, social care, housing and business rates retention.

Party conferences

We use the party conference season to promote the positive work of local government. The 2016 party conference season saw us deliver a significant programme of events and speaking engagements. Working with stakeholders including businesses, charities, and think tanks, we hosted debates and receptions, as well as providing a range of speakers from senior positions in local government.

Images from top: Teresa Pearce MP, Brandon Lewis MP, Tim Farron MP, Lord Adebowale





LGA President Lord Kerslake

It gives me great pleasure to continue to be the President of such a trusted and influential organisation. The LGA is doing a great job in Westminster and Whitehall, its voice heard across both Houses, with barely a day going by without reference to local government.

As we know, local government has an interest in a very significant range of issues. From housing, children's education, finance, adult social care, and devolution, the LGA has successfully kept the voice of local government at the forefront of the political debate, and the profile of councils high on the agenda of decision-makers. The quality of briefings ahead of parliamentary debates, and the trustworthiness of the analysis and research, makes the LGA an organisation of real influence inside Parliament.

I would like to thank all those in the LGA and local government who provide briefings and support to parliamentarians as we scrutinise legislation and policy. I would also like to thank the LGA Vice-Presidents, who I have been working with in Parliament to promote local government.

I speak on behalf of many parliamentarians when I say that it is a genuine privilege to be given the opportunity to be a champion for the important work of councils and their central role in the nation's wellbeing.

LGA Vice-Presidents

Every year the four political groups at the LGA invite representatives from the House of Commons, House of Lords and European Parliament to be LGA Vice-Presidents, approved by our General Assembly. Our Vice-Presidents have an association with local government, and we support them in their day-to-day work. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our Vice-Presidents for the 2016/17 parliamentary session for their invaluable support.

Lord Kerslake – President

Lord Adebawale

Baroness Bakewell of
Hardington Mandeville

Baroness Barker

Catherine Bearder MEP

Lord Beecham

Lord Best

Clive Betts MP

Lord Bichard

Bob Blackman MP

Douglas Carswell MP

Baroness Eaton

Tim Farron MP

Julie Girling MEP

Baroness Greengross

Baroness Grey-Thompson

Baroness Howarth of
Breckland

Stewart Jackson MP

Margot James MP

Baroness Janke

Andrea Jenkyns MP

Baroness Jones of
Moulsecoomb

Lord Kennedy of Southwark

Earl of Lytton

Norman Lamb MP

Andrew Lewer MEP

Baroness Maddock

Catherine McKinnell MP

Baroness Pinnock

Dr John Pugh MP

Steve Reed MP

Baroness Scott of Bybrook

Baroness Scott
of Needham Market

Lord Shipley

Baroness Smith of Basildon

Lord Smith of Leigh

Wes Streeting MP

Keith Taylor MEP

Lord Tope

Derek Vaughan MEP

Charles Walker OBE MP

Catherine West MP

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